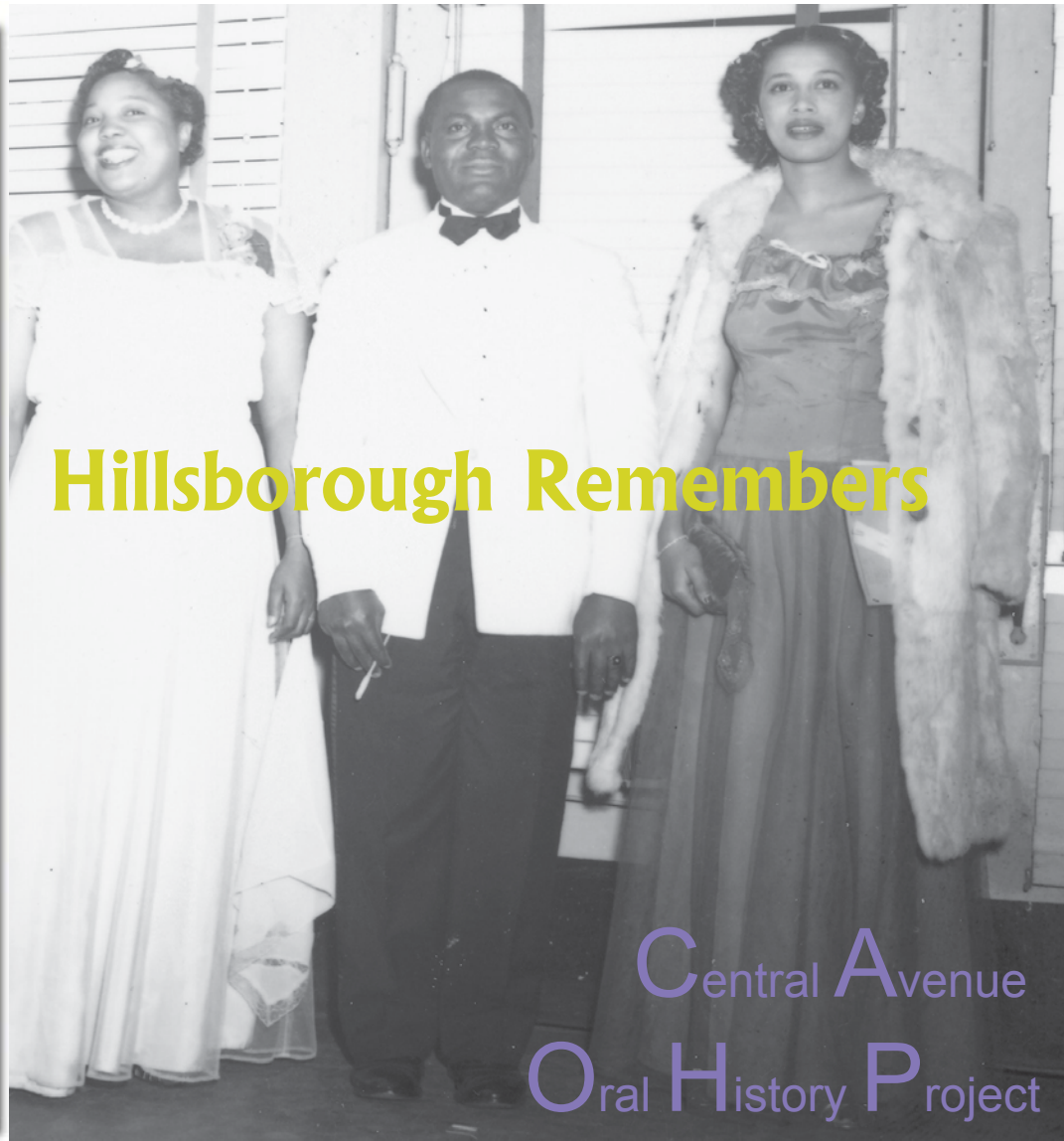


# *Roosevelt Baker*



**Hillsborough Remembers**

Central Avenue  
Oral History Project

*This is an interview with Roosevelt J. Baker (RB) a former teacher, retired. This interview is being conducted at the Ybor City Library on September 15, 2003. The interviewer is Myron Jackson, (MJ) representing the Central Avenue Business and Entertainment District Oral History Collections Project.*

RB: I have six children, five girls and one boy. I'm divorced and I live in Ybor City. Oh, for the past sixty, sixty-five years. And ah, where the library is located now used to be a beauty school, used to be a beauty shop called the Sunlight. I better start on Central here now on the South. On the South end of Central and we will have ( ) by some of the things that I remember. During the thirties all the way through the fifties.

