

**Oral History Interview of
Ralph Leggett**

**Interviewed by: Cosby Morton
October 29, 2013
Lubbock, Texas**

**Part of the:
*African American Interviews***

© Southwest Collection/
Special Collections Library



TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY

**Southwest Collection/
Special Collections Library**

15th and Detroit | 806.742.3749 | <http://swco.ttu.edu>

Copyright and Usage Information:

An oral history release form was signed by Ralph Leggett on October 28, 2013. This transfers all rights of this interview to the Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library, Texas Tech University.

This oral history transcript is protected by U.S. copyright law. By viewing this document, the researcher agrees to abide by the fair use standards of U.S. Copyright Law (1976) and its amendments. This interview may be used for educational and other non-commercial purposes only. Any reproduction or transmission of this protected item beyond fair use requires the written and explicit permission of the Southwest Collection. Please contact Southwest Collection Reference staff for further information.

Preferred Citation for this Document:

Leggett, Ralph Oral History Interview, October 29, 2013. Interview by Cosby Morton, Online Transcription, Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library. URL of PDF, date accessed.

The Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library houses almost 6000 oral history interviews dating back to the late 1940s. The historians who conduct these interviews seek to uncover the personal narratives of individuals living on the South Plains and beyond. These interviews should be considered a primary source document that does not implicate the final verified narrative of any event. These are recollections dependent upon an individual's memory and experiences. The views expressed in these interviews are those only of the people speaking and do not reflect the views of the Southwest Collection or Texas Tech University.

Technical Processing Information:

The Audio/Visual Department of the Southwest Collection is the curator of this ever-growing oral history collection and is in the process of digitizing all interviews. While all of our interviews will have an abbreviated abstract available online, we are continually transcribing and adding information for each interview. Audio recordings of these interviews can be listened to in the Reading Room of the Southwest Collection. Please contact our Reference Staff for policies and procedures. Family members may request digitized copies directly from Reference Staff.

Consult the Southwest Collection website for more information.

<http://swco.ttu.edu/Reference/policies.php>

Recording Notes:

Original Format: Born Digital Audio

Digitization Details: n/a

Audio Metadata: 44.1kHz/ 16bit WAV file

Further Access Restrictions: N/A

Additional Materials: related photographs available in reading room

Transcription Notes:

Interviewer: Cosby Morton

Audio Editor: N/A

Transcription: Paul Doran

Editor(s): Walter Nicolds

Final Editor: Katelin Dixon

Interview Series Background:

The African-American Oral History Collection documents the diverse perspectives of the African-American people of Lubbock and the South Plains. These interviews and accompanying manuscript materials cover a myriad of topics including; early Lubbock, segregation, discrimination, politics, education, music, art, cultural celebrations, the May 11th 1970 tornado, commerce, and sport.

Transcript Overview:

This interview features Lubbock barber, Ralph Leggett. Leggett discusses his career as a barber in East Lubbock. Leggett talks about the neighborhoods and the various businesses in East Lubbock and how urban renewal has changed the city's landscape.

Length of Interview: 01:22:46

Subject	Transcript Page	Time Stamp
Biographical information and youth	5	00:00:21
Queen City	15	00:07:37
Barbers and barber shops in East Lubbock	29	00:17:14
Different hair styles, Joe Lewis, Conk, et cetera.	70	00:41:25
Working at Old Man Shield's Barber Shop	79	00:48:55
The clientele and celebrities, Bobby "Blue" Bland	83	00:53:39
Working at the post office	89	00:59:07
Influential alumni from Dunbar High	91	00:59:44
Lady barbers and beauticians	93	01:01:10
The effects of urban renewal on East Lubbock	106	01:09:16
Old fashioned haircut techniques, straight razor, Bay Rum, tonic water	110	01:12:16

Keywords

Dunbar High School, East Lubbock, Queen City, The Flats, Barber Shop, Caviel's Pharmacy

Cosby Morton (CM):

Good evening, today is October the twenty-ninth. My name is Cosby Morton, and I'm representing Texas Tech Southwest Collections. I have the honor today to talk with Mr. Ralph Leggett. Good afternoon Mr. Leggett.

Ralph Leggett (RL):

Good afternoon, how you doing?

CM:

Just fine sir. Tell me first, what is your full name?

RL:

Ralph L. Leggett.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

Yeah, the "L" stands for Leon.

CM:

All right, and Mr. Leggett, when were you born?

RL:

June the twenty-first, first day of summer, 1938.

CM:

1938. Where were you born at sir?

RL:

I was born in a little old town called Point, Texas, which was Rains County.

CM:

Okay. What is that close to?

RL:

The closest little old town was Greenville, Texas.

CM:

Ah, okay.

RL:

Greenville, Texas, Sulphur Springs, Texas.

CM:

Yes.

RL:

And I think there was another little old town around there named Commerce.

CM:

Yes.

RL:

And places like—

CM:

Cooper.

RL:

And then we had Cooper, and another little town about five or six miles down the road from us there named Emory, Texas, Lone Oak, Texas, and we were about forty-nine miles directly east of Tyler, Texas.

CM:

Okay, well I know the area very well, for the simple reason is that my mother came from Paris, Texas.

RL:

Oh, yeah.

CM:

And Paris, you go through Greenville, then Cooper, then Commerce, then Paris.

RL:

Right.

CM:

So she's in the same area over there. So okay, I know the area very well, been in that area many times. When did you come to Lubbock?

RL:

My dad moved out here in Lubbock, we came down here October 12, 1954.

CM:

Okay, and why did y'all move here?

RL:

We moved here—actually my dad came here and worked first for about six months.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

And he was going to come back and get us, and we was supposed to be on our way to California.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

He had a brother who lived out there, and his brother had a job waiting on him, so he came back and got us, and we came back and we got to Lubbock, and he decided he wanted to stay for a little bit, and so got in and got stuck here, and didn't move nowhere else.

CM:

Okay, and I knew your dad, because I actually cut yards for your dad.

RL:

Yeah.

CM:

So okay, so you came here—what grade were you in?

RL:

I was in the latter part of the tenth grade.

CM:

Okay, and you went to Dunbar High?

RL:

Yes, here in Lubbock.

CM:

Yes sir, and Dunbar High was located on Date street. It was the Dunbar that was located on Date.

RL:

Right, right off Date Street.

CM:

All right, okay, how many were in your family?

RL:

It was four of us.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

It was two girls, and two boys.

CM:

Oh yeah?

RL:

Yeah I have two sisters, and a brother.

CM:

Okay, are you the oldest?

RL:

I'm the oldest.

CM:

Okay you're the oldest.

RL:

Yeah.

CM:

Okay.

© Southwest Collection/
Special Collections Library

RL:

I'm the oldest.

CM:

All right. Tell me about where'd y'all lived when you first moved here?

RL:

Well like I said a few minutes ago, when we first moved in, we lived in one of Snodgrass's rent houses.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

Which is right across the street from the old Dunbar High School, right there off of—

CM:

Elm.

RL:

Elm, yeah.

CM:

East Twenty-Fourth.

RL:

Elm and Fir.

CM:

And Snodgrass is actually—he had a lot to do with East Lubbock, because he had a lot of property over there.

RL:

Right, right.

CM:

And sold a lot of property—

RL:

Right.



© Southwest Collection/
Special Collections Library

CM:

Mr. Snodgrass did.

RL:

Snodgrass did?

CM:

Yes.

RL:

Oh my, I didn't even know he ever did.

CM:

Yes, yeah well I know he had a lot to do in rent houses and stuff over there.

RL:

Yeah he had a whole bunch of them.

CM:

Yes, yes, okay.

RL:

He sure did.

CM:

Okay, so you lived on east Twenty-Fourth, and that's between Fir Avenue, and Elm Avenue.

RL:

Right. Actually we lived right across the street from Dunbar.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

Right across the street there.

CM:

Oh okay, right.

© Southwest Collection/
Special Collections Library

RL:

Right across where old man—the “goat man”.

CM:

Virgil.

RL:

Virgil.

CM:

Virgil.

RL:

Mr. Virgil.

CM:

All right, and let's talk about Mr. Virgil now. Mr. Virgil had a lot to do, because on that street, Elm, that same area right there across from Jim.

RL:

Right, right.

CM:

And Ella Iles—

RL:

Right, right,

CM:

Dunbar. You had the nursery there—

RL:

Nursery back there.

CM:

Called The Colored Nursery.

RL:

The Colored Nursery.

CM:

You had that ran by Mrs. Woods.

RL:

Right.

CM:

But Mr. Virgil was unique, he had goats.

RL:

Yeah, he sure was.

CM:

He had a bicycle shop.

RL:

A bicycle shop.

CM:

Yeah, and he rented bicycles even back then.

RL:

Right, yeah he sure did.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

Yeah, of course he used to have a lot of children over at his yard, and his place over there.

They'd go over there and play with his children. I forgot how many children he had.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

But I know he had two or three girls.

CM:

Oh okay. So did he have him a little store in there?

RL:

Seemed like to me he did.

CM:

Okay, yeah I knew he fixed some kind of sandwiches or something, I knew he did that.

RL:

Yeah, and I think he sold some kind of little old soft drinks, I mean he had a coke box or something back up in there.

CM:

Okay, so he had a bicycle repair—now, at the time y'all were living there, further down the street there by Fir, there was a theatre. Was it there when you came to town?

RL:

Yeah it was there, yeah. That little theatre was right there, because right by that theatre, that's where Joe Davenport—

CM:

Ah.

RL:

And Ralph Alexander had a barber shop right up in there.

CM:

Okay, that would be the six hundred block of east Twenty-Fourth Street—

RL:

East Twenty-Fourth Street.

CM:

That still exists right now, the street.

RL:

Yeah.

CM:

So there was a little shopping center there.

RL:

Yeah, right.

CM:

And I've talked to James Otis Price, and he told me that his uncle, Johnny Walker, had a store there, and then the Moores had some kind of café there, and then you said Mr. Davenport now. One of the reasons we're talking to Mr. Leggett today is Mr. Leggett is a barber, and he's been into the barber profession for a long time here, but we'll talk about that. But, so you said Joe Davenport, and Ralph Alexander had a barbershop there?

RL:

Right, and also it was a little old café there that was run by Ms. Hamilton.

CM:

Oh okay.

RL:

By a lady named Ms. Hamilton.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

Yeah, that's right.

CM:

Now all this is way before Paul's place?

RL:

Oh yes.

CM:

Okay, this is before Paul's place?

RL:

Yeah that was way before Paul's place. But Paul, he was barbering I think at that time—no, Paul started barbering I think about three or four years before I did. But he started over there in Queen City, with just barber named Jane Robertson.

