

Interviewee: Robert Lindsay

Interviewer: John W. Cooper, III

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Location: Clapp's Chapel AME Church, 1201 NC-61, Whitsett, NC 27377

Acronyms: RL: Robert Lindsay, JC (John W. Cooper, III)

JC: Well hello everybody, my name is John Cooper and today I'm interviewing Robert Lindsey Sr. How are you doing today?

RL: Everything good.

JC: That's good. That's good. So just to get started, uh, can ask your date of birth and where you were born.

RL: Okay, February the 3rd, 1937.

JC: And where were you born?

RL: In the Whitsett area.

JC: Whitsett area. And who are your parents?

RL: Marshall Alexander Lindsay and Ruth Elizabeth Foust Lindsay.

JC: And can you tell me what your childhood was like growing up?

RL: Well, I was raised on a dairy farm and just a regular dairy farm with milk cows. Sold milk, bottles of milk and all that. {inaudible 00:58} community railway still in Whitsett area. That's where I grew up at. Worked on the farm you know milking cow getting up haying stuff of that nature, You know, a farm I guess priming sourdough, cut the corn stuff like you know. Planting wheat stuff of that nature, you know, just regular farm like a dairy farm. We have to do all that work, you know, cleaning it out stable, barn, stuff like that. I had horses, mules on that dairy farm, which is a nice life for them. And you know, hard work, but it was good.

JC: So was that your family's farm?

RL: No, it was dairy farm.

JC: Okay.

RL: Big dairy farm. Rock Creek dairy.

JC: So you and your family worked on that farm?

RL: Right. Right.

JC: And how many how many hours did you work at like during the day?

RL: Well, probably about normally in the summertime I work like maybe six seven hours doing school work about three three hours after school. I worked after I graduated from high school.

JC: And where did you go to school growing up?

RL: Oh Sedalia. {Inaudible 02:24} all at one school same school. Yeah. Graduated in 1955.

JC: From Sedalia?

RL: Yeah, same school. Had one school.

JC: So the schooling from kindergarten to 12 grade-?

RL: You see .

JC: Was all-?

RL: At that time from kindergarten, I mean from this first grade to 12th at that time till integration came in that when they separate. But Sedalia like I said was a elementary high school that was first through twelve when I was still going.

JC: So you didn't experience integration?

RL: No, no. We was segregated the whole time.

JC: What was that like for you as a student?

RL: It was nice cause that that's the way it was at that time you know. We just didn't have a lot of opportunity that the white school had because see on that farm see a lot of white people that and our friends a boy at white school we'd be working together and evening time after school they'd be telling me the thing they had like they had sport like football, basketball team, and track and all that kind of stuff. We'll see we didn't have that. We didn't have no baseball, football team, like that. They would had the you know just like you get seats and things like that, it like hand-me-down stuff. You know really. Cause you think back into 50s like that, I mean people didn't complain because that just the way it was. Well we come and ask a little bit up all neighborhood or like there everybody white and Black got along good. Wasn't no problem between races nothing like that. I mean, race relationship was good, you know community relations. So, so we were blessed that you know, you know have no you know, no interracial problem anything like that.

JC: Did you a-

RL: {Starts speaking}.

JC: I'm sorry. Were you about to say something?

RL: When I was in school, I drove a school bus too.

JC: Oh, really? Ok.

RL: Yeah. Couple of years or two years, last two years high school. Graduating 1955 in June. In June '55.

JC: Do you have any siblings? Did you have any siblings?

RL: Yeah, you had large family out of-it was twelve, twelve children in my family. I was a number of six in the middle.

JC: {Laughs}.

RL: There was five five boys and seven girls.

JC: What was that like?

RL: You know, it was good. It was good. We had a load of family, good Christian parents. We raised in a Christian home and I went to Wadsworth community out of a home church, Wadsworth congregation church. And so see I was number six child and now I'm the oldest. I got five sisters younger than I am. See I had-there five boys and seven girls. I had a little baby brother. He died when he was two years old. And so now like I say everybody gone the ones that older than I am gone so I'm the oldest one now. Which I'm 86 for February 3rd I'll be 87. So after I got out of high school my oldest brother got me a job with him in furniture. Otto's interior decorating in Greensboro. So worked out about two years after that when I went into trucking. So I had retired truck driver for forty four years.

JC: What was the company you truck for?

RL: What was that?

JC: What was the company, the trucking company you worked for?

RL: Okay now the interior decorator was Otto Zenke and the trucking company was Heir Motor Express. That was the first one. And then next one was {inaudible 07:02} I went to work for Consolidated Freightways. 24 year that where I retired from. So both of the last company union companies. So I had 30 years in with the union and retired.

