

**The Lemon Street Schools Oral History Collection  
Marietta City Schools System, 2019-2021  
Tommy Davis interview  
Conducted by James Newberry  
February 3, 2020**

**Complete Transcript**

Interviewer: All right. This is James Newberry, and I'm here with Tommy Davis on Monday, February 3rd, 2020 at her home on Roosevelt Circle in Marietta, Georgia. Thank you for meeting with me.

Davis: Oh, you're welcome.

Interviewer: And do you agree to this interview?

Davis: Yes.

Interviewer: So, can you tell me your full name?

Davis: Tommy H. Well, Tommy Hill Davis.

Interviewer: And what's your birthday?

Davis: February the 14th, 1944.

Interviewer: Where did you grow up?

Davis: Here in Marietta, Georgia, on East Fuller Street, went to Lemon Street Elementary School, then Lemon Street Junior High and Lemon Street High School.

Interviewer: And what are your parents' names?

Davis: My mother's named Ruby Ballard Grogan. My father was named Willie Lee Hill.

Interviewer: And what did they do for a living?

Davis: My mother was the first black person that worked at Dobbins Air Force Base nursery. And then she worked at First United Methodist Church nursery, but she's been retired for many, many years now because of her failing health. And my father I'm not sure, because he lived in Macon, he didn't live in Marietta, Georgia.

Interviewer: So, in your early years, what was your life like? What was life like in the community?

Davis: Lemon Street was my favorite street that I went to. Elementary from fourth grade, from fourth grade to junior high, and from junior high to high school. My fondest years on Lemon Street was going to Lemon Street School, because we had the best football team, the best marching band, the best basketball team. In other words, overall we had the best of everything. And we always won everything. And those were my fondest years. And my next fondest year of school was when I was in ... I think I started when I was in the eighth grade. Eighth grade, ninth grade, 10th grade. We had a little group that we formed, and the name of our group was the Cookies. It was me, myself, Tommy Hill, Priscilla Slade, Gloria Slade, Kate Slade, Barbara Cook, Linda Waites, and Evelyn White. And we all sang together. And then I sung a lot by myself because I could do solo. So, I sung a lot, we sung on all the talent shows. My other favorite memories of being able to go to the Lawrence Street swimming pool, which was our swimming pool then, black swimming pool only. No reflection on whites, because I don't have a problem, I'm not hung up on color. But my favorite times of going there, I didn't swim because I used to be afraid of water. But I'll get in any boat, but I don't like water. I first went in water last year at Georgetown, in South Carolina. My used-to-be boss convinced me to get in the Atlantic Ocean with her. But that was fun. But I always enjoyed being able, Ms. Elizabeth Porter would always ask me, would I do something for her, doing all the swimming shows. And I would always sing. I would always dress up in some kind of formal attire and sing. And then my next favorite thing was at the Montgomery Street Canteen. We used to have what we call a masquerade ball. And we would dress up in different costumes. One of my favorite friends, she was a football player, and they had to guess who we were. And I dressed up in a Japanese, my mother had a Japanese outfit, so I dressed up in that Japanese outfit. My girlfriend that was in the football team, because she won a prize because she was the best-looking person of all. Because she was built up anyway, and she looked like a football player. So that was my favorite time of growing up in this city besides my school. My school was my pride and joy. I loved Lemon Street.

Interviewer: Well, you mentioned talent shows. Where did they hold the talent shows?

Davis: We had them in, most of the talent shows were held in our gym in our school. And then when I would sing at the swimming show, that would always be at the Lawrence Street swimming pool. But then I also, under age, but they used to let us sing at the [Brahma 00:04:51] City Elks Club. We laugh about that now, me and my classmates, two of us anyway. We say, "You know we weren't old enough to be in there," but we were so talented, really, we could have been a invitation of Gladys Knight and the Pits, because we could sing that good. And they used to let us come up there and sing, but we shouldn't have been there because we weren't old enough to be there.

Interviewer: Where was that?

Davis: It was on Tower Road at the Brahma City Elks Club.

Interviewer: Okay, okay.

Davis: But they used to let us come up there and sing. Hugh Grogan was over it, so by him knowing us and me being a relative to him, he would let us come there and sing.

Interviewer: Okay.

Davis: But we weren't supposed to be there. But it was fun. We enjoyed it. Nobody never said anything out of the way to us. It was just real clean fun, because what I really enjoyed most about of way back then, everybody was very, very close. Very, very close. And we were like one big family. Everybody that went to Lemon Street, from the time I was in there we were like one big family. And to this day my clients, we are very close. We just celebrated in December of last year at Piccadilly. I took decorations, Christmas decorations, and they always let us have a room. So me and my classmates, we decorated the tables with the stuff that I bought. I ordered us a Lemon Street High School cake from Sam's. They did the school color around the top, which was blue and silver. And I told them to put, "Happy Birthday to Lemon Street High School Classmates of '63," but the man put on there, "Happy Reunion Birthday to Class of '63." We laughed about it and joked about it and we said, "Oh, it's okay because we know what we're having."

Interviewer: Yeah.

Davis: But we have lots of fun together. Those are my fondest years of being in school.

Interviewer: It sounds like it. So you mentioned the three schools, the elementary, the junior high, and high.

Davis: And high school.

Interviewer: So, let's start by talking a little bit about the elementary.

Davis: Elementary.

Interviewer: So, when you started there, where were you living at that time?

Davis: Here. I was living in Robinson Court, which is Fort Hill Homes.

Interviewer: Okay. So you were living ...

Davis: We had just moved back up here. I was born here. We moved away, I went to school in Smyrna in first, second, and third grade.

Interviewer: Okay.

Davis: I was the first, we were the first students to go to Rose Garden Hill when it was first built. No other kids had ever went there, we was the first kids that went there.

Interviewer: In Smyrna?

Davis: Right, in Smyrna.

Interviewer: Okay.

Davis: Then when I was in the fourth grade, I was in the fourth grade, my sister was in fourth grade, and I have a story to tell about me, first grade. My teacher in the first grade, she told me, she made a real believer out of me though, she told me that ... Because back then first and second graders had to sit in the same desk together, in the same seat together, because we didn't have a school, it was a three-room house. It was only first and second grade, third and fourth grade, and fifth and sixth grade. So she used to tell me that if I didn't stop talking to this one particular person, that she was going to make me sit in there another year. And I really did not believe her, because I was a smart student. But she made me sit in the first grade for two years. And I used to hate to tell people that I repeated the first grade simply because of running my mouth. I still love to talk to this day, but at least it don't get me in trouble any more. But I got in serious trouble, and I made God a promise. I said, "Lord, I am never going to repeat another grade in my life." And I didn't. I didn't.

Interviewer: Well, how did you make the move, then, back to Marietta?