MJ: May I ask you something, Mr. Baker? You taught at – were you at Booker T?

RB: No, Mr. Curry was there. I was at Middleton.

MJ: You were at Middleton.

RB: I taught at Middleton Senior High School. I was there for twenty-four years until ( ) came and I was transferred to Hillsborough High School, where I became a partner here there of the vocational area.

MJ: That's why you eat mustard ( ).

RB: Oh, yeah. I remember Bill ( ) we worked together there for twenty-four years. Maybe I'll start at the foot of a Central Avenue. Which is Cass and Central Avenue. Let's take a stroll down Central. Central Avenue which I refer to as the "Wide Way" like they have in New York. That's our Wide Way. In other words you hadn't been to Tampa unless you strolled down Central Avenue. Now on the corner of Central and Cass Street was located a large building there and it housed, at one time it housed a battery company there. And across the street was a shoe a shoe shop. Now it it wasn't owned by black but it was there, you know I mean, ( ). And as we go further down Central we come to the Pyramid Hotel which is owned by Mugeys. And underneath there was you had a pool room a which a Mr. Gardner was the owner of. I can't think of his first name, I think it might have been Isaac Gardner ( ). I can't think of his first name. And next to it you had a Attorney Jackson, a Harold Jackson. And then we had a CPA office there. I think that's the name Certified Public Accountant a Mr. Duvets was there. And across the street we had Woody's, but we called them "tressie club" at that time you all today call them dry cleaners, but we call them "tressie clubs" at the day. Mr. Woody owned that on the corner of Harrison and Central Avenue. And across the street we had a grocery store called Polaric Grocery Store on the a southwest corner. On the northwest corner was the Moonless, Charlie Moon owned a beer place there. And ah upstairs over the Moon, what we called the ah, I called it a beer joint, was what we called the Apollo Hall. That's the dance hall for blacks at that time. And at that time we had many band leaders would stop there. Such as Duke Ellington, Count Basey, Cab Calloway, a quite a few of our local bands would come up and play. And a that was our enjoyment for dancing, that was our only dance hall that we had. And across the street we had Johnnie Gray ah he had a little sundry store across the street. And as we go further down we had a barber shop in there, I forget who it was owned by. We had a – I can't think of the name of it. And I think we had the old Central Theatre. This is all black, black owned

business. And as we go down we had Dusty Pool Room which was located on the corner of Constant and ah Constant and Central. Ah which ( ) a first class pool hall there for blacks. We had people from out of town, and other states come in and have big, you know, contests and stuff for that. And ah across the street, I'm just taking you, you know ( ). We come to the Cozy Corner, a which was a well this is in black ( ) to a run it. But a this at first it was a what we call a hot dog stand which was controlled by some white folk. And a next to that we had the Gem Drug Store. And upstairs over the Gem Drug Store was the first black attorney I had ever seen. His name was ah Attorney ah, I had it here.

MJ: Forman & Rodriguez?

RB: No, no. Lawyer Green, Lawyer Green. Now, if you notice in going down Central, going down Central you get to the to a this a drug store, the new – Do you remember ( ) you too young for that. Well, they had a stairs, a stair on this side of the ( ) Watts Sanders ( ) a stairway that goes there and he had his shingle hanging that said, Lawyer Green. And he was a member of Saint James Episcopal Church. And this was in the early thirties. This was around 19 this around 1929 or 30 and he was one of the black ones that I knew.

MJ: This is St. James that was over there in Central Park?