CM:

Now Queen City, that was located—Railroad Avenue, which is Southwest Drive now against the railroad tracks, the old Denver and Fort Worth railroad tracks, and then I guess it probably started about Juniper or somewhere over in there?

RL:

Yeah Juniper was right up in there, yeah.

CM:

Tell me about Queen City, what kind of structures, what was Queen City?

RL:

Well it was just mostly a lot of little flat-top buildings, and it was another guy, he had a hotel over there.

CM:

Oh, okay, another hotel.

RL:

Named—oh golly, what was that man's name—oh man, I can't think of his name right now, but anyway, he left and went to California. But yeah he had a little hotel there, and then it was kind of like a little miniature shopping center, because another man that had a drugstore over there, his name was Mr. Goldstein.

CM:

Oh okay, and now see Mr. Goldstein at one time, his wife, she was actually a beautician. Yeah, and he had another drug—so he actually had a drug store over there.

RL:

He had a drug store over there, and then I think he moved it over there, from down over there right off of Avenue A—

CM:

Oh okay.

RL:

For a long time, and he had that, it was right there by his house there. It wasn't exactly on the Avenue A, but it was right there kind of next to his house.

CM:
Okay.

RL:
And he rent it for a while, and then after that he closed it up.

CM:
Was he a pharmacist?

RL:
I don't think so.

CM:
Okay.

RL:
He was a notary though.

CM:
Okay.

RL:
Yeah he was a notary, he could sign papers and fix papers and things that people couldn't understand, figure out what was going on.

CM:
All right.

RL:
And then also in that area too, right across the street there from the barber shop was another family by the name of the Deos.

CM:
Okay.

RL:
Ms. Deo. Mr. Deo, he put in a barbershop over there.

CM:
This is on Avenue A, or at Queen City?

RL:

Avenue A.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

Avenue A.

CM:

Okay Avenue A, and this would be between I'm thinking Eighteenth Street—

RL:

Yeah.

CM:

And Nineteenth Street.

RL:

Right.

CM:

Right where Caviel's—

RL:

Caviels—

CM:

Pharmacy—

RL:

Pharmacy.

CM:

Is right there—there was a barber shop to the south.

RL:

Barber shop right there.

© Southwest Collection/
Special Collections Library

CM:
Okay.

RL:
Sure was.

CM:
So you—

RL:
In fact, that's where Dr. Loving—

CM:
Yeah, F. L. Loving.

RL:
F. L. Loving, he had a little place, little doctor's office shop right in there.

CM:
Okay.

RL:
And then Queen City was—well I remember a lady that lived over there, her name Ms. Walker I believe. And Ms. Walker I believe was the last somebody moved from over there. Man they had trouble trying to get her out.

CM:
Oh is that right?

RL:
Yeah.

CM:
Okay, and, now—

RL:
She wasn't selling her store—

CM:
Okay, so, and I'm thinking what happened to Queen City was urban renewal?

RL:

Urban renewal.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

Right, urban renewal.

CM:

So, and I said it starts about Juniper, and then the tracks on the south, the what you'd call now—their independent tracks now—but you had Railroad Avenue, that was the Old Slaton Highway.

RL:

Old Slaton Highway, right.

CM:

It went all the way through, but then the northern part would probably be east Twenty-Seventh, or east Twenty-Eighth, something like that. And you had that little square there—

RL:

Right.

CM:

Bordered by the tracks on the east also—

RL:

Right.

CM:

Santa Fe at that time—

RL:

Santa Fe, right.

CM:

Then now Burlington Northern tracks.

RL:

And then you could go right across the track from Queen City, down a little ways, and they had another little old place, they called it Stein City.

CM:

Oh, okay, and now let me—now Stein City—

RL:

Yeah.

CM:

Bordered on the south by the grain elevator, the PGA grain elevator.

RL:

Yeah the grain elevator.

CM:

Producers Grain elevator.

RL:

Grain elevator.

CM:

And then on the north, you had East Thirty-Fourth there on one side—

RL:

Right.

CM:

And the graveyard, the Lubbock Cemetery.

RL:

You've got the graveyard, the cemetery's right there.

CM:

Then you had the railroad tracks that were on the west side of it.

RL:

Right.

© Southwest Collection/
Special Collections Library

CM:

So the railroad tracks are going diagonally down—

RL:

Diagonally, right.

CM:

With Railroad Avenue right there—

RL:

Right.

CM:

There on the west side. Then the east side, at the back of the east side there, they eventually put the dump ground there.

RL:

Right.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

Right, sure did.

CM:

Okay, and Stein City—because see I was raised in Stein City.

RL:

In Stein City, uh-huh.

CM:

Okay, so, so it kind of—

RL:

And also they had, over there in that same section, they had a water plant where they—

CM:

Reclamation plant.

© Southwest Collection/
Special Collections Library

RL:

Where they purified—

CM:

And it's still there now.

RL:

Purified the water.

CM:

Yeah.

RL:

Or done something to it—

CM:

Yeah.

RL:

Whatever.

CM:

And now, they had a reclamation—they changed it to a reclamation plant—

RL:

Yeah, uh-huh.

CM:

Where it has the sewage—

RL:

Right.

CM:

And then that's on Guava, that's the backside.

RL:

Yeah.

© Southwest Collection/
Special Collections Library

CM:

And at the very back of that, which I guess is Beech—of course the streets over there were Ute, Walnut—

RL:

Yeah Ute, Walnut.

CM:

Vanda—they was still going with the tree names.

RL:

Tree names, right.

CM:

And then you had—

RL:

Still do.

CM:

—East Thirty-Fifth, you had East Thirty-Sixth, and then the back part was East Thirty-Seventh, and one up against the actual grainery. Now, at the back you had—Ralph Alexander lived on Beech.

RL:

Right.

CM:

The dirt streets back there.

RL:

Right, sure did.

CM:

The streets were actually dirt. And you mentioned Mr. Ralph Alexander just then because he had a barbershop with Mr. Davenport on East Twenty-Fourth, but then behind him Mr. David Crockett had some hogs back there, and then the last family back there, that lived back there, were the Higs, H-i-g-h.

RL:

The Highs, yeah, I remember the Highs.

CM:

Yeah they were Highs, they lived back there, right there on top of the dump ground.

RL:

Yeah, yeah.

CM:

And that's after they had moved the dump ground from where Struggs is right now.

RL:

Yeah, right.

CM:

Where Mae Simmons Park is.

RL:

Yeah.

CM:

Yeah.

RL:

Sure is.

CM:

And they moved it over there.

RL:

Uh-huh.

CM:

Okay, now tell me some more about Queen City. Now, I heard that Queen City—well, I know Mr. Priestley, Roger Priestly and Clarence Priestly's dad, had a barbeque place over there also.

RL:

Uh-huh.

© Southwest Collection/
Special Collections Library

CM:

Off of Railroad Avenue—

RL:

Yeah.

CM:

And the last street over there.

RL:

Yeah, and well there was another man there, he had a little grocery store over there, Mr. Moore.

CM:

Oh okay.

RL:

Mr. Moore had a little grocery store over there, and he had a grocery store, and I think he had something else that was over there, because his wife, she used to be president of the Federation of Choirs.

CM:

Oh okay.

RL:

When they organized that—matter of fact, and I think she was the first one that helped organize that, Federation of Choirs, that's still going on.

CM:

And tell us what the Federation of Choirs is.

RL:

The Federation of Choirs is different churches in the community, and every fourth Sunday, they all come to one church, and each choir get up and render a number.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

And each choir would, and so that was just a way of bringing the community—

CM:

Together.

RL:

In a sense together.

CM:

So the churches were very involved in the community.

RL:

So the churches was real involved in the community—

CM:

Okay.

RL:

Back in the day.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

Yeah.

CM:

All right.

RL:

They sure was.

CM:

Let's go back to Avenue A, and you mentioned Mr. Goldstein had a pharmacy over there at Queen City—well, before we leave Queen City—Queen City was also noted for a lot of carousing on Saturday night.

RL:

Oh yeah, now Queen City, it was—some places, sometimes man, that was a dangerous spot to be in.



© Southwest Collection/
Special Collections Library

CM:

Okay, All right.

RL:

Yeah man, I remember some guy by the name of—I can't think his name right now—but anyway, that place had gotten so tough, one time man that the police was kind of scared to go over in there.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

They wouldn't go, and then this guy I'm talking about, I think he and a policeman got into it, and they got in a fight, and the guy took the policeman's gun and I guess the man got scared and he started running, and he started running the police.

CM:

Oh okay. Now of course, they didn't have a liquor license back then, because Lubbock was dry.

RL:

No, it was dry—

CM:

But, so we're—

RL:

But it was—

CM:

So the alcohol had to be bootleggers.

RL:

Lot of bootleggers man.

CM:

Lot of bootleggers over there.

RL:

Lot of bootleggers. And I guess one of the biggest bootleggers they had—

CM:
Yeah.

RL:
—in Lubbock, man, during that time was some brothers of them—oh, golly, I went to school with one of them girls—Gant—

CM:
Oh the Gants?

RL:
The Gants.

CM:
Okay and you're talking about Phillip Gant?

RL:
Phillip Gant.

CM:
Okay, yes.

RL:
Yeah, yeah, Phillip Gant.

CM:
Yeah.

RL:
And the law was always chasing him somewhere, man. He'd go get a load and come in somebody they'd be somewhere waiting on him.

CM:
Where would he get the alcohol from, Post or somewhere?

RL:
Well he would go down to Post, Amarillo.

CM:
Oh, okay.

© Southwest Collection/
Special Collections Library

RL:

I guess anywhere he could pick him up some.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

And he'd bring it back in and police would get after him, because they know what he was doing. And man, he'd give them a run for it. They'd be going across the fields—

CM:

Oh okay.

RL:

And kicking up dust—

CM:

Oh All right.

RL:

And everything man.

CM:

Now we mentioned you're a barber, and you've been a barber since when?

RL:

I've been a barber since April of 1959.

CM:

Okay. Where'd you go to school at?

RL:

I went to Tyler Barber College.

CM:

Tyler Barber—a lot of people there.

RL:

Tyler Barber College in Tyler, Texas.

© Southwest Collection/
Special Collections Library

CM:

Yes.

RL:

Yeah.

CM:

Quite a few of the barbers back then went to Tyler Barber College.

RL:

Yeah, in fact it'd been—they said one time most of the barbers in the United States went to Tyler Barber College.

CM:

Oh okay.

RL:

Yeah, old man Henry Morgan started that barber shop—

CM:

Oh okay.

RL:

That barber school.

CM:

Right.

RL:

And the reason why he started that is because the white barbershop wouldn't allow black barbers in they shop—

CM:

Okay.

RL:

To cut, not only black hair, but white folk's hair too.