Davis: Well, since we were from Marietta, we wanted to move back to Marietta. So my parents moved from Vinings back to Marietta. And my grandmother also, who we lived with in Vinings, she went to live with my aunt, and then my aunt moved. They had bought a house in Edward. So that meant that if we moved back to Marietta, we could be close to going to our grandmother, because our grandmother ... And those people right there, that was my second mom and daddy right there. My grandparents were always helping my second mama and daddy. I just loved my grandparents, my mother's parents. And that was the reason we moved back to Marietta.

Interviewer: And tell me their names again?

Davis: Anna Haney Ballard and Thomas Ballard was my grandfather.

Interviewer: Do you remember, and if you don't, no problem, but do you remember when they were born?

Davis: My grandmother's birthday is January the 15th. I don't remember what year, but Martin Luther King was born on my grandmother's birthday.

Interviewer: Okay.

Davis: I don't remember my grandfather's birthday, but I do remember my grandma's birthday because I always celebrated my grandma's birthday. My grandmother lived long. My grandfather passed away when I was four or five years old, but I can remember it as if it was yesterday. I really can. Because we lived in the house with them, because he used to sit me on his right knee and her on his left knee, and he told us life's history. And he told us this horrible story. I always thought it was a horrible story, but he said how he came to Marietta, Georgia before he probably met my grandmother, I'm assuming, I'm assuming it might have been before he met my grandmother. They might have all been living there, but they lived on a plantation. And my grandfather worked on the plantation, as well as just other white men that worked there. I can't remember the man's name, he told us, but I was real little. I can't remember that. But I remember most of it. He said that they had worked that day and the man ... The tools that they were using to do whatever work that they were doing that particular day, the white man told him that my grandfather had taken the tool. So the man came, the slave master came to my grandfather, he was named little Kevin, to ask him, "Tom, did you take my tool?" And he said no. So he said, "Why did you think I took your tool?" And he told him that whatever the other man's name was, "He told me that you took it." So my grandfather went to this man's house and he confronted him. And I don't know what he said to my grandfather. All my grandfather told me and my sister was that he cut his mick off. And that was the reason the slave master had to slip him out of South Carolina. That's how he came to Georgia, because they would have hung him.

Interviewer: So, the person who accused him of stealing?

Davis: Right.

Interviewer: He ... Oh, my.

Davis: That's why I think it's a horrible story.

Interviewer: That's kind of scary.

Davis: It is kind of scary. But he told us that, and I will always remember that as long as I live, I will always remember that story. But even though I thought it was a horrible story, I thought it was a valuable lesson to me and my sister. Because we never knew anything about slavery time, because we wasn't born during that time. I was born during World War II, but we don't remember anything about slavery. But I can tell you what I do remember from Vinings, transitioning from Vinings back to Marietta, Georgia, where I grew up at, where I was born at, it was totally different when we moved back here. Because see, when we lived in Vinings, it was the Crawfords, which was a white family, My grandparents, which was the Ballards, another family, which was the Cummings, and then another white family, which were the Browns. Well, all four of us, if my

grandparents or my mama had to go somewhere, Ms. Crawford kept us. If Ms. Crawford or her daughter had to go somewhere, her three grandsons came to our house. We played together all the time. And I guess that's why I have a problem with the "N" word and the "C" word, because we never used those words. And I never heard those words until we moved back up here. And me and my sister was in the fourth grade. I will always remember, they were talking about cracker this and cracker that. So me and my sister said, "We like crackers, can we have some crackers?" And they said, "We know you all are from the country." And we said, "Well, why you think we're from the country?" And they said, "Because you all don't know what a cracker is." And we said, "Yes we do, because we eat them all the time." And they started laughing at us. And we said, "Why are you all laughing at us?" And they said, "Because you all really don't know what a cracker is." And see, we weren't used to, and we were never used to white people living on one side of town and black people living, until we moved back here. It was like, me and her used to think they moved us to Mars or somewhere, because we just could not comprehend the fact that people were so separated, because we were never separated.

Interviewer: So in Marietta, then, did you interact with white people less than you had before?

Davis: Well, I kind of did. Well, I'll tell you, I'll give you a prime example. At the Greyhound bus station, which used to be right on Roswell Street, well, when we got out of school every day, we would go there to just play the piccolo, buy their famous hot dogs that we loved. And it was amazing, because there we could go right in there and go up to the counter. The difference in there and Hunt's Ice Cream, which was on the square, if we went to Hunt's Ice Cream, because we liked their hot dogs too, we had to go all the way to the back. That's the only thing that I ever remember being really, really different in this town when we moved back here, was the fact that blacks lived on all one side and whites lived on another side together. It was like they were separate. Even though black people worked for white people, because my mother, her mother's oldest brother, they were the first black people that worked for the Carmichaels. I don't know if you're familiar with the Carmichael, big white house that's up there on ... Well, my grandfather, my grandmother's brother was the butler. And my mother and one of her sisters, who I will show you the picture after the interview that's down there in the den, they worked there. The Carmichaels gave me my first ring that I ever wore on my finger when I was a baby. They gave me that ring. And my daughter wore it when she was a baby.

Interviewer: So, was there a good relationship with the Carmichaels?

Davis: Oh, yes.

Interviewer: When your family was working for them?

Davis: Yes. Even though I was a little bitty girl, my family was very close to them. And like I said, they gave ... Because me and my sister were little then. We were the

only two, I think, that my mother had, because I don't think my brother was born then, because my brother was born in '49.

Interviewer: Okay.

Davis: Because he's just 70 years old. But I remember all the stories. I have a good memory when it comes to stories.

Interviewer: I was going to say, I could listen to you all day.

Davis: I remember all the stories. Because even just right here in Marietta, and I left out one fun thing, two fun things that I remember when we first moved back here. There was an elderly black lady that lived in a house on Coal Street, and she had a grocery store. And she sold big oatmeal cookies about this big around, and she sold what people call pork rinds now. Back then we called them skins, because they were in a little brown paper sack. That was my favorite store to go to in the afternoon because I knew I could get the oatmeal cookies for a penny. I knew I could get the skins for five cents a bag, and I knew that I could get a Baby Ruth for five cents. Five cents a bar.

Interviewer: Did the store have a name?

Davis: Candy's Grocery Store.

Interviewer: And what are the streets?

Davis: I could actually take you and show you where her house used to be right now.

Interviewer: Okay. But it's no longer there?

Davis: It's right ... It's no longer there. Actually, the Marietta Housing Authority is right in the spot where her store used to be.

Interviewer: What was her name?

Davis: I guess Ms. Candy, that's all we remember calling her, was Ms. Candy. Now, James Gober might could tell you what her first name was.

Interviewer: Okay.

Davis: Or either maybe, I don't know, Ms. Carter might could tell you. I'm trying to remember who might could. I'm trying to remember. Let me think off the top of my head who might could tell you what her first name was. It would have to be somebody older than me that lived there in the projects. Now Mr. Louis Scott, he might could tell you.

Interviewer: Oh.

Davis: Or either his nephew, Freddie Scott.

Interviewer: Okay.