RB: That's right. ( ). I used to be a Methodist too. Ah, then be I got Dusty's Pool Room, I called that. They had the Red Nine. That was a beer joint that was ran by, I can't think of his this Cuban fellow named that ran the Red Nine ah saloon there. Then we move on to ah the Royker's Dining Hall – which was located on the corner of Shelton and Marie. And Central in there. But, but we had one or two cabs. Because the Jackson cab and we had our um the Way Cab. Yeah, now I was talking to one of the relative of the Jackson, was in the Jackson family, you know, and she remember all of that too so we had a big thing going on on downstairs. Now we had a pawn shop ran by a Lewis. Lewis Pawn Shop. And in later years we had Arthur's studio and that guy would take pictures, you know. In that same building that was on the corner of Roosevelt and Central. And across the street we had um this fellow called Wigwam. Now he actually was the first fellow to have the Cozy Corner with their chicken. And the white came in there and got that fast, I know cause I was going to Harlem School. And this is around 1928 or 29. Ms. Teeter was the principal. No, Ms. Teeter died under Mr. Longbreaker. J. C. Longbreaker became the principal of Harlem School at that time, and I used to come through there cause I lived in Ybor City growing up. ( ) that's how I know that ( ). You got another shoe shop they called it Georgia Shoe Shop. On the corner, well it's across from a the Whiteway Barber Shop. You heard of Whiteway Barber Shop?

MJ: Yeah.

RB: ( ) all nice, everyone the most beautiful barber shop we had in this city. For blacks. And ah it was owned by, let's see now, this boy ah parent he died, Luther can't think of Luther ( ). They lived on the corner of Morgan and ah the family lived on Morgan and Scott. Eddie Zanar Luther here Eddie Zanar well anyway his dad owned the barber shop there. And then we'll move on into ah Kid Mason.

Kid Mason ah he has a son whose named after him. And he had a son named Ralph, which I knew very well cause he was my flat mate. ( ).

MJ: And Ralph's haberdashery.

RB: That's right. He had in West Tampa on Main Street. He had lived up Newport North all his life just about, after he left here.

RB: You remember him then.

MJ: Oh, he's a very nice guy. I used to go there and patronize him, you know.

RB: Yeah, it was nice. ( ) and all that.

MJ: Yep. Sold a little bit, little bit tail ornament.

RB: That's right, he had a thing going on for his self. And the first milk shake, I have you know, he made it for me. But his daddy had the Kid Mason had his first dinner on the corner of on the corner of a Scott and Central, where the old Savoy and things, at that time. Then they moved cause the cause the theater, the old theater long years ago I think used to be in there. Old timey theater back there but machines was killing all of them ( ). But anyway um that first milk shake I ever tasted he made it there. An we stopped in every afternoon. Then we go across the street to the Tally Drug Store. Ah that was owned by Mr. Gardner and another friend, I understand. You knew the Tally Drug Store?

MJ: Yeah, used to go there a lot.

RB: Now do you remember the Greek Stand.

MJ: Yeah, used to go there a lot too.

RB: Well, the Greek used to own that and my cousin later bought it. ( ) Johnnie Jordan and upstairs over that was a Dr. White office. He was the school er a doctor go around to the schools and checked out the black kids. You know how that went. And ah, but anyway after he would come through the school you know what I mean, he would a check our teeth and all that kinda stuff, you know, whatever. You know, back then it was something ( ).

MJ: ( )

RB: But anyway then we go on across the street to this building I was just speaking about, just a few moments ago, the three story big building on the corner of Scott and Central. Now in that building, that building served it's purpose well for the community, the black community every, every lodge that black folk, you know affiliated with they would meet in this particular place. You know, they meet on different nights up there. Like the Knights of Pithia, and the Masonic lodges bought four or five of them, you know. The Heron and so forth and so on which I'm ( ) and the Oddfellows and then you had the women with their Eastern Star and on down the line. Oh, we had about twelve or thirteen different organizations would meet there. That was the meeting place for that particular, we had no other place, unless you went to church, you know what I mean, have it in church. ( ) that blacks could actually have what we call a building where they could actually meet. It was pitiful but that's the way it was. And ah now we're going next door to the Anderson Building. It's near an Anderson Valley on the building next door where the library, Miss. Ada Payne, had the public library. That what we called the Harlem Branch Library. I don't remember that Harlem Branch Library ah and she had a the land full of books in there. And she would a try and call us in and say "Look we got books, we have books!" In that little tiny library she had about four hundred something books on the shelves. Saying, "Read! Get

them out, read!” She used to stress that. Read, read, read because that’s where it’s at in reading. You notice most of the other people read a great deal and that broadens your scope of mentality. And reading does do that because you can read about so many different – I like to watch a Jeopardy. ( ) you can cover area. I like that, it’s very educational to me and things of that nature.

Now ah we’ve talked about the Palace Drug Store, and talked about the doctor’s office. And ah Central Avenue to me when you start out on Cass and Central, I think it extended as far as Henderson Ave. and then you had been, you had been on Broadway then. What we called the Broadway. That’s the way I see it.