CM:

Ah okay.

RL:

And see old man Morgan, that's the reason why he started that school.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

Is because he was real light, he looked kind of like a white man anyway, and so he went to work in one of these white shops that they had down there. And I guess they really didn't just know too much of the difference, but then he would cut black hair. But then he started cutting white folk's hair, and man they didn't like that.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

And so they found out that he was actually a black man.

CM:

Oh okay.

RL:

And they told him he had to go.

CM:

Well let's go back prior to the time that you started to be a barber in 1959. All right when you came here in '54, who were the barbers back then?

RL:

The barbers back then was Jimmy Blalock.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

Jimmy Bla—

CM:

I'm sure he's in the Blalock family.

RL:

Yeah, Blalock — Blalock and—

CM:

Where was he located, where was his store?

RL:

His barbershop, it was right there pretty close to old man Shields's barbershop.

CM:

Oh so it was on Avenue A also?

RL:

It was Avenue A, but he moved further down a little bit later on, on Avenue A, and I think that's where—I don't know whether Shirley started working there when she come out of school or not—because when Shirley and her first husband Butler came out of school, that's when I started—they were finishing.

CM:

Oh okay.

RL:

And so she started there with Blalock, and then I think later on another lady barber started work there, her name Mary Glenn.

CM:

Yes, okay yes I remember Mary Glenn. And when you go on years later—the seventies—Mary Glenn and Shirley Butler—her name's different now.

RL:

Oh yeah, right.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

Right.

CM:

She actually had a barbershop—they were at a barbershop on East Broadway and Court [?].

RL:

Yeah right there on the corner.

CM:

Two ladies.

RL:

Right, yeah, she and Mary—they had a barbershop right there on the corner there man.

CM:

And that had to be unusual, because you had women.

RL:

Yeah.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

It was two women, and it used to be a big, long row of apartments right there behind that shop.

CM:

Okay you're talking about East Broadway?

RL:

Yeah East Broadway.

CM:

Okay. Yes, yes sir I remember those. Okay, now you mentioned now—she probably started in the fifties then, before you started?

RL:

Yeah I think Shirley started cutting hair—

CM:

Okay.

RL:

No, she started cutting hair in '59, too.

CM:

Oh okay, she started in '59, too.

RL:

Uh-huh, '59 or '58, because see I went to barber school—I started in September of '58.

CM:

Yes.

RL:

Yeah, so when I started—yeah Shirley probably started in '58, she started a year before I did.

CM:

And the interesting thing about Shirley is that she was Miss Dunbar in 1954.

RL:

Yeah.

CM:

Yeah that's a interesting deal.

RL:

Yeah the same year we came to Lubbock.

CM:

Yeah she was Miss Dunbar in 1954.

RL:

Uh-huh, she was.

CM:

So, and Blalock's shop, you probably had Shirley there—was there anybody else there?

RL:

No that's the only somebody I remember working there was her.

CM:

Okay, now around the corner down on seventeenth, or either—I guess it had to be seventeenth—the Sedberry's, were they in business then?

RL:
Yeah.

CM:
Okay.

RL:
Yes, they had the barbershop and the funeral home.

CM:
Okay, and they had a café there?

RL:
They had a little restaurant there, too.

CM:
So we're talking about probably the two hundred block of Seventeenth Street, between Avenue B and C?

RL:
B and C.

CM:
And they were right next to the church.

RL:
Yeah.

CM:
Yeah.

RL:
Yeah it was right next to that church, and also there was a whole lot of apartment complexes—

CM:
Okay.

RL:
Right up in there that they built, a little bit later on too, because I think—

CM:

The flat-top, pink apartments?

RL:

Yeah, yeah.

CM:

Yes okay.

RL:

Uh-huh, yeah.

CM:

All right.

RL:

Sure did man.

CM:

Now something else you had down there prior to this, way before this before the Dunbar school was located in there because Mr. Will Sedberry.

RL:

Yeah.

CM:

And that church, which was torn down a few years ago, was Messiah Presbyterian.

RL:

Messiah Presbyterian.

CM:

But one time it was called Sedberry Church.

RL:

Yeah, sure was.

CM:

And the school actually had classes there.

RL:

Uh-huh.

CM:

So Sedberry had an operation, they cut hair also.

RL:

Yeah, right.

CM:

Wasn't there a beauty shop somewhere on there, didn't they have a beauty shop also?

RL:

Yeah, I think they had a beauty shop there.

CM:

Uh-huh.

RL:

In fact, I think Sedberry's wife was a beautician.

CM:

Oh okay.

RL:

She was a beautician and a barber, she cut hair too, in the shop too.

CM:

So they had a whole business that they had—the café—

RL:

Yeah they had a whole—café—

CM:

A barbershop—

RL:

And a barbershop, a funeral home—

CM:

A beauty shop, and they had a funeral home.

RL:

Funeral home, yeah.

CM:

And a church there.

RL:

Right, sure did. In fact the Sedberry's—

CM:

Uh-huh.

RL:

So I have been told, one of the first black families to ever move to Lubbock.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

Back then, them—and see this lady named Mrs. Green—

CM:

Okay.

RL:

She was one of the old timers that came, and old man Shields. And I think old man Shields came in during the time—ooh he came in back in 1915 or '16 or something.

CM:

Uh-huh. Now was his first name Ben Shields, or is that his son?

RL:

No that was his—Benjamin Shields, I believe that's what it was.

CM:

All right.

RL:
Yeah.

CM:
All right.

RL:
Now his son was named Willie Shields.

CM:
Oh okay.

RL:
Yeah, he had a son named Willie Shields.

CM:
Okay.

RL:
And he had a daughter, and his daughter was named—oh what was that woman's name—they called her Kelly, I think that was her nickname, they called her Kelly.

CM:
All right.

RL:
And right there across the street from the barbershop—

CM:
From Shields' barbershop, or from—

RL:
Yeah from Shields' barbershop.

CM:
Okay on Avenue A.

RL:
On Avenue A, yeah.

CM:
Okay.

RL:
Yeah there was a lady that had a café back there named Miss Ollie Mae.

CM:
Oh okay.

RL:
Yeah her name was Miss Ollie Mae, and she had two sons. One was named Draper—

CM:
Uh-huh.

RL:
And he was one of them bad actors, boy I tell you, he'd give that woman so much trouble.

CM:
Now as I understand it, the Flats—that we call them the Flats—they were bordered by East Broadway on the north, and then Avenue A on the east, and then you had Avenue D or F—

RL:
Yeah, Avenue—

CM:
or E—

RL:
B and C and all that—

CM:
And then you had Nineteenth Street on the south. But the Flats were not entirely bad, there were just certain areas of the Flats.

RL:
Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, I mean—now right along there was where the barbershop was man, now that was a tough area right there man.

CM:

Okay, between Seventh Street—

RL:

Seventeenth Street—

CM:

And Nineteenth—

RL:

And Eighteenth Street.

CM:

And Nineteenth Street.

RL:

Yes.

CM:

Yeah, okay.

RL:

See it was right next to the barbershop—

CM:

Uh-huh.

RL:

A guy had a shoeshine stand there.

CM:

Oh okay.

RL:

Yeah he had a shoeshine stand there.

CM:

This would have been on the west side? West side of the street?

© Southwest Collection/
Special Collections Library

RL:
Yeah.

CM:
Okay.

RL:
Yeah—

CM:
All right.

RL:
Would have been on the west side of the street.

CM:
All right.

RL:
And then on the other side of us, on the north side of us was Abram's Tea Room.

CM:
Ah, yes.

RL:
Anyway, had a little hotel like right there.

CM:
Yes, right.

RL:
And next to him was Lusk Boot Shop.

CM:
Okay, so yeah the north side of the street there and then, and that's you said you have a picture actually, that has the picture of Caviel's in that same area.

RL:
Same area right there.

CM:
Okay.

RL:
Yeah, where Lusk Boot Shop was at too, and Abram's Tea Room was right there.

CM:
And the building, the structure of Abram's Tea Room is still there—it's a different deal, but it's still there.

RL:
Still there, and later on they tore all that stuff down over there now. And then down the street on the corner of Avenue A and Nineteenth Street—

CM:
Yeah.

RL:
In fact right behind New Hope Baptist Church was a whole bunch of—well they wasn't no hotels, but they were houses.

CM:
Okay.

RL:
And they were painted green, a green house, but they had houses all down and through there.

CM:
Okay, now you're talking about on the south side of the street?

RL:
Yeah.

CM:
Yes okay.

RL:
Yeah uh-huh.

CM:

Yeah, and I don't know what the name of those were, but I've talked to people that lived in those.

RL:

Lived in those.

CM:

Yeah.

RL:

Yeah, yeah, I had some—

CM:

And, because I think on the corner of east Nineteenth—on Nineteenth, excuse me, I keep saying east, the west side is Nineteenth—Nineteenth and Avenue A on the northeast corner, there was a store there. They said the store was Mrs. Pinkston.

RL:

Yeah, yeah.

CM:

Yeah.

RL:

Yeah, it sure was.

CM:

Yeah.

RL:

If fact the business—where that store is on Nineteenth and A now?

CM:

Yes, Stripes.

RL:

Stripes.

© Southwest Collection/
Special Collections Library

CM:

Uh-huh.

RL:

It used to be a café there—

CM:

Wow, okay.

RL:

Or something like that, yeah, because I remember a guy got killed there one night, because another guy had a piece of his cake.

CM:

Wow, wow, this is—

RL:

Yeah got his piece of cake, man got into it, got into a fight, and he got shot.

CM:

Now, when you—

RL:

Oh, Lordy.

CM:

When you started down there—of course in Sedberry's I'm assuming that Mr. Elmo was in there cutting hair—

RL:

Oh yeah.

CM:

Yeah.

RL:

Yeah.

CM:

And I guess Mr.—

RL:

Yeah, when they wasn't doing bodies and things—

CM:

Yeah.

RL:

Or things like that there.

CM:

That's sort of like the western—

RL:

Yeah.

CM:

When you see the guy, he's a barber, but then he's also the undertaker.

RL:

Yeah.

CM:

It's the same man.

RL:

And really tell you, about a week in, man on Saturday night. Ooh, you're talking about cowboys and Indians man.

CM:

Yeah.

RL

I'll tell you, there was a few nights man, I left before it got dark. Because I knew what they'd been having.

CM:

And it's important to mention the fact that back then, they had the ambulance service too.

RL:

Oh yeah.

© Southwest Collection/
Special Collections Library

CM:

Because see that was before what we call EMS, so they actually picked the people up and took them to the hospital.

RL

Sure did.

CM:

So they had the ambulance service.

RL:

Yeah.

CM:

And the undertaker.

RL:

That's right.