Davis: Because his nephew Freddie Scott, he's older than me. Freddie might remember her first name, but we always called her Ms. Candy. She was a little short lady, real fat and dumpy, but everybody loved her because that was the only little black grocery store that we could go to. Then on Richmond Street, that was Reverend Cook. When I first started going to Zion Baptist Church, which is the historical museum now, Reverend Cook was the pastor there. He also had a restaurant on Richmond Street. I remember, me and the love of my life, I had to wait on him every day after football practice. It was three of us, me, my cousin, and another girl. I was waiting on Cecil. Rosemary was waiting on my cousin Dub, and Marianne was waiting on [inaudible 00:19:13]. Because they all three of them played football. So, I would always be the last one left there, because they would come out and they would say, "Oh well, Tommy, you know you're going to be the last one out here today." And I said, "Why?" They said, "Because Cecil's down there taking a shower. He's washing his hair." And he really did do this. I'll show you a picture of him before you leave. He did this ... And I always wondered, "Why do I have to be the last one sitting out here every day?" But I was always the last one sitting out there. And we would always, we would leave our books on the ... We used to have concrete benches, two concrete benches in front of Lemon Street High School that we used to sit on. We would leave our books there, we would walk up Lemon Street and then go up Richmond Street to his cafe. We would go in there, we would always get a hot dog, a-

Davis:: This cafe, we were going there, we would always get a hot dog, a drink and chips. And then, we would leave that part and go to the little dancing room. And I would always go in there and I love to sing. I would always go in there, either I would put money in the piccolo or he would put money in the piccolo and I would stand there and sing. And then, when a slow song came on, we had to dance all the time.

Interviewer: Did he become your husband?

Davis: We was going to get married. Actually, he's my oldest son's father.

Interviewer: Okay.

Davis: And we both married separate people. Neither one of our marriages worked out. So God put both of us back in our own lives after I was only 22 years old. And actually, my son's grandson, I mean, my son's oldest son, who is our grandson, people would see us with him. And when they didn't see us with him, they would say, "Y'all look lost." And we would look at each other and say, "Why did they think we look lost?" And I asked them one day. I said, "Why y'all think we look lost?" They said, "Well, we've never seen y'all without y'all's little boy." And me and him both would look at each other and start smiling, and then I'd



say, "What little boy? We don't have no little boy." They said, "Yes, y'all do. That little boy that look just like him." I said, "That's not our little boy. That's our grandchild, which we raised together." But we was engaged to get married. He told me he wasn't taking "no" for a second time. So I agreed to get married and then he said, "I'll let you decide where you want to get married and who you want to marry us." So we had all that planned out. We had a real bad snow storm here one year, and his mother called me and said, "Have he been to your house yet?" And I said, "No." She said, "Well, I'm kind of worried because he hadn't gotten home from work." Well what happened was the camps had all shut down so he didn't have a way to get home. So he decided that he was going to walk from, it used to be Hill Haven nursing home, but it's another nursing home now across from the back side of Kennestone. It's closer to the women's center now across the street from the women's center. He decided that he would try to walk in the street and he said he kept slipping down, falling. So then, going back to childhood, he goes and get in the branch. That branch right back there in the back of my momma's property. He decided he would walk back from all the way from Kennestone all the way to here. By the time he got to my house, he was drenched from head to toe and I told him, I said, "You're going to have to come in and get out of these wet clothes because if you don't, you're going to be sick." I think it was a week later he called me at work and he said, "I've got this terrible cold and I can't get rid of it." And so, I called and made an appointment for him to go to the doctor. So he went to the doctor. He called me at work and said, "I got a little sad news for you." And I said, "What?" He said, "I'm going to have to go into the hospital and have some tests ran." And I'm thinking, "What for?" Anyway, to make a long story short, he ended up having to go in the hospital. They found two little lumps on his esophagus wall. So they brought in a specialist and the specialist said to me, he said, "I think we caught them in time, but they don't have the equipment for us to do the procedure here at Kennestone. So we're going to have to take him to Cobb [General 00:00:23:47]." And he said, "He's going to need somebody to go down with him." And I said, "Well, I can't go because I have a grandson gets out of school and my son goes to work when he gets out of school, so there's not going to be anybody." I said, "But I can come up here afterwards. My son can take my grandson to work with him because my son worked over at the Ritt or the girl's club." But anyway, I went back to the hospital and they told me, the doctor that did the procedure told me, that they had caught it in time. He would only have to have two treatments of chemo. Well, the doctor that I had recommended him to go to in the beginning, when he started doing his chemo treatments, he gave him entirely too much. Things started happening, but I couldn't put it together and his mother couldn't put it together. We just knew things was happening. So one day she called me and she said, "I need you to come over here." And I said, "Why?" She said, "Well, Cecil can't find his watch that you gave him for his birthday and he's having a fit." So I go over to his mother's house, and I go in his room because he's laying on his bed. And I said, "Your mother said you can't find your watch." So I started looking for the watch and I couldn't find it. So I went around on the side of his bed by the windows, and when I got on the side by the windows, my foot touched something on the floor. So I didn't say anything. I just reached down and picked up what I saw on

the floor. And when I picked it up, I saw that it was his watch. Seiko watch, very expensive watch. He didn't realize that he had torn it all to pieces, but it was because of the chemo. The last time he had to be rushed to Kennestone hospital, and I didn't know until after I got home from work and went over there. Because I was supposed to meet him there. And me and him and my grandson was going to come home to my house. But by the time I got to his mother's house, nobody was there. So I went across the street to my cousins house since I thought they play checkers and stuff together lots during the day. So by the time I got over there and knocked on the D. [Deb's 00:25:55] door, and he said, "Come in." And I came in and I said, "Cecil here?" And he said, "No." He said, "They didn't call you?" I said, "What do you mean they didn't call me?" He said, "They had to rush him to the hospital today." I guess I really wasn't thinking because I walked. I literally walked from behind the bus station all the way to Kennestone. That's how concerned I was. By the time I had got up there, they had sent his mother home. That's what the nurse told me because they felt like that she needed to go home and eat and take her medicine. Well, I went back and they let me see... The tall specialist that was in the room with him, he asked me was I Miss Blunt and I said, "No, I'm his fiancé." So he said, "Do you know who his doctor is?" And I said, "Yes, I do." And he said, "Well, the reason I want to know who his doctor is, because whoever his doctor is or was has administered entirely too much chemo to him. And because of that, it has resulted into him losing his eyesight." I can't remember if it was his left eye or his right eye, but I know it was one of them. And then, he said, "Also it has destroyed most of the brain cells on his brain." They had his hands and feet tied down with the sheet. So the specialist went out of the room, and then he, and while he was out of the room, my fiancé asked me to untie his hands and his legs, his feet, rather. And I said, "No, I can't do that." And I explained to him why I couldn't is because they didn't want him to hurt himself because of the extent of the chemo that had did the damage. He went from there to the VA hospital because he was in the Navy. I didn't get a chance to go down to see him. I can't remember how long it was, but he was having a fit. So his family picked me up and took me down there, and I told them, I said, "I'm not going to go in. I'm going to stand in the hallway, and you all go in first, and we'll let him think that I didn't come." So by the time they got in the room, I could hear him all the way in the hallway. He was just ranting in and raving, "Y'all came down here and didn't bring her?" So I walked in the room and I said, "What are you in here doing all this fussing for?" So that big smile he always had came on his face and I kept thinking that particular moment, I said, "Oh, he's going to pull through this." Even though I remembered what the specialists had told me the damage that it had done. Because he was his normal self. He was sitting up in the bed and I said, "What did you eat today?" And he said, "I only had coffee." And I said, I looked at my watch, and I said, "You only had coffee and it's 12:30 in the day?" I said, "You never had any breakfast?" He said, "No, I just had coffee." So I said, "Wait, just one moment." I turned around and walked out of the room. I went to the receptionist window and I said, "Mr. Blunt, in room," whatever the room number was, I said, "He said he hadn't had any breakfast today. He had only had coffee." I said, "So can y'all give him some food?" And she said, "Oh sure. Yes ma'am." So I said, "Well, if you want me to, I'll stand right here and