MJ: Yeah.

RB: You can ask me any questions you want to ask me.

MJ: You know, I’m just glad to have this opportunity cause you just like reconstructed a lot of things I forgot in my own mind about it. In that um the ( ) everything that you, I guess community with me. There was entertainment –

RB: Yes, ( ).

MJ: ( )

RB: Yeah, yeah. It was packed right there on Central Avenue. You see, it served as a nuclear ah to ah many of the blacks, in Hillsborough County. That includes Belmont Heights, if you from Belmont Heights, West Tampa, Hyde Park. You know what I mean? This is it! You understand, like the song said, “This is it”? This is it, right here! This is Central and this is where you will see some of everybody at. And they gonna have some of everything here for you, right here on this – ( ) right here for you.

MJ: You know, your talking about some place, and I’m sure you touched on all of em. I was trying to think on next to the Lincoln Theatre, there was a place that served food.

RB: Johnnie Gray’s?

MJ: That was Johnnie Gray’s.

RB: That was Johnnie Gray right next to that Lincoln ( ) that place was built ( ) that’s way back up in ( ). When they built that and a car broke there. But we had the old Central Theatre there, I’m tell you it was something else to see. It was something else. I’ll tell you. You could smell the shrimp before you even got into the place. It was just ( ). He had second grade pictures most of the time. ( ) strong while other people for a hundred years and they brought him over here in his new ( ). Yeah.

MJ: I’ve got a picture I’ll give it to you. It’s actually a colored picture.

RB: What’s the name of it?

MJ: No, it’s a colored picture of the part of Central Avenue where you talking about. ( ) in the background. I had it blown up to eight by ten.

RB: Well, I’m gonna have to blow it up bigger -- I like that. I like that kind of ( ).

MJ: They gave me the negative you know, so I had it blown up. A picture of a ( ) Tampa at that time with ( ) and you took a shot of it, cause there's a guy with a the guy that's in the picture was named Mr. Harris. They called him "Soup Man" and he would do like catering or get clothes for you and stuff like that. You know.

RB: Yeah, we order from some company ( ) a zuit suit. Man, I'm telling you, I had a zuit, I had two zuit suits and the boy named James Dean Cunningham, you know how they have these books and they say look here man just order and he fixed me up good too. ( ) it came and put it on and I walked down, walked down Star Street and got on Central there had my long coat on. Man, that's slick. Sitting in the back ( ) and had the greens with the big buttons. Like eight inches, you had to squeeze to get ( ) then I had my wide brim hat on, you know, you couldn't tell me nothing. And my tie, had this chain hanging from ( ) all the way down here come over here and then start walking in the park. Ms. Thelma come ( ) back here ( ) brand new took a ( ). And they put um in the water and let them set there while ( ) then you take them out, after you soak, let them soak in em. Then take your ( ) and tie it into ( ) I wish I had that picture.

MJ: ( ) I remember, I mean it sounds like Cab Calloway.

RB: ( ) then this other guy, Dewey ( ).

MJ: Oh yeah, right, right, right.

RB: You don't remember Dewey ( )?

MJ: No, I'm only ( ) years old. I've heard a lot of him.

RB: Yeah, he was an Italian fellow.

MJ: Right.

RB: Yeah, I liked to hear him sing. He was something else, too. He had a zuit suit, too.

You see, they were made for Italian, those zuit suits were made for Italians and Blacks. You didn't find many of the ah the ah Caucasian people, they didn't wear ( ), but the jiggles and the blacks ( ).

MJ: Look, let me ask too, now a lot of things you talked about that was from childhood and adult memories?

RB: ( ) right on up there but not for a you may find some adult people but it's for the wool baby, the younger type.

MJ: But I mean you were a child coming up.

RB: Oooh, yes! ( ) I grew up near to that stuff. I came up in there, yeah. That's right. The pin strip it played a very important role with the black, the pin stripe suit, I have two or three now. In fact, I bought one about three or four months ago. ( ) liked the pin stripes.

MJ: Did we mention on here how old you are?

RB: I'm eighty-three.

MJ: Eighty-three years old.

RB: That's right. ( ) I remember when sodas were sold for five cents a bottle. Sodas. We could get a meal, you could get a meal at one of those places, the Greek Stand, you could get you a meal for eighty-five cents.

MJ: Wow!