CM:

And the barbershop.

RL:

That's right.

CM:

And the beauty shop.

RL:

Yeah.

CM:

So they had the complete service deal.

RL:

Right, and see Ms. Odessa Long, she had her little beauty school right across the street there, almost from the shop.

CM:

Yeah see that would have been on— Now, at one time she was on Avenue A?

RL:
Yeah—

CM:
Yeah.

RL:
Avenue A—

CM:
Yeah Avenue A—

RL:
Right there.

CM:
Yes, right there.

RL:
Right there.

CM:
Just to the north of Eighteenth Street.

RL:
Right.

CM:
Okay.

RL:
And then on the north side of that was where this old lady Green stayed.

CM:
Okay.

RL:
She was one of the latecomers of Lubbock too.

© Southwest Collection/
Special Collections Library

CM:

Okay, and the picture that you've got that you showed—so that would have been between—did she stay right next to Mr. Shields's hotel?

RL:

Yeah.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

Yeah.

CM:

All right.

RL:

Sure did.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

Sure did—

CM:

All right.

RL:

Man.

CM:

Mr. Shields—

RL:

Uh-huh.

CM:

And the clientele for the hotels—who was going to these hotels?



© Southwest Collection/
Special Collections Library

RL:

Well, most of the time when I'd be in the barbershop there working a lot of the time, you know, it'd be a lot of times people coming through town looking for a place to stay.

CM:

Okay, uh-huh.

RL:

And I guess somebody told them about old man Shields had a place—

CM:

Yeah.

RL:

And then he'd get up and go over there and tell him, give them a room or something, let them stay in, and whatever. And then I think also too, he kind of rented a few rooms—

CM:

Yeah.

RL:

For folks that just—

CM:

Yeah.

RL:

Want to do other things.

CM:

Yeah, and it's important to understand the time that we're looking at—the late fifties.

RL:

Late fifties and the early sixties man.

CM:

So you could not stay at the—they were not available to the African Americans.

RL:

African Americans.

CM:
Yeah.

RL:
No, they sure wasn't man. And if you stayed in the hotel, you was put I guess in the lowest places that they had around there.

CM:
Okay.

RL:
You sure wasn't fixing to stay in nothing that looked pretty nice, or nothing like that.

CM:
Now I've heard another instance down there in the Flats is that there were actual hobos back then because the railroad tracks were so close.

RL:
Oh yeah, yeah.

CM:
Yeah.

RL:
Yeah.

CM:
So you actually had hobos.

RL:
We had hobos.

CM:
We called them hobos, but people that rode the train—

RL:
Rode the train.

CM:
The freight trains and stuff.

© Southwest Collection/
Special Collections Library

RL:

Right, yeah man, I've seen a whole slew of them man.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

They had their little backpacks on, and they'd come and maybe buy something to eat from over there at the café or something like that.

CM:

Oh okay.

RL:

Yeah, and get their little stuff and walk on. Some of them would be walking south of Avenue A—

CM:

Yes.

RL:

And then some would walk like they was going downtown.

CM:

Oh, okay.

RL:

And going back north.

CM:

So it's a time where you actually saw the actual hobos?

RL:

Oh yeah, yeah.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

Sure did.

CM:

Now your shop was located on the east side of the street, and you said Mr. Deo owned the shop?

RL:

Yeah, yeah.

CM:

Or he owned the building?

RL:

He owned that building, uh-huh.

CM:

Okay, what was his first name?

RL:

Edward Deo.

CM:

Edward Deo.

RL:

Edward Deo.

CM:

Now, he was sort of—

RL:

See Edward Deo, he was a notary, he was a real estate guy—

CM:

Wasn't he one of the first black real estate brokers in town?

RL:

Yeah.

CM:

Okay.

© Southwest Collection/
Special Collections Library

RL:

Yeah because see they'd say his dad was known real well around here in West Texas man.

CM:

Okay, All right.

RL:

And see, and his dad—in fact his dad could speak fluent Spanish.

CM:

Oh okay.

RL:

Yeah, and Deo could speak Spanish pretty good too.

CM:

Wow.

RL:

He sure could, yeah.

CM:

So when you went into that shop, was there somebody in there—who was there when you went in, who was the first people?

RL:

Oh when I went in that shop, me and another guy named Rider, Matthew Rider—

CM:

Okay.

RL:

Went in that shop—

CM:

He's back in the fifties with you?

RL:

No, he came in the sixties. That's when that was.

CM:

Okay, All right, who was there when you first went into the shop? Is that when you first started?

RL:

Well yeah—no when I first started, I was over at old man—in fact the business, no Rider, when he first started cutting hair, he was over at old man Shields' too—we both went over there.

CM:

Okay so you were on the other side of the street?

RL:

Yeah, we went over there on the other side of the street—me, Rider—and well we had another barber in there named Mr. Blewitt. But Mr. Blewitt, he got sick and he passed away.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

And then another barber that worked in there, old man Shields' shop, was Wash Coleman—

CM:

Okay, yes.

RL:

Yeah Wash Coleman worked in there, and Wash, he left—

CM:

Yeah.

RL:

And then put him a little shop right there where that building is right there across from MLK.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

Right here.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

And but him, and then another barber that worked in there with me was Willie Anderson's brother.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

He lived up there in some little town on the other side of Midland.

CM:

So you had two or three barbers in here, and y'all all had business?

RL:

Oh yeah.

CM:

Oh okay.

RL:

Yeah.

CM:

You had a shoeshine guy in there too, right?

RL:

Well not in the shop.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

Not in the shop, but he was right next door to the shop.

CM:

Oh okay.

RL:

Right next door to the shop, yeah man.

© Southwest Collection/
Special Collections Library

CM:

Okay, so this wasn't Mr. Mason at Snappy Shine, this was just another guy?

RL:

This was another guy. Mr. Mason's shoe shine, Mr. Mason's was downtown somewhere.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

Yeah.

CM:

So he had a business there—

RL:

Yeah Mr. Mason, yeah—

CM:

Which was called—

RL:

He'd been a—

CM:

Yeah.

RL:

Ever since I knew him, he had a business downtown.

CM:

And he had a thriving business too.

RL:

Yes, he sure did. In fact, he moved twice downtown—he moved and he got another building, another place next to a building—it was a restaurant right there on Main Street.

CM:

Oh okay.

© Southwest Collection/
Special Collections Library

RL:

Let's see, what was the name of that restaurant—that was when they was beginning to—

CM:

Piccadilly?

RL:

Piccadilly.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

Yeah.

CM:

So he was—

RL:

Piccadilly man.

CM:

Yeah he was on—that would have been Main and K.

RL:

Yeah.

CM:

Yeah, the Piccadilly restaurant, I know what you're talking about, yes, it became a—

RL:

And see right along during about that time is—because see that's when they very began to start letting blacks go into the restaurants.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

And I never will forget that, because for a good long while, you couldn't go in there.

CM:
Okay.

RL:
Yeah you couldn't go in Piccadilly's.

CM:
Now that was J. B. Mason, right?

RL:
Yes, J. B. Mason.

CM:
Okay—in the picture of Dunbar, you'll see his house there, which had to be on like Avenue C. J. B. Mason—

RL:
Yeah I remember J. B. Mason's little old house right there, sure do man.

CM:
Yeah.

RL:
Yeah, he stayed right there in that little old house a long time.

CM:
Yeah, so his clientele was actually all colors.

RL:
Oh yeah.

CM:
Okay.

RL:
Well he had a whole lot of white people, he did a lot of boots and things.

CM:
Oh okay.

RL:

Old cowboys I guess, whatever men call themselves, you know.

CM:

Well I remember years later, that my dad would take shoes down there to get them dyed.

RL:

Oh yeah.

CM:

If you wanted them dyed a different color, you didn't buy a brown set of shoes, you got them dyed a different color.

RL:

Yeah, Mr. Mason learned how to do all that kind of stuff.

CM:

Okay, All right.

RL:

Yeah.

CM:

All right.

RL:

Sure did, and Willie Lusk—I learned a lot of stuff about Willie Lusk—he used to make boots, man, for movie stars—

CM:

Right.

RL:

People like that, I think he made a pair of boots for Liberace.

CM:

Oh okay.

RL:

And he said it cost him ten thousand dollars man—

CM:
Okay.

RL:
Back then.

CM:
And the story I've heard—he learned to do that boot making from another guy, so he did handmade.

RL:
Yeah, all handmade boots.

CM:
The picture that we're seeing, that we're going to post, which has Caviel's there—your shop's located next to that, but then also next to Mr. Lusk's in there. And at one time I read that Mr. Lyons was in there, when the dentist, the first dentist.

RL:
One of the first dentists, yeah.

CM:
Yeah.

RL:
Yeah he was in there, and then he moved around there—and I don't know what street that is—but anyway he moved. And also right there on the corner where the barbershop was—not on the south side of the street, but on the north side street—well now old man what's-his-name, he had a building there, it used to be a picture show right there on the corner right there.

CM:
Now and I think that was either—if it wasn't the Palace, or the Ritz—it may have been the Mickey Mouse. But yeah, you're right, it was on the corner—I never saw it, but I saw the foundation to it, on the corner of—that would have been Seventeenth—

RL:
Seventeenth. Yeah, Seventeenth Street.

CM:
On the southwest corner of Seventeenth Street and Avenue A—

RL:
Yeah.

CM:
There was another black picture show there.

RL:
Picture show right there.

CM:
Okay.

RL:
That's right.

CM:
All right.

RL:
And old man—what's his name owned that building—him and old man Waymon Henry, that's who owned that building.

CM:
Yeah, and we're talking about—

RL:
Yeah.

CM:
Now when we say Mr. Henry—Mr. Henry is interesting that he was a barber also, is that correct?

RL:
Yeah, yeah.

CM:
Where was his shop located at?

RL:
His shop was right across the street, kind of right up the street there from New Hope.

CM:

Okay, so he was on Birch Avenue—

RL:

Birch Avenue, right there, uh-huh.

CM:

And then he would have been between East Twentieth, and East Nineteenth Street.

RL:

Yeah, right.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

And see right down the street there was a big hotel right there down the street down there.

CM:

Oh really, that was a hotel there?

RL:

Yeah, and they used to call it the Mighty Man's Inn, yeah.

CM:

Mighty Man—

RL:

Mighty Man's Inn.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

Man yeah.

CM:

So I'm beginning to see there's a lot of hotels here.

RL:

Yeah man.

CM:

We talked about a hotel that was over in Queen City, and then I do remember that Mr. King had a hotel.

RL:

Yeah Mr. King had a hotel right there—

CM:

Yeah.

RL:

On the corner right there across the street from the club that—

CM:

Yeah.