wait and I'll take the food to him." So she said, "That's fine." So I took the food in the room to him. He ate every bite of food. And then I said, "How do you feel now?" He said, "I feel much better." But he said, "If I could just go," he said, "I've got a slight headache and if I could just go home and take something for this headache, I would be okay." But me not really letting it really sink in right at that moment, he didn't mean go home to this earthly home. He meant he was ready to go to his heavenly home. That was on a Sunday. Me and his sister-in-law went down three days later because she said she wanted to go see him because she hadn't been to see him. Once we got there, she said, "do you remember what room he was in?" And I said, "Yes, he's..." And I pointed, I remember as if it was yesterday. I took my finger and I pointed, I said, "He's right down the hall in that last room." Well, the minute I pointed, the Holy spirit turned my whole body around. When the Holy spirit turned my whole body around, I looked straight in this room and I saw this man slumped over in a old [spool 00:30:28] Dish. I remember from being in one in Smyrna and they had a white sheet tied around him. And I just... I didn't scream out, but I remember crying and I said, "Oh my God." And she looked and we both, I will always remember, we both fell to our of knees in that corridor of the VA hospital, and we were crying. And then she said, "We can't go in there and let him, see us like this." She said, "We got to get up off the floor. We got to dry our eyes and we got to go in there." So we did that. And then she, before we went in the room though, she said, "You think he will remember us..." No. She said, "You think he would recognize us?" And I said, "Yes." I said, "I know he will because I was just down here on three days ago." So we got halfway in, well halfway where from I'm sitting from you. We were here. And he was over there, and the corridor was out here. So she said, "You sure he's going to know us?" And I said, "Yes." So she said, "Cecil, do you know who this is?" He never looked up. He never spoke, and she just kept talking to him. But I kept observing the fact that he never looked up at us. He never spoke. He just sit there with his head kind of slumped. And I can't remember how many weeks it was. Not even weeks. It was a few months because I will always remember. It's very easy for me to always remember because his niece called me on the 4th of July and said to me, she was crying, and she said, "Auntie, he's gone." And I said, "What?" She said, "He's gone." And the first thing I thought about was his your mother. Because his mother, at that particular time, I think his mother was in her seventies. And I said, "I'll be up there as soon as I can get over there." But he ended up, he passed on the 4th of July. We were supposed to be getting married. That was in... He was 45 years old. I remember that he was 45 and I was 44. I will always remember it because he's just a year older than me. He was born October the 10th, 1943 and I was born February 14, 1944. But we were born on the same street. He always told me that when we were little, growing up, and his sister still tells me to this day, she said, "I don't know why you can't remember him giving you those little yellow flowers." I said, "I don't remember him. I don't remember none of y'all. I can tell you who I do remember, but it's not you all. I don't remember none of you all and I have a good memory." And I think that's why she always kept saying, "I don't know why you can't remember us" I said, "I don't." I said, "I remember my grandfather talking about your brother, whose name is Willie James. But my granddaddy named him Shorty Blunt because he was little. But

he was old, but he was little. He looked like a little kid. And my grandfather named him Shorty Blunt and he would always say, "Shorty Blunt, go tell your mom and daddy you're going to a store for me to get me some snuff." So he would always let him go to the store and get him snuff. But that was when East Fourth Street was not paved. It was dirt. I can remember that. The street was dirt. After you cross Lemon Street and go up the hill, that was dirt. My mother told me that there was not houses up there. She said that was the dumping ground where the people dump their trash. But now, there's been houses there for years now. And now, it's really developed over there now.

Interviewer: Well, let's talk about Lemon Street Elementary. You would've come there in fourth grade?

Davis: Right.

Interviewer: And how many years did you go there?

Davis: I went from fourth grade to '63.

Interviewer: Okay. And can you describe a typical day? A school day? How did you get to school and then, what did you do?

Davis: Well, we'll go back to fourth grade. Fourth grade, Robinson Court was like here, the spray pool was here and the school was here. So all I had to do was come downstairs, walk across the spray pool and walk down the steps in I was at school. That was in the fourth grade, fourth and fifth grade. Sixth and seventh grade, I had to go through... Well, I had gotten promoted to the sixth grade. The sixth grade was the annex building. That building that they're fixing to remodel back there that they tore down. That was what we called the annex. That's what we called it. We didn't call it the middle school. We called it the annex. I would have to walk down the steps again and I could walk straight across the porch and go to school there. Then, they took the annex across the street and put it in the high school. And over there we had the seventh and eighth grade over there. Because Mr. Preston Williams taught one. He taught the seventh grade. Mr. Watson taught the other seventh grade. Mr. Aaron Adams taught the eighth grade and Ms. Betsy Owens taught the other eighth grade. So we'd exchange classes. That part was my favorite part because that was high school. That was my favorite part. I loved every teacher that I had, but Mr. Lewis Scott was my favorite out of all of them. He will always be my favorite.

Interviewer: Why was he your favorite?

Davis: Because we had the largest class that was in Lemon Street, but we also had the worst boys in the class. Because they were literally hanging him out the window by his feet and he was... I guess we enjoyed the drama that the boys made in the classroom. But Mr. Scott was, really, Mr. Scott was... Every single person that has ever went through Lemon Street school, loved Louis Scott. He was, I

mean, he was a teacher that, he was always concerned about you getting an education. He was a no nonsense teacher in the classroom even though he had... He put a lot of laughter in it. Because I remember so many days he used to tell me, "Uh, Ms. Hill. Uh, you need to stop daydreaming over there." And I'm thinking, "What is he talking about?" And he would say, "Mr. [Grisham 00:34:53] is not in this classroom. He is at a Savannah State College and you need to concentrate on your lesson." And he was real good about giving the demerits. I don't know if you know about demerits. Man, he was the only teacher that I ever knew that gave demerits. I mean, if you did anything out of the ordinary in his classroom, you got demerits. But the girls, we didn't get too many demerits. The boys, they was always getting demerits.