RB: A square meal. And a breakfast, you get one for fifty-five cents. And at the Wig-Wam, I could go in Wig-Wam you get you a breakfast, a meal, or a dinner, it was next to Watt's Center. I forgot the Watts Center. Watt Sanders, yes. Watt Sanders he had a, he came in with a nice a lounge there you know. Um, and a it was very beautiful, man. He had what he called the Blue Room. ( ) yeah, Watt Sanders Blue Room. And we used to have a different socials there. I remember the Sigma. I don't know what you are ---

MJ: My father was a Omega.

RB: ( ). Yeah, we had a dance there one night. The Sigmas and we called it the shipwreck. Boy, that was the talk of the town. It was something else. I built a boat, you know, like the ( ). And a ( ). ( ) being with my brothers and all them, you know. And ah he was the Captain. And we had, oh you talk about a beautiful set it was that night. I built it right there at Watt Sanders. Up the gangplank, there was a ship here you come in to it. Those sisters come in with their gowns on and all this ( ). It was something else. It was beautiful.

MJ: So you have carpentry skills and all that, too.

RB: Oh, yeah. I build that, yeah. ( ) that was my business.

MJ: What did you teach at Middleton?

RB: Oh, those the industrial arts. I was the first black industrial arts teacher in Hillsborough County.

MJ: Did you teach anywhere before Middleton?

RB: Nooo. I graduated from Middleton, I didn't dream I'd be coming back there to teach. ( ) got me a job there. And I taught there for twenty, twenty-three years. Then ah integration came and a course I went in service, I spent about four years in service. In the Navy, United States Navy. And ah when I came out of the Navy ah I volunteered and went in there. They didn't draft me, I volunteered from Florida A&M. And went downtown Tallahassee and ah they wanted me in the Marines. I told them if I had to go in the Marines I'm gonna head on. I'll wait until you all call me. And so I started out and the man said O.K. we'll take you in in the Navy. ( ) cause, you know and I spent ah four years in the Navy. Did you see this movie about the black seaman.

MJ: Yeah, ( ) Miller. The guy that um.

RB: No, not ( ) Miller. This is during World War II. See ( ) Miller you know, he came in way ahead of that. ( ) Miller you know, he was a

MJ: Machine gun.

RB: ( ) and machine ( ) See I went in service in '42.

MJ: Yeah, o.k.

RB: You understand. This is a picture that was showed every so often about the ship blowing up.

MJ: Oh, yeah.

RB: With all these sailors, black sailors ( ).

MJ: Yeah, sure, sure.

RB: Well, my company, my company was the was with that crew.

MJ: That's the ones where they was having them handle the bombs and --

RB: They had to handle the ammunition, ammunition. And that's right.

MJ: And they refused to do it.

RB: Yeah, there ya go. See that was my crew. See we were stationed—See the ammunitions depot was stationed at Balao, California. Across from Real and that's where they had set up for it. But we had no training in handling no ammunition. In fact, I didn't go that night because I was busy, I had another duty. See, ( ) I had to cook. And those kids went on over there and man I'm telling you they got all messed all up in there. I could feel the ah you know, the concussions when that thing went ( ) from Chicago where it was. It would go down the river there you know, on the boat and pick them out. The crew gets one crew after the other, they work around the clock. Load, just load that those ammunitions on there. So that was the ( ) for to load ammunition. And we had no training in that!

MJ: Yeah, that's a sad chapter. I saw that they did a movie on that, that's right. But you know, speaking of that. Were you familiar, I remember ( ) it happened before ( ). You know they made a movie down there on Central Avenue at one time. Did you know about that? It was called *Black Like Me*, with James Whitmore.

RB: Oh, I remember James, yeah, I remember James Whitmore. But I remember one before that.

MJ: Oh, is that right? There was another movie they made?

RB: Yeah, they made it but it wasn't on Central. But they laid it right here in Tampa ah Ms. Marylou. And the picture, the name of the picture was *Yellow Harbor*. And it was filmed out here where this hospital, where the army hospital is out here. Over there. That lady was about five by five. The man had to take, I forget that man's name, he came out of Hollywood there too. But he had ( ) over there in the Bahamas. Cause I talked with him, I'm at the Bahamas I talked with him. And that was his mother and father, who was you know, they worked together in filming this thing. Cause ( ) she had some relative here. But now, *Black Like Me*, I don't you know, I didn't know it. But I remember ( ).