RL:

What's his name had. And then over—

CM:

Carl Mannis? (38:58)

RL:

Yeah.

CM:

Yeah.

RL:

And over here on the Idalou Highway man, it was a hotel over there.

CM:

Okay, really?

RL:

But I don't know who owned that one. I think some white person.

CM:

Okay yeah.

RL:

Some white guy owned that though I think.

CM:

Now you mentioned there was a hotel on Birch Avenue?

RL:

Yeah.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

Yeah, well they call it a hotel, but yeah it was a hotel, it was a big old building down there.

CM:

Oh okay.

RL:

Several people—called it the Mighty Man's Inn.

CM:

Mighty Man Inn.

RL:

That was a rough spot too. That's where Hainey and Mainey got killed over there.

CM:

Oh that's where they actually got shot?

RL:

That's where they got shot at right there.

CM:

To let everybody know the story of this—there were two identical twins named Hainey and Mainey—

RL:

Hainey and Mainey.

CM:

Blalock.

RL:

Yeah, Blalock boys

CM:

So as I understand they got killed same night.

RL:

Same night.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

Sure did.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

Never forget that man, I remember that the next day. And I think the guy that shot them was some guy named Lafayette.

CM:

Oh okay.

RL:

Yeah.

CM:

All right.

RL:

He was one of them bad actors back in the day too.

© Southwest Collection/
Special Collections Library

CM:

Now Mr. Henry is significant in the history of East Lubbock, in that he was one of the ones that purchased the land for the Dunbar School, along with Mr. Will Sedberry, if you look at that, go back. But now who was in the shop with Mr. Henry?

RL:

I think Mr. Henry, I think—I believe I'm pretty right about this—I think the Kennan brothers started working for him.

CM:

Oh they did, okay.

RL:

I think the Kennan brothers started working with him. And then after that, they got out and got their own shop.

CM:

So we're talking about Mr. H. C. Kennan, Mr. D. C. Kennan.

RL:

D. C. Kennan.

CM:

And then so I'm assuming if they were on Birch and they move around the corner there to—it wouldn't have been Ash, but they moved next to in that same shopping center with Dillard's Store.

RL:

Yeah, yeah.

CM:

And they were there on East—

RL:

Yeah.

CM:

Just past the railroad tracks—

RL:

Railroad tracks.

CM:

Past Avenue A—

RL:

Yeah.

CM:

They were right there on East Nineteenth—

RL:

Yeah.

CM:

On the south side.

RL:

Right.

CM:

Okay, All right.

RL:

And see and right down the street there from Saint Luke, a man named Mr. Mayweather had a barbershop.

CM:

Okay, now wasn't he down by Dunbar field?

RL:

Yeah.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

Yeah, he was—

© Southwest Collection/
Special Collections Library

CM:

Dunbar had a field down there.

RL:

Had a field down there, and he was right across the street from it.

CM:

About East Twenty-Seventh.

RL:

Well—yeah.

CM:

East Twenty-Eighth—

RL:

yeah.

CM:

Somewhere in there.

RL:

Kind of like going to that oil mill right down there.

CM:

Yes, right, okay.

RL:

Yeah.

CM:

So and all these barbers had clientele?

RL:

Yeah, yeah.

CM:

You had people getting their hair—now—

© Southwest Collection/
Special Collections Library

RL:

Sure did.

CM:

How much were you charging back then?

RL:

Back then man, haircuts—when I first started cutting hair—haircuts was a dollar and a quarter.

CM:

Dollar and a quarter. And what kind of haircuts were you doing? You mentioned something about they were called a Joe Lewis?

RL:

Yes, Joe Lewis is just the same thing that we cut today, it's just a bowl fade, they call it a bowl fade, and it's the same thing as Joe Lewis.

CM:

And when I was coming up it was called a "chili bowl".

RL:

Yeah, a chili bowl.

CM:

So it was called a Joe Lewis?

RL:

Yeah, and it had three or four different names for the same haircut, man.

CM:

Wow, okay.

RL:

Yeah, sure did.

CM:

So a \$1.25.

RL:

\$1.25, and the barber license was two \$2.50.

CM:
Okay.

RL:
That's what the barber's license was.

CM:
Now what is interesting about that—in doing some research, I found out that there were a lot of people cutting hair that did not have the barber license.

RL:
Oh yeah, oh yeah.

CM:
So looking back with the barber association, all the black barbers in the association—it said somebody in there was instrumental in getting them to come here and get everybody to get licensed.

RL:
Yeah, yeah, because see at that time, the barber's association—there was a time, that if you got caught cutting hair like in your house, or something like that—that was a fine and jail time.

CM:
Wow.

RL:
Yeah man, and of course see they used to have people to come around—they would come from Austin—see that's where the barber's rules and regulations are written, down in Austin.

CM:
Right.

RL:
And because that's where sanitation and all like that and stuff like that.

CM:
So it was a health issue?

RL:
That's why we had to go to school.

CM:
Okay.

RL:
Had to start going to school, because it was unsanitary see?

CM:
Okay.

RL:
Because people had different types of hair problems.

CM:
Right.

RL:
Many of them had some type of dandruff that was—

CM:
Yeah.

RL:
And then you would take it off of your comb, put it on somebody else, and start something on them.

CM:
Well something that I was afraid of—and my mom would always tell me about don't wear other people—was ringworm.

RL:
Yeah ringworm.

CM:
Yeah.

RL:
Yeah that used to be pretty prevalent—

CM:
Yeah.

RL:

Then in barber shops man.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

I used to treat stuff like that all the time. I used to order a cream from—

CM:

It's ringworm, I said rangworm, it's ringworm.

RL:

Yes, I used to order a product from Dallas, from Crawford's Barber Supply, and they had that and it was a type of grease-like—but it was real good for that.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

Ringworm, yeah it'd get rid of it, but it had a nice little smell to it.

CM:

Oh okay.

RL:

Yeah.

CM:

Well I remember such things Calamine.

RL:

Yeah.

CM:

You put that grease on there, it stinked also.

RL:

Yeah.

CM:

Now, you had a—what we called processes back then?

RL:

Oh yeah, now I used to do a lot of that myself.

CM:

Tell us what a process is.

RL:

They used to call them conks.

CM:

Okay, a conk, and what was that?

RL:

A conk, that was just a lot of guys started mixing—it was a product that you mixed, you'd take some arsh potatoes, and I think you'd boil them and cook them or whatever, and then you would put a certain percent of lye in it.

CM:

Wow.

RL:

I mean just lye man.

CM:

Like lye soap.

RL:

Lye soap, and let it eat up all that potato and whatever, and make it creamy like. They'd make a cream out of it like, you know.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

And then they'd take it and put it on your hair, on your head and your hair. But you had to work fast with it, because man that stuff, once it get down to your scalp, it starts stinging you, starts stinging, and man if you let it stay on too long, it'd take your hair out.

CM:

And the purpose of this was the straighten the hair?

RL:

Straighten the hair.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

To make the hair straight, see?

CM:

A lot of young people don't know what that is, but if you look at old pictures of Sammy Davis—

RL:

Sammy Davis, and—

CM:

Jackie Wilson—

RL:

Jackie Wilson.

CM:

Yeah, Sam Cooke.

RL:

Sam Cooke.

CM:

You would see those that they had on their head.

RL:

Yeah a lot of those, The Drifters—

CM:

Yes, all the bands, and all the—yes.

© Southwest Collection/
Special Collections Library

RL:

Back in those days. Even one of the most popular bands back in the day that was going. Oh, man he was bigtime too. I can't think of his name, I know you know of him, man, real good. But he wore a process too.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

Yeah, when I first started barbering man, I used to a lot of that man. And all I got was five dollars a head.

CM:

Oh okay, five dollars a head for a conk.

RL:

Yeah, five dollars for a conk man.

CM:

Yeah huh.

RL:

And so at one time, man I got to doing this stuff so much, one time—and I was making it look pretty man, in fact, I was the only barber here in Lubbock that could do that.

CM:

Okay, wow.

RL:

Because see I could put in those waves.

CM:

Yes.

RL:

Some of them could just put it on there and make your hair straight.

CM:

Right.

RL:

But they couldn't wave it. And man they liked the way I was doing that. I got to fixing some of these jokers' hair man, and on weekends they'd go out—I don't know what they'd be doing—then they'd come up short.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

Or get put into jail, and looking trouble. I said, "Well man, what are y'all doing?" So man, and at one time, I was doing it so much, until over at that oil mill right across the street over the from us—

CM:

Yes.

RL:

There were some guys worked over there, and I would do their hair, but they would get off their jobs, and they'd walk out the gate and get arrested by the police.

CM:

Really?

RL:

Yeah, I said, "Well man what are y'all getting arrested for?" "Man they didn't like us wearing them rags on our head."

CM:

Ah—

RL:

I said, "Oh man."

CM:

Because you'd have to have what we'd call a do-rag.

RL:

A do-rag.

CM:

A scarf, yeah.

RL:

Oh man, they crazy, I said. "No, they going to have to stop that—"

CM:

Ah okay.

RL:

"That's messing with my business."

CM:

Okay.

RL:

And that's what I told you, I went down to the city hall and I told somebody, I don't know who that guy was that the police was arresting these fellows coming out of the oil mill when they get off work. And I said now that's messing with my business, and do you know why I noticed that? A couple of guys told me, and they came in and they said, "Man we got to get this cut off." I said, "Cut off of what?" "Well man," they said, "These do-rags we're wearing on our heads man. They said we ain't supposed to have that." I said, "Man that's bull corn, they can't do that. Y'all working, you ain't stealing, nothing like that there."

CM:

Right.

RL:

But anyway, whoever was in charge, I told him—they stopped that.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

They sure did. Yeah, I went down and said, "I'm going to go talk to somebody."

CM:

Okay. Now, how long did you stay at Mr. Shields' barbershop?

RL:

At Shields' barbershop, I stayed at Mr. Shields' barbershop I think about four years.

CM:

So then you moved across the street?

RL:

And then I went across the street, because Deo used to come over and I used to cut his hair a lot.

CM:

Okay, All right.

RL:

So that building that he had—I forgot—he had a lot of space over there, he said, “Hey Ralph, you want to come across the street? I’m going to put a barbershop in there. Everything’s going to be brand new—new chairs and everything.” I said, “Oh man, yeah, sure.” I said, “Okay”, so he did that man, put in everything, nice and everything. And so when he got through with it, I went over there and looked at it, and man it looked a whole lot better than when I was over there at Mr. Shields’ you know.

CM:

Mr. Shields’ place.

RL:

So I let Mr. Shields know I was going to go over there, about—oh maybe about two or three weeks before I did.

CM:

How much rent did Mr. Shields charge you?