Interviewer: What did you wear to school?

Davis: My favorite thing to wear to school was ballerina...We called them pleated toes back then. But they're actually ballerina shoes. We would go to Murray's shoe store on the square. All of us girls wore them. We kept a lot of black shoe polish on. But if you wore them and it was raining, you didn't have no shoes. They would come apart. But my favorite thing to wear to school was those ballerina shoes. I wore flair tail skirts, v-neck sweaters. I didn't wear jeans to school. My mother didn't allow us to wear jeans to school. So I mostly wear flare tail skirts, v-neck sweaters, bobby socks and ballerina shoes.

Interviewer: Okay. And what... Sort of describe, I mean, I know what it looks like. I've been there. But describe the building at Lemon Street Elementary, like where you came in at the beginning of the day.

Davis: Well, where I came in, because of where we lived at, I just came... We lived at, I can't remember the building number, but it was young Robinson Court. We lived upstairs on the end and I would, me and my sister would just come down the steps, walk down the walkway, walk across the spray pool, go down the steps and go in the door. Because our classroom was the second classroom that you went through once you went through the double doors. Our classroom was on the left hand side. That was Ms. [Lathonia Robinson 00:19:24]. And then, when I got to fifth grade, my fifth grade teacher was another teacher that I loved. She was Dr. [Canty 00:39:33] who worked with Dr. [Welgess 00:39:36]. She was his wife. And she taught us in fifth grade. Everybody loved her like everybody loved Ms. [Lathonia Robinson 00:19:43]. But I very seldom went out the front door of the elementary school because I live so close to the back door. I always went in the back door.

Interviewer: Okay.

Davis: I never went through out the front door at all.

Interviewer: The cafeteria, did you bring your lunch or did you eat what was there?

Davis: Well, now, when we first moved back up here, my mother used to fix us a lunch, and my brother, who's in there, he used to bring out a lunch to us. And he would bring it to the window, and then me and my sister [inaudible 00:40:17] would go outside and get it. But then, once we got in fifth grade, from fifth grade on, we ate in the lunchroom.

Interviewer: And what subjects were you learning?

Davis: In elementary?

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Davis: Math, reading. We had Math, Spelling, and English. And then, once we got to junior high, we still had math, English, and reading. I want to say we had, not geometry, we had mathematics.

Interviewer: Did you have adequate supplies, textbooks, things like that?

Davis: What they did, we got all the old books from Marietta High School were given to us. We never had brand new books. We always had used books from Marietta High School.

Interviewer: What condition were they in?

Davis: They were in fairly good condition. We could tell that they were used, but that they had backs on them. The backs weren't tore off of them. They had backs on them, but you can tell when a book's been used.

Interviewer: Okay. Did you participate in any extracurricular activities?

Davis: I played softball.

Interviewer: What age were you?

Davis: Ninth, tenth. Ninth and tenth grade, I played softball.

Interviewer: Where practice-

Davis: I did field and track.

Interviewer: Oh, okay. Where were the practice fields?

Davis: Right there at the central office... Well, not the central office. The alternative school right there. That was our football field. That's where we had PE, that's where we practiced field and track, that's where the band practiced, that's where we played football until we bought Turner cathedral parking lot is now. Because, actually, when we bought that football field, I was no longer in school,

and I was working in the lunch room. And what we would have to do on Friday nights because they didn't have... they had concession but not concession where you could actually fix the food down there, so we had to fix the food in the lunchroom and then we had to walk it down to the field. But they had a thing there where we could get behind there and sell the hot dogs, hamburgers, or whatever we did that night, we could sell it to the students.

Interviewer: So, the lunchroom was in charge of concessions down at the football field?

Davis: Right.

Interviewer: Okay. And are you talking about the lunch room at the high school?

Davis: No, lunchroom at the elementary. I cooked in the lunchroom at the Lemon Street Elementary School, the one that's still there now, that's named Hettie Wilson Library. That's where I worked at. My husband worked there as a janitor.

Interviewer: Okay. So, how long did you work there?

Davis: I worked there from '66 to '67.

Interviewer: And was that your first job out of school?

Davis: No.

Interviewer: What was your first job after graduating?

Davis: My first job after graduation was I used to go with my mother and my aunt, I started working at a very early age, like 12, 13, I would go with them to work because I was always taught to work from knee high to adult from that lady right there, my grandmother. So, I would clean the bathrooms. My mother showed me how to iron clothes, and I knew how to mop a floor. So, that's what I did then. Once I was really still in high school and right after high school, I guess maybe about, I would say, 14 or 15, I had my first job by myself. I would catch the Greyhound bus, go to Belmont Hills, get off the bus, someone would pick me up, and then take me to their house and I would clean their house. I did that for many, many years. And then, my third job was I started teaching Head Start at Wright Street School in Louisville. Then I went from there to Austell road to teach Head Start. I taught Head Start three years in Louisville, three years on Austell Road. Then I worked at Hickory Hills... Not Hickory Hill, I worked at West Side School. I worked in the clinic, and I was assistant to one of the teachers in first grade class with my oldest grandchild. I did numerous jobs.

Interviewer: Okay. So, in working in the lunch room at Lemon Street, who did you get that job through? Was it the principal or...

Davis: Well, the lady that was over the lunch room, the original lady that was over the lunch room, who was Ms. Porter, I knew her from when I was in school, and I knew Ms. Eloise Adams from when I was in school, and I knew Ms. Betty Nelson when I was in school because they was the first three original peoples that was over lunch a when I was in school. Ms. Porter no longer worked once we got out of school because she was too old, so Ms. Nelson and Ms. Sweet Thing was still there. And then, other ladies worked there. But I knew all of the ladies that worked in the lunchroom. I knew them because they either lived in the projects with us or they lived in houses around the surrounding area. So, I think, if I remember correctly, I may have gotten a job through my husband who worked there before I did.

Interviewer: And tell me his name.

Davis: Charles C. Davis Sr.

Interviewer: Okay. I want to quickly ask you about the place you lived at Fort Hill. Can you describe the... Is it an apartment? Is that what you'd call it?

Davis: Apartment. Apartment.

Interviewer: And can you describe it? Like what floor and how big it was?

Davis: Okay. There was one, two, three, four. The two end apartments upstairs and downstairs was only two bedrooms. The four middle apartments was three bedrooms because all of the people... Well, the Braves, I'll use them for example. We lived on this end... Well, we lived upstairs on this end, and Rebecca and Felton Anderson lived down under us. Across the hall from us and downstairs across the hall from us, it was the Brave family. Their family was so big they had to have two apartments. Then the next porch over was my relative, Dana Grogan, who was married to AJ Smith, they lived downstairs. Richard Crawford, one of the young men that's out there on that picture of the All Star team, his mother and dad and his sister and brothers, they lived upstairs over my cousin. Then across the hall from them was Marvie, which we called her Marvie, but she was Ms. Heat. She lived across the hall upstairs, and down under her was the Millers, another girl that we went to school with.