MJ: They actually, I'm going to hunt the movie down cause I found it on the – it's not a big segment but there's a picture of Johnnie Gray and the Lincoln Theatre and his place. He changes skin color and became you know, a black to see what it was like ( ). But you know, talking about movies and stuff a little bit. When I was at St. Peter Clavier, I went to St. Peter Clavier there, one time Butterfly McQueen came there.

RB: I want to tell you about her, my cousin was a friend of hers. A friend, you know of Butterfly McQueen's. She played in a *Gone with the Wind*. ( )

MJ: Bout birthin no babies.

RB: Yeah. I remember her very well. ( ) she lived ( ) right down in there. No fool you, I'm not kidding.

MJ: Yeah, she said she went to Harlem then she said she ( )

RB: That's right. Yeah, that's right. But she came here and they had sitting out here in front of the Tampa Theatre, you know, there. The people came by to recognize her, cause she played in one of the biggest movies ever was. *Gone with the Wind*.

MJ: Not to jump around. I just wanted to ask you in conclusion, when we start talking about celebrities and those type people. I heard, just over the years, I heard that somebody told me Johnnie Ace got killed on Central in the Savoy, you know.

RB: Now I don't know about that.

MJ: The singer, you know.

RB: I don't know, I remember Johnnie ( ) but I don't remember him getting killed down on Central. Now, I'm not saying he didn't, but I don't remember. But he was good.

MJ: Yeah, they say he would have been a great singer, but I think he was one of the ones, you know, that performed down there.

RB: Yeah, now see we had the Florida Collegiate Band here, then we had a Manza Harris, a we had some local bands here.

MJ: Yeah, including Charlie Brenaway.

RB: Yeah, yeah Charlie Brenaway.

MJ: Which is who Ray Charles played with.

RB: That's right. Ray Charles. You remember Ray Charles here?

MJ: Ah my mother taught a couple of his kids over at Meacham. Cause she –

RB: She did?

MJ: Yeah, and some of them are still here, some of them are still here. As a matter of fact, I think there's some people, you know, that's with this organization that knows one of them. Because, matter of fact, they're making a movie about his life. And this kid, Jamie Far( ) portrayed him. He said it was interesting they had a party one night, this was a few months ago. They had a party and they had all his kids show up. There was twelve of them. He got twelve kids, and he said and Jamie ( ) said some of them didn't even know Charles. But he said they gave them all a million dollars apiece.

RB: Well, that wasn't bad.

MJ: No, but I remember that he was ( ) here in those days.

RB: Well, it was something else back there too. ( )

MJ: Yeah, Cab was incredible talent.

RB: But we had Negro business, we had pretty good Negro business on Central, I'm telling you, until they burned it down. And a lot of them lost their jobs and just just couldn't support their family. 'Cause most of 'em, you know, the black they had to get out to support their family, too as well as the man got out there. See they weren't making ( ) my father made seven or eight dollars a week. A yeah, cause he worked at the B&B Grocery downtown, used to be the City Market.

MJ: How many were in your family?

RB: Ah, there's six, six of us kids. Mother and father. Yeah, five girls and two boys. So that be seven in the family. You remember my brother? Leroy Baker.

MJ: Yeah.

RB: Used to rent the Buddy Ball.

MJ: Right, right.

RB: That was my brother. ( ) Yeah, Baker's and then he worked at a at that drug store. He was manager of Eckerd Drug Store for a long time. Yeah, on Nebraska ( ). Yeah. That's my brother.

MJ: You said some of you family was involved with the Greek Stand, too.

RB: Cousin.

MJ: Cousin.

RB: Johnny yeah, Jordan. Johnny Jordan. Ah he and his brother and all the Solomon and all them.

MJ: Yeah, I used to go in and get an ice cream and stuff. Cuban sandwiches, they had Cuban sandwiches.

RB: They surely did. And you get the cup a coffee and all that kinda stuff. I remember, a doctor, I remember Reverend Rhodes. You know Reverend Rhodes?

MJ: Yeah, yeah. In that house with a Greater Bethel. It was Greater Bethel was the church I went to.

RB: Oh, right ( ).

MJ: Matter of fact, you know that was some sort of case or something I think my father handled his case, you know.

RB: He was some cat. He was out of Carolina, too. Your people out of Carolina.

MJ: We're out of South Carolina.

RB: I thought ( ).