RL:

I think back during that time man, Mr. Shields was charging me fifteen dollars a week.

CM:

Okay, which was a lot.

RL:

Yeah it was a lot then.

CM:

Yeah, that is a lot.

RL:

When I got out of school, Cosby, man, I came—and well after old man Shields told me what he was going to charge me, man. The first three months I had a little money saved up after I got out of school, and if it hadn't been for that, man I couldn't have paid my rent. And so I started cutting hair for him—it must have been around about September, October, maybe—anyway, it was about two or three months before Thanksgiving.

CM:

All right.

RL:

And so I was sitting down and talking to him one day, and so I said, “Well I guess I'm going to have to get me a little advertising, get me some cards or something like that.” And he said, “Ah son, you ain't got to be doing nothing like that.” He said, “The best advertising you can do is just do some good work.”

CM:

Ah, okay.

RL:

Man that's been with me ever since man.

CM:

Ah.

RL:

And so the more I cut, the better I got.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

And so man I guess around Thanksgiving I had a real good month that month. And then at Christmas time, man I had done so much work, man. I said, “Golly man,” I said, “Oh shit!” Because see I had thought about kind of quitting.

CM:

Yes.

RL:

And so I said, "Well if I can make out to the first year, and make enough to where I can pay my rent, I guess I can just hang on in here."

CM:

Okay.

RL:

Well man I was making way more than what my rent was going to be man. So I decided, I said, "Well I think I better stick with this."

CM:

Now, fast forward, when you moved across the street, I guess towards the late sixties, a new haircut comes in: the afro.

RL:

The afro, yeah.

CM:

Now you mentioned you were over there with Mr. Matthew Rider.

RL:

Yeah, Matthew.

CM:

And Mr. Matthew Rider had the reputation of—the fro was his job. I mean everybody knew, you'd get a fro from him.

RL:

It didn't matter, Matthew also would fix that hair too. Rider, he fixed women's hair, man—

CM:

Okay.

RL:

And everything.

CM:

All right.

RL:

Man yeah, and he had lots of customers come in man. I didn't particularly to much want to be fooling with a lot of women, man. Because I didn't want to be getting fussed about you cut off too much of their hair. Of course Rider though, Rider was sort of a, kind of a racketeer fellow. He was off into a lot of other kind of stuff man. But man—his brother came and worked with us for a little while.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

He had a brother that went to barber school.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

But it was him and another barber named Mr. Thomas.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

I think he might have been on one of them pictures I had.

CM:

Okay, All right.

RL:

But anyway, he was from Waco, and then he worked with us for a good long while. And then he left and went back to Waco because he got sick.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

And then he went back there and started working there, and it wasn't too long that he had passed away.

CM:

Well it's important to remember where you were located at. So you were located in the thick of things, in the Flats.

RL:

In the Flats man, I'm telling you.

CM:

So tell us about some of the things that went on over there on Saturday nights, right in that particular area, Eighteenth Street and Avenue A.

RL:

Well see, right around the corner there, I guess about maybe thirty, or forty, fifty yards up a little bit—well maybe not quite that far—it was a white man, he owned a store there, that was a big old store there, man. But now Saturday nights, man that's when a lot of people was out here picking cotton. I used to work on a lot of guys that would be coming into town from off being out in the fields you know.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

And man they'd come into town, get their haircut, man get their hair fixed and all that kind of stuff.

CM:

Yeah.

RL:

Then that's when they had The Cotton Club right here on Slaton Highway.

CM:

Yes, on Slaton Highway.

RL:

Slaton Highway.

CM:
Yeah.

RL:
That's what they was going, that's where they had dances and all that kind of thing. And then they also had a place out here going towards Idalou, they called the—oh, gosh—

CM:
The Palm Room?

RL:
Palm Room.

CM:
Yes okay.

RL:
There we go.

CM:
All right.

RL:
Yeah.

CM:
Okay.

RL:
Yeah the Palm Room.

CM:
Yeah, All right, used to have a big elephant on top of it.

RL:
Yeah, but I didn't really know where that place was at man.

CM:
It's way out almost to 1729.

© Southwest Collection/
Special Collections Library

RL:

Oh yeah.

CM:

The building's still there.

RL:

Still there?

CM:

Yeah.

RL:

Yeah man, I didn't go out of course, I wasn't no clubber no way.

CM:

Yeah.

RL:

But now, the Cotton Club and the Palm Room was what they all would go in.

CM:

Yeah, did you ever go to the Cotton Club?

RL:

I think I went there once.

CM:

What's interesting about that—the people that came to the Cotton Club, I mean the performers—Ike and Tina Turner, B. B. King—they had some performers that later on in their careers were big people.

RL:

Oh yeah, big people man, yeah, because I worked on one of the guys man that came here to Lubbock—Bobby “Blue” Bland.

CM:

Oh okay.

RL:

Bobby "Blue" Bland.

CM:

All right.

RL:

And I fixed Bobby "Blue" Bland's hair.

CM:

Yeah.

RL:

Sure did.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

Yeah.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

Bobby "Blue" Bland.

CM:

Bobby "Blue" Bland, a blues singer, Bobby "Blue" Bland.

RL:

Blues singer, yeah man. I fixed on his hair, and then I fixed on a lady's hair that was a singer too.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

But I can't think of who she was.



© Southwest Collection/
Special Collections Library

CM:

So the people picking cotton would come into town—so we're looking at a situation that's very similar when you watch an old western, are the people in a roundup coming in to town, and going to the saloon, so you have a similar situation.

RL:

Same old kind of situation, man, that's right. They'd come to town, man, and get their hair fixed, and then they'd go back home, get themselves all spruced up, dressed up, whatever, and then they'd go out to the club.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

And man they used to have Bobby "Blue" Bland, essentially every time he come to town man, there was going to be a fight. And I'll be doggone, every time he came, there was a fight, too.

CM:

Oh, man.

RL:

Boy he'd get to singing them songs, and some of those old sisters, boy—

CM:

The blues.

RL:

Yeah.

CM:

Yes.

RL:

You'd get a thing about what they going through and whatever.

CM:

Lost my job, yes okay.

RL:

Boy and somebody done got mad at somebody, a boyfriend or something, and then there's a fight go, boy.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

Yeah.

CM:

All right.

RL:

Man, I tell you it's true.

CM:

All right.

RL:

Yeah, the trouble I've seen. Then one evening I was cutting hair, and one evening down there, and there was a big old window right there you saw in that picture right there.

CM:

Right.

RL:

But anyway, man I was standing up there, and all of a sudden, here come this woman and this man, and she had a knife, and she kept sticking him right in the back with it man, and he wouldn't turn around and trying to fight her or nothing. And so finally somebody from behind her—it was kind of a two-by-four laying out there a little bit—he got it and hit her and knocked her down man. He said, "Man why ain't you doing nothing to fight this woman man?" He said, "Ah man, I don't want to be fight—" "Yeah, but she cutting on you though." (laughter) And then one time, Cosby man, I was standing up there at the window man, and it was two older fellows that I had customers, they was coming down this way from Caviel's Pharmacy. And when they got almost to the barbershop, man somebody started shooting and going on.

CM:

Very interesting time.

RL:

Yeah man, and then all of a sudden I hear that door come open man, they said—

CM:

Ah, okay.

RL:

And they both were trying to come through the door at the same time.

CM:

Interesting time.

RL:

I said, “Man what’s the matter? What’s wrong with y’all?” He said, “Man some dope out here shooting.” (laughter) Oh boy.

CM:

It’s interesting to say that you also worked at the post office—how many years?

RL:

Yeah I stayed at the post office thirty-one and a half years.

CM:

Thirty-one and a half years. When did you start there?

RL:

I think I started there December of ’67.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

Yeah.

CM:

All right.

RL:

Because I started there in December of ’67—

CM:

All right.

RL:

And then I retired in January of '97.

CM:

Oh okay, All right.

RL:

Yeah, sure did.

CM:

So you had a couple of careers there.

RL:

Yeah.

CM:

You mentioned you graduated from Dunbar in '59, or '58.

RL:

No, I graduated from Dunbar in '57.

CM:

'57, so you were actually in the class with Venita Woods—

RL:

Yeah Venita Holmes, Venita Woods.

CM:

Benny Johnson?

RL:

Benny Johnson.

CM:

Benny Sims now.

RL:
Right.

CM:
Mary Jo Wilson.

RL:
Mary Jo Wilson—sure did.

CM:
Some of the leaders in the community—

RL:
Yeah.

CM:
—over there, y'all were in the same class.

RL:
Same class.

CM:
Yeah.

RL:
Sure was.

CM:
So you were there also at the time—but you didn't graduate with him—but with Floyd Price and Theodore Price.

RL:
Floyd Price, yeah Floyd and Theodore Price, yeah—

CM:
Okay, All right.

RL:
The Price boys. In fact of being, they used to live right over behind us—

© Southwest Collection/
Special Collections Library

CM:
Okay.

RL:
When we lived on that street right across from school.

CM:
East Twenty-Fourth?

RL:
Twenty-Fourth—yeah, East Twenty-Fourth.

CM:
Yeah, right, yeah, East Twenty-Fourth.

RL:
And, yeah we lived—and like I said, in one of old man Snodgrass's houses.

CM:
Okay, yeah, and I remember over there—and I got that wrong because I said Snodgrass was selling houses, but I remember Mr. Snodgrass had a lot of houses—

RL:
Yeah, he had a lot of houses.

CM:
And he had a car lot down there, but then Wilkinson also had a bunch of property in there also.

RL:
Yeah, yeah, right. And right across the street from us, lived the Cages.

CM:
Ah, okay.

RL:
Yeah Miss Cage.

CM:
Yes, and she had quite a few kids.

RL:

Yeah, Miss Cage, and yeah she had about three or four boys I think.

CM:

Yeah—I'm the same age as her youngest kids.

RL:

And two or three—of course one of her girls is on one of them pictures there.

CM:

Oh okay.

RL:

Yeah, and of course she was a barber too.

CM:

Miss Cage?

RL:

Not Miss Cage, her daughter was.

CM:

Wow, I didn't know that.

RL:

Yeah, uh-huh.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

Yeah she's in one of them pictures right there.

CM:

Yeah, one of her daughters.

RL:

One of her daughters Miss Cage.

CM:

Now we talk about the women being barbers, but also at this time, or somewhere along the line, there was a shop where Miss Nettie Lou Gatson was a female barber.

RL:

Yeah, Miss Nettie Lou, when I first knew her, she was working with the man that had that barbershop down there by St. Luke.

CM:

Okay, Mayweather?

RL:

Mayweather.

CM:

Mayweather, okay.

RL:

Yeah, and now that's where I saw Nettie Lou. That's where she worked down there with him for a good long while.