Interviewer: Wow. So, you remember every single person.

Davis: I can even remember everybody lived in the building across there and across there too.

Interviewer: So, you knew everybody?

Davis: Yeah, I knew everybody.



Interviewer: And you showed me some pictures of your sisters in the... There was a nursery. And tell me, who was watching over the nursery? How was that managed?

Davis: Okay. And Ms. Pauline Walker, whose son, oldest son that was a doctor... He works at [inaudible 00:48:23] Shelton's now. She was over the nursery, it was Ms. Pauline Walker, Ms. Francis Russo. They were the first two people that I remember. My two oldest children went there when Ms. Walker was over it. My youngest sisters went there when she was over it. My two oldest children went there when they were over it. After they got too old, then it was my next door neighbor, who was my oldest daughter's godmother, Lola Phillips Jones, because she was married then. She was over it. And John James, I don't know if you've heard that name. Okay? He was over it. He was a man. And Sarah Nichols. They were the three that was over the nursery.

Interviewer: Was it his own room? Like his [crosstalk 00:49:13].

Davis: No, it was separate. If we go out this door, go up the street, go down Cole Street, cross the little creek right there, the first row of, I call them, townhouses that's right there, that's where Fort Hill nursery used to be. I remember when they demolished it last year. I remember when they tore it down and built what's there now.

Interviewer: So, all of that was there for all that time?

Davis: Yeah, for years.

Interviewer: Were there any other services there besides the nursery?

Davis: Down under the very building, that if it was still there now, it would be facing my mother's house. We had a large playground over on that side, and we had a large playground right here at the edge of our school, the high school. There was a long row of apartments, and they had a long back porch. Well, down under that porch, that's where Felicia Wilson's mother had the Girl Scouts. She was my oldest daughter's Girl Scout Troop leader. That's what was down under there, and that's where a lot of those other rooms down under there was where the maintenance people that worked for the housing authority... because they didn't have those buildings that they had when I lived in there. When I was a teenager growing up and my children was little, they stored their stuff down there in those extra rooms that Ms. Hettie Wilson did not have, because hers was in the center. And long years ago, they used to have a nursery down there, too. I'm assuming that that's probably where the original nursery was before they built Fort Hill.

Interviewer: I see. Did you know Hettie Wilson?

Davis: Mm-hmm (affirmative). We went to the same church. We've been in the same church for 99... Believe me, she was the one that kept everybody off my back in

church. She kept everybody out for everybody's back. If she liked you, nobody didn't bother you. And her daughter Felicia was the same way.

Interviewer: So, she was-

Davis: Felicia's the same way.

Interviewer: What did you think of her? Can you describe her personality?

Davis: Oh, God. Very firm, very to the point there, very likable person, no nonsense. But she believed in what was right, and she stood for what was right no matter whose feelings that she had to hurt. She didn't have a problem with that, particular if you were wrong. And what I liked about her, she was always, if a young person made a mistake, no matter what that mistake was, she was right there for you at all times. She was never a lady that criticized you or put you down because you had ever made a mistake. She was just never that type of a person, and I think that's why all of us that knew her really loved her. I got class friends that were like brothers and sisters to me that are no longer with us, that I've been right up there in Zion Church since I been [inaudible 00:52:18] some years [inaudible 00:52:19] with them that they just recently passed away. We all loved her because she just had our backs when we were young. I remember when Reverend Johnson, who was my second pastor, who married me and baptized all four of my children, I remember when he was our pastor. We had an issue there one time, and Ms. Hettie Wilson was the first one that went to him and said, "We're not going to do this [inaudible 00:12:49]. We're not putting nobody's children out of this church. These children been here all their lives, and I don't care what they've done, we're going to help them through whatever they're going through, whatever the challenge is, and they're not going to be put out of his church." That was one thing she would not let them do, put no child... Because some churches I know from firsthand experience have a serious problem with putting young kids, whether they be girls or boys, out of churches if they make mistakes in life. But she was just one of those types of person. She was not standing for that. She would literally fight for your rights.

Interviewer: Wow.

Davis: And then, I can remember her coming to our school, high school, elementary. Her, Ms. Clara Jenkins, Ms. Dot Christian, Rosetta Tobias, I can remember those women... My cousin Frank Sexton. I can remember those people coming to the school always being concerned about what was going on in that school. Those were a group of people... And all of them is in one of those books. I can't remember. I know they're in one of them because they were the main people that started this homecoming thing. They were the main people that started this homecoming thing here in Marietta, because I can remember all the way back when we were in school, we used to decorate floats like you see on the Macy's parade. We used to do that at Lemon Street. We did, every year. We were the first group of people in this city, in Cobb County that ever did that. And then, Marietta high school kind of copied us afterwards.

Interviewer: Was that for the Lemon Street parade?

Davis: Yes.

Interviewer: And how often was that held?

Davis: We had a Mayday parade, and our homecoming parade was the biggest of all. But before every football game, we had a parade. We were the only band and majorettes that went all... That's why I wanted you to see that Centennial book because that stuff is in that Centennial book. And I could not understand for the life of me why. I don't know. I think Felicia said she had the book. I didn't hear Peal say that she had the book. I think I heard Felicia say that she had the book, but I was trying to figure out why they only gave you all the little bitty small picture. And the love of my life is one of those little boys that's on that little picture in Ms. Patterson's class. But I couldn't understand why they didn't go back and get the people that was like the young man that talked to you that told you that he had pictures of his dad and his mama, when his dad was coaching and his mama was crown.

Interviewer: [inaudible 00:55:39] yeah.

Davis: Yeah. Now him, I babysitted him when he was a little baby for his mama, him and his brother, because she was my nurse when I had my third child. The doctor that she worked for was my doctor, and she was my nurse. But I knew her before she was ever my nurse. I knew her when I didn't have no children because they lived right across the street from us. I knew everybody that lived across the street, and I knew everybody lived in the building we lived in. I knew everybody that lived down the street. I knew everybody lived... My other grandmother lived on that street, had relatives that lived in that [inaudible 00:00:56:16]. Like I said, we was just all one big family, and everybody knew everybody.

Interviewer: Well, I want to talk, to move towards the end, I want to talk about the high school and your years there. I know y'all won the football championship in '63?

Davis: Well, we won-

Interviewer: I'm checking on the time.

Davis: ... we won football, we won... Well, to be honest, we won everything. We won football, we won football championships, basketball championships, field and track championships, everything that was pertaining to sports, we won it all. We won it all. And I literally can sit here and honestly tell you we won it all. We were the best. I mean, you can talk to older people that's old enough to be my ancestors will tell you Lemon Street had the best of everything.

Interviewer: And people in other schools, in other places-

Davis: Of course-

Interviewer: ... they knew that?