MJ: His mother and father moved here from around Orangeburg ( ) around that part. And we still got a little family spread out. I used to hear them talking about Greenville, too but I didn't know them. And then my mother was from Charleston and they both met up there at South Carolina State, she was at Classmen and he was at State.

RB: You have nice people, man all of them nice.

MJ: ( ) you got my memory going now. A whole lot of this stuff.

RB: Yeah, but I pick up on stuff, man that's still on.

MJ: Just in talking to you, compared with other people I've talked with, you've made me really appreciate the significance of the project. Especially when you talk about the time line in terms of you know, going back to the thirties.

RB: And see, I I can just see the Lord helped me here today. I can see myself as a little fellow a a leaving Harlem School in the afternoon with my little book tied up with a a rubber band. Coming down Constable by the County jail there, a you know by the cemetery, ( ) and come by the County jail there ( ). Then in the back back there we used to keep, they had an iron door back there on Jefferson they packed ( ) back there. We used to walk in and peek through window ( ). Most kids are curious, they want to know. and them kids ( ) they gotta know that you can't do like mommas and daddies do us. They want to know, they ask you questions, they want to know. You gotta find out, how you gonna tell them this and all that. And that's a job. And they'll tell you, "I don't believe that." Where you go then? But anyway, we peeked through this door and some of the things that I saw with these two eyes, I ( ).

MJ: Ok. That was the a –

RB: Tampa Daily Times paper. I delivered that for about four or five years. I made good money with it. A that was one way I could make enough money to go away to college, you understand, shining shoes and selling papers. And a this ( ) Pearl McAdams. I happen to have known him pretty good and I also knew his boy, you know. And ah he said, "Hey, boy do you have a paper?" I said, "Yes sir, Mr. ( )." He says, "How much?" I says, "Five

cents". That's all it was. Five cents a paper at that time. Tampa Daily Times paper was there was one, one sheet in there for the black folk and it had to be color. And Mr. Henderson, the late Mr. Henderson. Trying to think of Mr. Henderson's last name. He lived over in Hyde Park on Fig Street. Herbert Henderson! He was the first editor that we had to a you know, to get all the news for the black folk. You know, in order for the papers. That was for everyday. And then latter on Mr. Karl, a fellow named Mr. Karl, you might know him in fact he lived out in Central Dairy back there. He became the editor. Then Rosalind Williams. I wish you all would do something on Central Avenue I could tell you, I mean Scott Street, I can tell you about that plenty. Did you know that we had a black woman on the coco cola, I mean a soda company? A soft drink company.

MJ: No, I didn't know that.

RB: Called the Colman Kemper. Named for Alan Kemper. From Dr. a Morgan and all them they had office in there and all down through there.

MJ: Oh, o.k.

RB: There's a lot of things in there.

MJ: Yeah, cause that ( ) when Palace was on Scott Street. Right.

RB: Right there on the corner ( ).

MJ: Your talking about going on back toward Nebraska.

RB: Yeah, yeah!. Did you know we had a a most of you undertakers, you know, was on Jefferson and they would march or go down Scott Street and had the band playing in front, like New Orleans style. Did you see a a what that ( ) had that lady ( ) horses ( ) where the bands ( ). Well, we had that. You didn't have the horses but we had the band. And we had a donkey in front of it leading it. You know, like the horse is leading then you have the little fellow directing the band, you know, at the Scott Street. And had and had the coffin out and the coffin out of the ah you know, the a hearse. And it was marching with the hearse down the street and they had it up like this though. Right down Scott Street!

MJ: Wow! Wow! Was that before Central Park was built?

RB: Oh! Way before that. Central Park came in a hundred years later.

MJ: So you had all black business down Scott.

RB: Yeah, you had all down there, yes you had undertaker, yeah, you had all kinds going there. Yes! You called 'em undertakers at that time.

MJ: Cause you know right now, St. Peter Clavier School that's a hundred and nine years old. That's actually the oldest Catholic church in the diocese just about.

RB: Well you know, we had the Seventh Day Adventist school there too, you know, right next to down to ----

MJ: Yeah, that's right. Yeah, right, exactly.

RB: On Scott Street ( ). You had a Dr. Snake's Shoe Shop going all down through that. Then you had the Wyatt House, a beer joint there you going on down though there yeah. You'd be surprised. It had Larkin Grocery. You remember Mr. Larkin?

MJ: Yeah, yes.

RB: Larkin? He owned a lot of property here in a Tampa. Because he had one of the most best stocked a grocery store on the corner across from St. Peter Clavier there. On the corner of Scott and Governor.