CM:

Okay, and then she ended up in a barber with three women, Mrs. Nathan—

RL:

Yeah, Mrs. Nathan, and—

CM:

And Mrs. Ernestine Harris.

RL:

Ernestine Harris.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

Sure did.

CM:

All right.

RL:

Yeah man I remember that real good. And then there was another lady that used to work with Paul and Joe. What in the world was her name? I called her name the other day. Was it Geraldine, Geraldine something. Anyway, but she left him, went to Amarillo—she was a tall lady.

CM:

Oh okay, All right, so you had quite a few ladies.

RL:

Yeah, yeah, we had quite—and there was another lady—I can't think of her name because I didn't really get to know her too well—she was a lady too, she worked up there with Paul for a while too. She was kind of a heavy-set lady.

CM:

Oh okay, All right, okay.

RL:

Yeah at one time man it was a whole bunch of barbers here in Lubbock, but then there was a whole lot of us here too, and we had plenty clientele.

CM:

And you say that because I know my mother was a beautician for almost fifty years. She went to Mrs. Long's school and there was a lot of beauticians. Where she had her shop at, right there next to the USO, or the community center on Cedar, within three blocks or four blocks, there were at least six beauticians.

RL:

Oh yeah man.

CM:

Mrs. Fair, Mrs. Goldstein—

RL:

Yeah Mrs. Fair, Mrs. Goldstein, and—

CM:

I heard Mrs. Meniffee had a shop—

RL:

Yeah.

CM:

Mrs. Jessie May Taylor had a shop. And they all had customers.

RL:

Yeah, and then this barber here also worked with Paul too—well they called him Brother all the time.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

Blanton.

CM:

Yes, okay, yeah.

RL:

Blanton, yeah, Blanton.

CM:

Okay yes.

RL:

And see and his wife, she had a beauty shop right next door to the—

CM:

Right, yeah.

RL:

To the barbershop there, yeah.

CM:

Because my mother was using it because of the beauty shop there, Ms. Blanton, yeah I remember that.

RL:

Yeah Ms. Blanton, uh-huh.

CM:

Okay, yeah, okay.

RL:

Yeah, and then this lady—well of course she's not working in a shop I don't think now. I don't guess she is—her name was Blanche.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

Now I don't know whether Blanche is her real name or not.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

But anyway, she fixed hair out of her house.

CM:

Wow.

RL:

She's still over there too. You know where that hamburger stand is over like you going toward on the Idalou Highway?

CM:

Yes.

RL:

Highway over there?

CM:

Yes, okay.

RL:

Yeah, now she stays right down the street from it.

CM:

Oh okay, yeah.

RL:

Her name Mrs. Blanche, but now they got things kind of tore up all over there right now.

CM:

And what was interesting about that years ago I remember my mother dealing with that. You could not actually have the barbershop, or the beauty shop in your house. They had a separate deal.

RL:

Well you could have a beauty shop in your house—

CM:

But it had to be separated with a wall of some kind.

RL:

Yeah, yeah. But of course today with the same thing, you couldn't ever have no barbershop in your house.

CM:

Yeah, now what's really interesting—Mrs. Billie Bowman. Mrs. Billie Bowman actually had moved down across from Mrs. Fair there, down by the Pleasure Garden. And in her house, she had a bedroom back there, but then what she had was in the closet that was actually cut out, and you could go through the closet to get into the bedroom. I just remember that, it was interesting that kind of deal.

RL:

Yeah, well I mean we had our way of doing things back in those days man I'll tell you. A lot of memories man.

CM:

Yes.

RL:

Yes sir, but it was a lot of black people here in Lubbock, and especially on the east side man. I mean we had businesses and things over here.

CM:

Right, just looking I saw a lot of stores, I knew of a lot of stores, but there were other stores there.

RL:

Yeah, and see what's-his-name, he had a store right up there on Broadway at one time, a long time ago—R. J. Gibbon's wife's brother.

CM:

Yeah, Joe Middleton.

RL:

Joe Middleton.

CM:

Yes.

RL:

Yeah, he had a store there, yeah sure did man.

CM:

And then if you look at East Twenty-Fifth where Mr. Gibbons was living at across the bridge there, over here now there's a bridge—but there was a store in the middle of that block called Seiber Heights, the grocery store, and then Ms. Titea [?].

RL:

Ms. Titea [?] yeah, Ms. Titea [?] right there.

CM:

She had a store right—yeah.

RL:

Sure did.

CM:

Yeah, right there by the ballpark.

RL:

Yeah.

CM:

Yes.

RL:

And then T. J. Patterson, his auntie, she was a beautician—

CM:

Rose, yeah—

RL:

And she had a little old—

CM:

Mrs. Rose—

RL:

Little old store right there—

CM:

April Rose—

RL:

place, yeah—

CM:

Yeah.

RL:

April Rose.

CM:

Yeah, and then because actually you get into that, that's right across where Struggs is at.

RL:

Struggs is now.

CM:

On East Twenty-Fourth.

© Southwest Collection/
Special Collections Library

RL:
Yeah.

CM:
And she was a beautician also.

RL:
Sure was.

CM:
And then Mary Mack was in the back of the building

RL:
Back of the building, Mary Mack.

CM:
Yeah.

RL:
Before they moved over there and built that other place over there.

CM:
Yeah, right.

RL:
Yeah.

CM:
When they moved on to the Queen City area.

RL:
Queen City area, yeah, yeah.

CM:
Yeah, okay, and you right, I never thought about that—even over there in our neighborhood, we had Gambles Barbeque, then you had Ms. Jocelyn's store, Ms. Shugg had a store, and numerous—Dillard had a store, Tramble had a store down there—

RL:
Oh yeah.

CM:

Ms. Pinkston had a store, I think Ms. Worthing had a store, Goldstein had moved back over in that area, he had one.

RL:

And see and another thing, see when Dr. Chatman was living, he used to be one of my customers.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

I used to work on Dr. Chatman.

CM:

Dr. J. A. Chatman, yes.

RL:

Yeah, J. A. Chatman.

CM:

Yeah.

RL:

And I got to talking to him one time, and Dr. Chatman, he used to own a whole lot of property here in Lubbock, Dr. Chatman.

CM:

Right.

RL:

In fact of business, he said some white man gave him fifty acres of land—

CM:

Wow.

RL:

For curing the claps on him or something like that.

CM:
Wow.

RL:
A disease or something, and of course over there where Patterson got his little newspaper place.

CM:
There are apartments right behind there, and he called them for Jolene, they were named for his daughter that passed away. Yes, okay.

RL:
Yeah all that was his too, see?

CM:
And you look at that—him and John Fair, old man Fair's dad—

RL:
Old man Fair, yeah.

CM:
And then you also look at Mr. Struggs—they all owned a bunch of property, and rental property right there, little houses.

RL:
Yeah, they did.

CM:
We called them shotgun houses.

RL:
Yeah, yeah, sure did, they sure did man.

CM:
Yeah.

RL:
Yeah, I knew all about that time man.

CM:

Yeah and see you go back down into that area where the Pleasure Garden was on East Twentieth there, of course the nursery was down there—

RL:

Yeah the Pleasure Garden, yeah—

CM:

The nursery moved into Bob Hamilton and them's store.

RL:

Oh yeah.

CM:

On East Twentieth right there between Railroad Avenue—

RL:

Right.

CM:

And off of Elm there, there was Bob Hamilton that had a store there.

RL:

He sure did.

CM:

And the nursery first moved into there before they moved down where you lived at.

RL:

Yeah, yeah, right, yeah sure did.

CM:

That's now called the Carver Heights Nursery.

RL:

Carver Heights Nursery, right.

CM:

Yeah, but back then it was the colored Nursery.

RL:
Yeah.

CM:
Okay, All right.

RL:
It sure was.

CM:
There was a lot of businesses, quite a few.

RL:
Yeah man.

CM:
Yeah.

RL:
We had a lot of businesses in this town.

CM:
Yeah.

RL:
We sure did.

CM:
And I think—and you might think the same thing—but the urban renewal caused a lot of problems.

RL:
Yeah man, urban renewal come through here, and they just knocked out everything man.

CM:
Yes.

RL:
They sure did, because I know a lady, she had a business—I can't think of her name right now—but anyway, she didn't want to move—you could have kept your place—

CM:
Right.

RL:
If you could have brought it up to standards.

CM:
Right.

RL:
But see, back in those days, most of our people, we didn't have that kind of money.

CM:
Right, yes.

RL:
And then they wouldn't let you have—well, they would let a few of you have some money, but what they did—they let you have enough money for you not to be successful with it.

CM:
Ah okay.

RL:
See—

CM:
All right.

RL:
And that's the way they did this lady, I can't think of her name, but they bought her out and gave her enough money to get her another house, but the money that they gave her, she had to have a note with it.

CM:
Oh okay.

RL:
And she wasn't able to pay the note, so therefore she lost her house after they done built her house man.

CM:

Ah, okay, All right.

RL:

So man I mean back then man, boy they figured that thing out, well we going to have to get those blacks out moving. Now, in one sense or the other, the same thing is happening again.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

Now this lake right down here—

CM:

Right.

RL:

Now they really want the east side now—

CM:

Right.

RL:

Is because of this lake, this is the most beautiful area of the lake—

CM:

It's the only place pretty much in town that you have the features of the hills and so forth.

RL:

Yeah, right.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

And it's a lot of history down in through there too. See, up to a certain point down there, that's where the Buffalo Soldiers fought the Indians.

CM:

Ah, yes, yeah in Yellow House Canyon.

RL:

In Yellow House Canyon, yeah man.

CM:

Right.

RL:

So that's why they had a little old controversy between us and the Spanish folks.

CM:

Right.

RL:

They wanted it to be Cesar Chavez all the way.

CM:

Yes.

RL:

We said, "Oh no, uh-huh, we got history in there too, we don't want that covered up."

CM:

Yeah, in fact I think—well there's actually a sign that depicts an Indian battle, whichever over here in Mae Simmons Park.

RL:

Yeah.

CM:

Coming around that curb in lake number five I believe, whatever that lake is.

RL:

Yes, yeah, right.

CM:

That's interesting.

RL:

Yeah, we told them, "No, maybe if it was Broadway over there."

CM:
Yeah.

RL:
“But that’s as far as you can come.”

CM:
Well we’ve covered a lot tonight Mr. Leggett, and I’ve really appreciate it. There’s more than we can cover, and what I’m going to do is I’m going to look at these pictures, I’m going to make a copy of them, but we’re going to talk more, because I want to come and talk to you at the barbershop and stuff.

RL:
Oh yeah, okay, yeah, yeah, yeah man, because these dumb young fellows, they don’t know nothing about all this stuff.