Davis: ... they can tell you the same thing because they came to school up here. I remember when I stayed in Vinings with my grandmother and my aunt and uncle. I used to ride the school bus back up here. And a lot of my cousins that lived down there, they rode the school bus back up here with me. But everybody loved Lemon Street from Atworth to even Cartersville, and Cartersville students didn't go to school down here. But if their parents liked the school well enough, they would make sure their children got to school down here. I mean, we have people from Atworth, Smyrna, St. John, Austell, Powder Springs. What's that other little town? Oh God, what's that other little town? I can't remember the other little town. But we had kids from all over. Are you familiar with White Circle?

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Davis: Okay. We had kids from White Circle that came to Lemon Street. Three of them was in my class. Three of them was my classmates.

Interviewer: So, I know then, there's a lot of pride, and you were graduating about that time. That was what?

Davis: '63.

Interviewer: '63. So, you graduated before Lemon Street-

Davis: Way before.

Interviewer: ... closed?

Davis: Way before. And then, I worked there right when he was getting ready to close.

Interviewer: So, did you sense in the early '60s when you were in high school a move towards... I mean, obviously, this is in the news, it was going on, but the effort to integrate the schools?

Davis: Well, to be honest with you, I'm a person that I don't like to sugar coat stuff, if you know what I mean. I like to just tell the plain Gospel truth. Now, personally, on a personal note, I watch stuff from seventh grade, eighth grade, ninth grade, tenth grade on, or stuff that I saw, and I'm not the only one that saw this. Whole lot of other people saw this, too. It was as if the white nationality was always envious and jealous of us. We always sense this. We always sense this. From day one, we sense this. Because what they would do, the police officers... I don't remember. No students. I heard some people say in the meetings, too. I don't ever remember seeing no students. I remember seeing police officers, and I

remember what those police officers did and it wasn't so nice. One of those obituaries, this obituary, this man right here, I can distinctly remember one Friday night at a football game. He was coming into the game. Two white police officers were standing outside the game because they always came down and stood and watched us because they already knew that we were the best that they was stand on the... They'd be all around the square watching us, our floats and parades and everything. This was every Friday. Even when we had May Day sometimes they would let us go all around because on Lawrence Street, which is no longer there, that cathedral out there had a historical church on the square that was much better than Zion historical building, that I grew up in. They didn't fight to save this. We fought to save ours. Across the street from there was Hantly Shelton's was right on the corner up there. A little bitty small building was right on the corner uptown. It was called the Marietta Inn. That's what they called it. It was Hantly Shelton's first, a little cafe, a Barbie shot, another cafe and then Dr. Wellington's office. When he moved from Montgomery street that's where he moved to. Him and Dr. Kenton to move on the very end and once you went around the corner it was Leaders Department store. Turner was across the street. There was a florist, there was a shoe store and there was another store on the corner. And then you turned and went down. There was another little, little, I call it a little junk store, but it wasn't a junk store it was just small. And then right down below that was Anderson Motor Company and across the street from there was the big star across the street from there was the shoe shop, the dry cleaners and then the Strand Theater that we had to go in the side door until years later. Then they started letting us go in the front door.

Interviewer: Well tell me more about the... well one second. We have about six minutes left on the tape. So what I'll have to do is take it out and-

Davis: Do it over again?

Interviewer: Like clean it off so I can do it. But talk to me a little bit more about the-

Davis: Demonstrate?

Interviewer: ... the process moving towards integration and what you saw, what you sensed.

Davis: I'll use my children for example, because see this integration stuff has never really bothered me. It really has never bothered me because my grandfather had already told me all the history pertaining to that. So I never let that bother me because in my mind I've always felt like this, if you cut yourself and I cut myself, black blood is not going to come out of me and white blood is not going to come out of you. The blood is all going to be red. So that's the way I've lived all my life for 75 years. I taught my children the same thing. My children are 57, 55, 51 and 50 and all of their lives growing up, they've just as many white friends as I have. I just raised my... My mother... Roy Barnes, he don't miss a Christmas coming in this house giving my momma something. Robin Burse don't miss a Christmas coming in this house giving my momma something. These are

people that my mother have not raised them, but she raised their children and like me and her both took care of their grandmother. We took care of their momma's momma. I took care of their momma's mom until she died in April of last year. That's what I did. I sit with her every night and then I sit with her in day. Because we're like family, I've never in my life used the "N" word. I've never in my life used the "C" word because my grandfather and my grandmother taught me from living in [inaudible 01:03:57] that was my main lesson in learning how to cope with people of different color. So I've never had a problem with color, so integration never really bothered me. It just never really bothered me.

Interviewer: Did it bother you though that the school was no longer-

Davis: Well, now-

Interviewer: The high school.

Davis: I will be honest. My heart was broken. It was really broken into a million pieces when I found out that we were not going to have that school. I will explain to you why. Because I was looking forward to my four children coming through those same school doors. My four children went to that elementary school, but they never went to junior high there and they never went to high school there. But I was looking forward to that because I was going to see my son follow in his dad's footsteps, but he had to follow in his dad's footsteps at other schools because that school was no longer in existence by the time he got to the age. Because my son started playing, my oldest son started playing football when he was six years old.

Interviewer: Right.

Davis: My youngest son started running field and track when he was 12 years old. Both of my boys run field and track all their life. They played football, basketball, they played it all. They played tennis. My oldest son travels all over the country and when I say country, I mean out of the United States playing golf to this day.

Interviewer: Yeah. Well here, let's pause there.

Davis: Okay.

Interviewer: Okay. This is James Newberry and I'm here with Tommy Davis. Beginning again. Ms. Davis, you were talking a little bit about integration and the loss of Marietta or, excuse me, of Lemon Street High School. Do you remember when they demolished the building?

Davis: I don't remember the exact month but I do remember it was in '67 and I have spoken with James Gobel who was in a meeting with us prior twice with this. He told me when we first started talking about this, he said, and we both lived on

Lemon Street at that particular time, but I don't remember them demolishing a building that particular day. But he does. He said he was on his way to the rec to work and that was the way he walked to the rec every day because most of all of us walked down Lemon Street and we went up through the projects to go to the rec, which was on Lawrence street of the swimming pool. He said he was dumbfounded when he got there and the whole front of the school was gone and he said all he could see was these tractor things and they were demolishing the gym which was out of the auditorium at the school. And he said he went down there and said, "Wait a minute, can't you all let us get some of our artifacts out of here?" He said some people did come and get some stuff, but he said he didn't get to get any because all he could see was everything crushed the pieces on the ground. But they're telling us now all I can say is what they're telling us because I haven't seen any of it. I do know that I've went to the library on Roswell street. Me and two other classmates went there specifically because we wanted to see, we already knew Hattie Wilson's stuff was there, but we were under the impression that since she had the connection that we have with the Lemon Street School, that all of the stuff would be together because Hattie Wilson Library was once upon a time Lemon Street Elementary School, which we went to probably before her children was even born. But they didn't have any, well I won't say that they didn't have it, but what the lady told us was that, because when we went over to the ministry part cause we said okay if this is all Hattie Wilson, where is the other half of Lemon Street that we felt like that should have been met with Hattie Wilson's stuff. The lady told us that the Lemon Street stuff was over on the other side of the room. So we specifically walked, the three of us, both of us specifically walk over to the other side of the room. And I was the first one looked down because she said, "It's right here." And I said, "Well if it's right here, why is the shelf empty?" I mean there was literally nothing. My question to her was why is all the rest of these shelves in here filled and Lemon Street is bare? She specifically told all three of us that I our stuff was in the basement. So one classmate who you met that I brought to the meeting at the central office, Frederick Walden. He said, "Can we go to the basement and see it?" She said, "We can't let you go down there because we're renovating." And I'm thinking, but if you've got it in a specific area, why we can't go down there and just take pictures even if we can't look at it? She said they were renovating this house. That's all she told us.