MJ: Unh, unh.

RB: We had all that down through, you'd be surprised at the number of businesses they had on Scott Street there. You need to get something on that too.

MJ: Yeah, I would. I'll have a chance to talk to Ms. Broody tomorrow. I remember I was at Helping Hand when it was on Central, you know.

RB: Ms. ah Ms. I know who owned that. What's that lady name, she lived there next to the hospital on Lamar. You don't remember any hospitals on Lamar? Um, oh my, ( ) heavy lady, light skinned.

MJ: Not Clara Frye?

RB: No. No, no. Lived next to it. Next to the hospital. See the Helping Hands on Central, but I'm trying to tell you this is on Lamar up between Henderson and Estelle and them now. And the hospital and them I remember the number of the hospital.

MJ: St. Joseph's.

RB: No, no, no. Man, that's for white folk. ( ) man, she started ( ). 1615 that's the number. I remember the number 1615.

MJ: O.K., o.k. I'll follow you and get background of this. And Henderson, yeah she moved and then the school was there too.

RB: Yeah, yeah the school was around there where – there ( ) see all white lived in there. Dr., Dr. William's boy from Harlem in there he ( ) after some white folk ( ).

MJ: ( ) Williams?

RB: His daddy. His daddy, the old man. ( ) and ( ) it was with him. You remember ( ) he went with Ray Williams for a while. You see, we had Ray Williams Funeral Home on Orange ( ) but then before that it was McRae. McRae got mad Tampa in here and he moved to St. Pete, he's still in operation over there. McRae's Funeral Home in a St. Petersburg. The guy who run it now he from up in Montana. What we called Montana, we called it Gopher Hole, too. Out there across from on a 34<sup>th</sup> up in there, you know. Yeah, I remember all that. Yeah, we had some violent history here in Tampa.

MJ: How you doing on time, cause I don't want to keep you.

RB: I'm doing all right. Yeah, I'm doing all right. It's almost 3:30. Whew! Wow! Golly. That what the time is?

MJ: Time is flying. I'm looking to see what I got left on here, let's see.

Well since we turned it off, you know, that was good. So we got a we got like seventeen and a fraction do some more, you know at any point in time. But you know what if you just want, you know, just like get back with me or something. Cause I don't want to keep you more than –

RB: Well if you want to. I'm comfortable.

MJ: I would love to. I'm thoroughly enjoying this.

RB: That's good.

MJ: And you know, I'm just saying some things might pop in your mind and you might want to just. You know, a share that too cause you a really a -- Now, you know, I've done four or five, five of these, you're the best one for me. I mean the experience. Cause your memory is so vivid and a just really wonderful you really bring this whole thing to life.

RB: Well, when I was in the service they told me that I had a very good remembrance of things. They would take us way out on um, when I was in service they took us way out to no where, blindfolded. And then when we get out there we take it off and they take us around and show us different things. And then pack different things up. And about two or three months after that they'd take us back and drop you off there and say, "Now can you find out where put it and you bring it back. You had to bring back the one that you had hidden. And I did it. ( ) and I could pretty well remember. And I can read people too. Minds, you know. I can look at their mind and tell a whole lot about them too.

MJ: ( ) I tell you, you just you just--- I'm realizing how much I've heard today --- especially when you, when you can reconnected with Middleton things and all of that, you know.

RB: Well see um, you see I like a lot of fun. I like to make people laugh and I like to make the people laugh and I like a laugh myself, because if you—to me-- it's medicine for me cause it release the tension that I have built up in down through the years. You don't understand where I'm going. You can think about things that had happened and you would see people and you just want to get you a gun maybe and shoot because of the way they have mistreated you or something like that. You understand? But with me saying something funny and you saying, that relieve all that, my mind gets off of that and it goes to some thing much more pleasant, you know.

MJ: In that Reader's Digest says "laughter is the best medicine".

RB: It is. I tell people that all the time.

MJ: I understand exactly. You know, I tell people all the time that I like to go and watch comedy movies or documentaries. Something very educational or something very funny. In between not too much now but I either like to learn something or get a good laugh.

RB: I do! That's right, no fooling. I tell you, no fooling, you can't do that --- messing with themselves that carried me down through the years to be frank with you. That's a mean people you know, they say "Look at that fool." Right here, you got it man, I wish I had your money I'd take my little bit of money ( ).