CM:
Oh no, no, no, no, and it was interesting the other day when we were there. So I want to come up there and just sit around and talk to you sometime, and which I’ll do, while you’re working up there because one of the things you do that a lot of barbers don’t do anymore is that straight razor.

RL:
Yeah, yeah that’s right.

CM:
See, they’ve gotten away from that now—

RL:
Yeah you sure don’t see that no—

CM:
Because I think the last time I had a straight razor was—well Mr. Gibson, because they just don’t do that anymore.

RL:
No man, they don’t—you go on these big cities now—if you see a straight razor. Then in there, because we’ve had some people come in from out of town, even from up out of some state someplace, “Man y’all still using a straight razor?” He says, “Yeah man, the haircut don’t look like a haircut letting you guys straight razor on it.”

CM:

Yeah, yep. I used to love that, because when they'd get the straight razor, they put that alcohol or whatever on there—I loved that man.

RL:

Yeah man, yeah man, make sure you don't any bumps or anything.

CM:

And they take that brush with the powder in it, yeah.

RL:

Yeah, and see our sterilization—and this has gotten to be where if you ain't using a straight razor, it's a no-no practically now, because ain't nobody using it, and that's kerosene.

CM:

Oh okay.

RL:

That's what we use to sterilize our clippers and things with is kerosene man.

CM:

Wow, okay.

RL:

And it ain't a whole lot of places you can buy that.

CM:

Right.

RL:

You sure ain't man.

CM:

They still have the restrictions for the sterilization of the equipment?

RL:

Oh yeah, yeah.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

You got to have sterilization now. Because see, you get in a certain—at least I have, we all do—and so you get in such a habit, that when if you working on somebody, you automatically just get that little brush and brush off your clippers.

CM:

Yes.

RL:

We dip it in that kerosene see—

CM:

Ah okay.

RL:

And clean the clippers off with it, you see, and so it's not something that you hate to do. It's just something you like to do, because you want to keep your customers clean and everything.

CM:

And that's something that you just don't think about. Because I know my mother had been a beautician, she had to sterilize, and you just don't think, but you're dealing with the hair—because especially if you shave—

RL:

Oh yeah.

CM:

And you have blood and all that kind of stuff.

RL:

Yeah, that's right.

CM:

Yeah.

RL:

That's the truth man, and see, and you never know what type—I know a guy got in my chair one time man—

CM:
Yeah.

RL:
Well he started to get in my chair, but then I noticed a whole bunch of sores all over his face and his neck, and what and ever, and they were kind of running like.

CM:
Wow.

RL:
And then I looked at him, I said, "Brother look here, you're going to have to go to a doctor. He said, "Really?" I said, "Yeah man." And what he had was really syphilis.

CM:
Ah, yes.

RL:
And man that was a bad disease at one time or the other man.

CM:
And see you just don't think about that when you deal with barbershop, you don't realize that y'all are going to have to deal with that.

RL:
Yeah, you got to deal with that kind of stuff.

CM:
Yeah.

RL:
Because see we had to deal with that, and people having canker sores, and—

CM:
Yes.

RL:
And real bad dandruff.

CM:

I guess simply because we have greasy scalps, you don't get the lice, but I'm sure in other places you get the lice too.

RL:

Oh, yeah we've had I think back in the day a couple of persons—well no, back in the day, it ain't been too many years ago, child came to the barbershop—this was a girl I think, and she had lice in her hair.

CM:

Ah.

RL:

Yeah.

CM:

See you just don't think about that.

RL:

No, but you that's the purpose, and one of the reasons why we got to go to school, is because when I went to barber school man, they gave us books and things, and you know about the endocrine system—

CM:

Yes.

RL:

The bone system, and the secretory system—I said, “We got to study all this just to cut hair?” But see, it's very important to know that.

CM:

Right.

RL:

Because you got to know what you're looking at, you see? And then a lot of times man, people will ask you, they'll get in a chair, but now you got to know the signs and things—like alopecia, that's a skin disease.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

See, and you don't want to be putting your clippers and things up in there man, and then putting them on somebody else.

CM:

Well in closing here, there's one last thing I wanted to talk about with the barbershop—I've always—and I joke about it now—I get my information from the barbershop. Because the barbershop, you've got all clientele in there, you have all walks of life coming in there.

RL:

Yeah, that's right, coming in the barbershop man.

CM:

And being a black barbershop, you get people from out of town—

RL:

Out of town.

CM:

The black guys coming to town—

RL:

That's right.

CM:

But you see everybody—from the preacher to the basketball players—

RL:

Yeah, oh yeah.

CM:

They come into the barbershop.

RL:

Right, and not only that—we get all races in the barbershop.

CM:

Ah, okay.

© Southwest Collection/
Special Collections Library

RL:

Spanish, white—we cut everybody's hair man.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

Women and all that.

CM:

And that has changed over the years?

RL:

Oh yeah.

CM:

Yes.

RL:

Yeah it's changed over the years man, and in fact now we have some Spanish guys man, they won't let nobody cut their hair but us.

CM:

Ah.

RL:

“And man those Spanish barbers, they can't cut hair like this man.” I said. “Well this is us man, we the best.”

CM:

And what's gets me is that no matter how—because I've seen posters where the athletes of West Texas, the boxers and so forth—but they go to the barbershop—everybody has to go to the barbershop.

RL:

That's right, that's right.

CM:

So no matter what your money situation is, what your notoriety is—you go to the barbershop.

RL:

That's right—even the president got to go to the barbershop.

CM:

You got to go to the barbershop.

RL:

And see—

CM:

Yeah.

RL:

Another thing, Cosby see, because see a lot of people don't know, but barbers, way back in the late 1700s, barbers used to be doctors too.

CM:

Ah, okay.

RL:

Yeah see—

CM:

Yeah.

RL:

We used to operate what they called bloodletting

CM:

Ah, yes, right—like when leeches took the place of that.

RL:

Yeah.

CM:

Yes, okay.

RL:

Yeah.

© Southwest Collection/
Special Collections Library

CM:

Yeah, right.

RL:

Yeah man.

CM:

Right.

RL:

And then in the old cowboy days, cowboy and Indian days, you know. If a cowboy, if he got shot—

CM:

Yeah.

RL:

First place he'd take him to was the barbershop.

CM:

Yeah, yeah.

RL:

And they'd hold him down—if he got a bullet in him, you know—

CM:

Yeah.

RL:

They'd pull his—oh, what'd they call it—sarsaparilla—

CM:

Yeah.

RL:

Back in the day, you know, to dead the pain of the whatever.

CM:

Do y'all still use Bay Rum?

RL:

Yeah, yeah.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

We still use that Bay Rum. I haven't used it in a good long while, because that stuff got to getting so high, but you can still order it though. Yeah Bay Rum, man.

CM:

You know, in school, in high school, if there's no alcohol, the Bay Rum.

RL:

Bay Rum man.

CM:

And we always called somebody he's a Bay Rum drinker.

RL:

Yeah, and I mean I used to buy a lot of that stuff man, but people got to drinking that stuff.

CM:

Yes, yes.

RL:

And so I guess that's why now they don't carry too much.

CM:

Yeah that's the old Bay—I remember Bay Rum.

RL:

Yeah Bay Rum, yeah, there's a nice smell to it. I'm going to have to order me some of that, I ain't had none of that in a long time, yeah old Bay Rum man, that's one of the first things we be—Bay Rum and there was another one, it's kind of green-colored like—haven't used it in so long, I done forgot what I used to use now.

CM:

Well I think what they used was tonic water.

RL:

Yeah, tonic water.

CM:

Yeah.

RL:

Yeah tonic water man.

CM:

Yeah.

RL:

Yeah they use to use—

CM:

Yeah.

RL:

They used that stuff way back in the day.

CM:

Yeah, because I remember that, because I always used to like when they'd take the scissors man, and cut across right there with the scissors, and then they put the powder in the brush—

RL:

And see that's another thing too, you know the barbers sometimes that I work with up there, you know I use scissors a lot too—

CM:

Right, right.

RL:

And they don't use scissors too much.

CM:

Right.

RL:

Victor, he uses scissors a little bit.

CM:

What's Victor's last name?

RL:

Hatchet

CM:

Hatchet, okay.

RL:

Yeah, old man Hatchet's son.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

And so but they learned a lot from what I do. You know, what I've done.

CM:

Right.

RL:

They'd ask questions and things, and so Victor, we got where our association started giving away scholarships.

CM:

Oh okay.

RL:

And so Victor is the first somebody we ever gave a scholarship to.

CM:

Okay. He's been cutting quite a long time.

RL:

Yeah, Victor's been cutting, he's been cutting—let's see, Victor's been cutting pretty close to twenty years.

CM:

Yeah because I know, he was starting to come in there when I used to go to Mr. Davenport for a while, and he was in there then.

RL:

Then, yeah.

CM:

Yeah, and Ms. Shirley was up there.

RL:

Ms. Shirley was up there, yeah.

CM:

Yeah.

RL:

Yeah, Victor's been up there for a good while, man.

CM:

Yeah.

RL:

Yeah he been there, and then after he came, I think the next person that came was Reggie.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

And then there was another guy was there, but he left and went to Houston.

CM:

Okay. Reggie who—Williams?

RL:

No—

CM:

Okay.

RL:

His granddaddy's a preacher.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

But you know Reverend Barber?

CM:

Yeah, yeah, has a church on the—

RL:

Yeah.

CM:

Yeah, I know him. He's from Commerce?

RL:

Yeah, they're all back down in there—

CM:

Yeah.

RL:

Russell.

CM:

Okay, oh okay.

RL:

Reggie Russell.

CM:

Reggie Russell, okay.

RL:

Yeah Russell, yeah Reggie Russell, and then there's old Frankie, Frankie—

CM:

So that's Paul's son—see I graduated with Paul.

RL:

Oh really?

CM:

Paul Russell, yeah.

RL:

Oh okay.

CM:

And I know Andy, she was a year behind me, Mrs. Barber, Reverend Barber's daughter, yeah.

RL:

Okay.

CM:

Okay.

RL:

Yeah.

CM:

Yeah, all right.

RL:

All right then.

CM:

All right, well I appreciate it Mr. Leggett, and thank you very much—

RL:

Okay, yeah, anytime man.

CM:

For everything, it's been a—



© Southwest Collection/
Special Collections Library

RL:

Yeah anytime, call me.

CM:

—informing.

RL:

We can sit down and—

CM:

Yeah.

RL:

—talk about a lot of stuff man.

CM:

Oh yes.

RL:

And get a print-out, and man give my grandchildren, my great-grandchildren, say now Papa will remember all this stuff.

CM:

Oh yeah.

End of interview

© Southwest Collection/
Special Collections Library