Interviewer: When was this?

Davis: This was last month. This was either the 1st of December or the 1st of November of 2019.

Interviewer: And you're talking about at Lemon Street Elementary?

Davis: Well, no, we went to the library.

Interviewer: Which one?

Davis: The library on Roswell street. The central lab.

Interviewer: Oh, okay. Okay.

Davis: Because we were told that all of Lemon Street's stuff along with Hattie Wilson's stuff was up there. So we took it upon ourselves to go up there because we, my specific class, which is class of '63 we're trying to get all of our history together ourselves. So we were going to compile it into a booklet form like this or we're going to do a hardback book. One or the other. We haven't decided what we're going to do yet because we haven't gotten everything together because we can't find half of what we really looking for. So that's why we're having to go to different classmates and say, "Okay, what do you have? What do you have?" Okay like we have one classmate that lives in Powder Springs. She says she got a box full of stuff, but she said she would have to dig in those boxes and find out which box... She got them labeled, but she said she's got so many that she would have to literally take the time to take them down one by one and look on the top of them and see which one is labeled Lemon Street stuff.

Interviewer: I see. So it's an ongoing effort.

Davis: Yeah, it's an ongoing thing. We're still working on it. We're not going to give up.

Interviewer: To finish up, can you talk to me a little bit about the legacy of the Lemon Street Schools for the larger community of Marietta today? How do you think that those schools as they operated back in the '60s-

Davis: You mean the two schools that the-

Interviewer: The elementary school and the high school, how do you think they impacted the community?

Davis: The elementary school, the annex and the high school really is the historical pinpoint of Marietta, Georgia period. It's just the historical point of this whole city because in the beginning, from what I was told, there was no Marietta high school over there. There was Lemon Street, well before Lemon Street there was Perkinson High School. Then there was the high school and then the elementary building, but I think the elementary building had to be there before the high school. I think. Who else said that? I think they got it a little mixed up because the elementary school would have had to been there and the annex. Because I can remember when we moved back up here, I was in the fourth grade and I used to look, we would be in a spray pool at night playing and I would look across the spray pool and I would always say, "What are those men doing back there in that building?" Well, at that particular time I never knew that that was the original Perkinson High School, which was later on named Lemon Street High School. I never knew that because Professor Woods would be back there with the older men in this city teaching them how to do stuff. Like I'll use these two men for instance. I don't think they were born here, but they came here at a very early age. Their family did and they married people from here. Those two brothers. The reason those two brothers ended up in brick mason is because



Professor Woods taught them that at night and they built his house up on the hill that his son is still living in today.

Interviewer: Lorenzo.

Davis: Yeah. They built that house.

Interviewer: Can you describe Professor Woods personality?

Davis: Oh God. Professor Woods along with Mr. Ruff along with Mr. Aaron Adams. Those three men. Professor Woods was a person that loved this community. I really believe that with all my heart. He loved this community. He poured his heart out in this community. He poured his heart out into helping develop young men that were no longer in school. These men that he had over there in that building at night they were full grown married men that he was teaching how to become entrepreneurs later on in life. That's the way I saw him as a person that was always interested in making you better. Well, for instance, every single teacher that we had at that school, from the principals to the teachers, that was their ultimate goal. Miss Dorothy Dyer, Miss Fred, Mr. Martin, Louis Scott, Miss Wilkins, Miss Ruby Williams, Miss Salah, Miss Watson. Every single teacher that we had in that building, they were concerned about us becoming potential citizens in this community and developing a business deal. Whether it would be through somebody else or of our own. Because like they told you all, well, I don't know if he was at that first meeting that we had right up here-

Interviewer: Not the very first.

Davis: Okay. We told the superintendent and we told the people that was in that room because I think they didn't really understand a lot of us being in tears that day because we were really hurt when that school was torn down. Because we knew that the bond that we had with the teachers, the principals, the band. We had the four best band directors that anybody... One band director came from Florida A&M, so we know that was a top notch black school in the state of Georgia. We knew that the bond was going to be broken between us and those teachers unless they stayed here in this community and not moved away where we could literally go fellowship with them. Now we have some students that still go fellowship with Miss Salah. She's real close to... That's one thing I'll give our a teachers credit for it. They were real close to all of our students. They took us as if we were their children, the principals, all the teachers. They treated us as if we were their children, not just students. They treated us like we were their children. They were always concerned about our wellbeing. Some of them would take the time out to come to your house and sit down and talk to your parents if they were having an issue with you at school. That's how devoted we were to each other. Principals, teachers, and students. We were just devoted to each other like that. So, this school it meant more to us than just being a school building. It meant more to us than just being a football team that won state championships, a basketball team that won state championships, a field and

track team that went to the top or a swimming team as far as their concerned over there at Lorne Street swimming pool. They won swimming championships every year. That stuff was vitally important to us, but the most important thing to us was that we knew that once that school was gone, the bond that we had with those teachers and those students, we knew that that was not going to be there anymore because those teachers are going to be gone. They was either going to be gone someplace else or they were going to die away and then... Because every time we lose a teacher or a classmate, we just lost one this past Saturday. Well, we didn't lose it this past Saturday, but they had a home going. It was like, "Oh God, another one of us has gone," and it's a very emotional thing for us when it comes to that school over there. It's very, very emotional and I will strongly say, I will always believe in my heart that it was because of the principals that we had and the teachers because they really cared about us. Mr. Ruff is old as he is. I don't care how many students that he had under him when he was principal, if his health will permit him to come back here and stand up and say a few words. My cousin that lives in Washington, D.C. who is now a PE teacher, them two going to come. The only reason Lewis Scott will not come because he can't remember that well anymore, but if he can remember you and he can get somebody to bring him, he going to be there. That's how devoted we were.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Davis: Students and teachers and principals.

Interviewer: Well, thank you.

Davis: I hope I didn't tire you out.

Interviewer: You didn't.

Davis: You can tell I love to talk.

Interviewer: And I think that we could almost do another interview, you know, about other things-

Davis: Right.

Interviewer: But for today I think we'll conclude there.

Davis: Okay.

Interviewer: So, let me stop the recording.

Davis: Okay.