JC: To backtrack a little do you have any early family memories?

RL: What you say?

JC: Early family memories?

RL: What a minute?

JC: Early like family memories growing up like Do you have any like memories that you remember? Of like your family growing up like anything fondly?

RL: What you mean? Like cousins and stuff like that?

JC: No, just like, like, you know, like a memory that you had when you're like four or five, six, something that you remember, like in detail just about your life.

RL: Oh, honestly, we just play sports after I got out of school, we had a community ball club. Let's see from '55 up to about let's see cause I was about 17 year old when I started I've been playing center up to about 37 years old. Now I was the manager of team.

JC: Okay. Okay.

RL: I married see me and my wife were married 61 year. We have five children, three boys and two girls. But the oldest boy died about-he been deceased about 10 year. 57, he had cancer and so now I have two boys and two girls. So wife, she been deceased about two and a half years now. She passed at eighty five.

JC: Gotcha. Gotcha. So what was the church that you and your family attended growing up?

RL: Yeah. Wadsworth Congregational Church over in Wadsworth. Where I was baptized. See cause and then see, I've been a member here about 60-64 year. See my wife, she belonged to a AME churches like this church here. But her home church was about four miles from here, Springville. So at the time, she was had to pass here at over Highway 61. So she started passing Clapp's Chapel, the old church that was up there. So she told me one time cause at that time I wasn't in the church, I'll run over aurora. Told myself, I'm go ahead and just join Clapp's Chapel since the same denomination. So her and the children joined down here. Which is the old church, that's where the Cemetery and so then when I went back into the church, I done went to join with them here at that time. So all the 64 years that I've been affiliated with Clapp's Chapel been a joy. Good people you know. So I had no desire to leave you know recall there was a thing. I liked it denomination you know. My activity at church, I start off like being the yardman. Me and the boys used to take care of camp and they would think I had to get them a {inaudible 10:56} three boys. So we didn't take any pay you know. The church, the {inaudible 11:05} to be aloud in the cemetery and people want to, I wouldn't even take no gas money. I was just doing it, you know out of love. And then from there, they put me on Trustee Board. Worked on trustee board for a number of years. Then thats when- see the pastor that married and my wife was J.R. Cheeks. He was a pastor at that time. So he went and married me and my wife and then like I say, he was there, he was a pastor 33 years cause he was pastor already when I joined the church. And so he was pastor and retired. When he retired he you know then I been here under all the pastors that been here. So we always had a good relationship that sales on trustee board, stewart board pro town. That's like a Chairman, stewart board. Which I'm still on the stewart board. Two choir, senior choir and a male chorus. I was on the usher board for a year and then I taught Sunday school for about {inaudible 12:28}. So that was the postion out here I had at the church you know. So I'm still into the choir, the senior choir and the male chorus. Stepped down from the other things once I got you know a certain age. Once you pay eighty years old you need to sit down. Let all young people you know to bring better joy and then community activity. I mean, I have-Whitsett Ruritan club. I remember that, that was all white, when we first started. Started

the club, I'm one of the charter members. Which I'm still a member there. In that thirty, thirty-eight years actually I'm the oldest member now. This white club cause there aint never been over three black in the club.

JC: What was the club again?.

RL: Huh?

JC: Was the club again.

RL: Whitsett, Greater Whitsett Ruritan Club. A white club but it started integrated. When I started a club here so the three of us Black that they solicited we were more than able just three of us joined you know go a lot Black people at a town was dying you know like to- I don't know what was scared of white people {laughs}. But anyway, so I've been here this past May for thirty-eight years. I got a Ruritan forever like I say now cause I don't have to pay any dues or anything you know. Ypur name go in the main off up in Dublin, Virginia on a plaque up there you know or people have been in like a Ruritan. What they call it, Ruritan forever. So you be a member, lifetime member you know. You don't have to pay dues or anything. And then I'm on the Whitsett board of Rec at the Whitsett Fire Department. Been on there twenty-four years, still there and I'm the only Black on there. It was just two of us Black. All that been there was {inaudible 14:40} Smith. He was a mayor, he was the first mayor of Whitsett, he died. And so then he would when he got built a fire station where he one of the charter members at the fire station and then when I retired 24 year they on me about joining since I was on the Ruritan club. But I didn't join cause I told them I would after I retire because you know when you driving a truck like that you dont know. When you get off, "Like come on now". No I like attend meetings when I'm off. So just as soon as I retired in '99 they called, "You ready"?. {Laughs}. And the thing that tickled me. Joined the club. So that next year, they had a meeting every year have annual meeting and so we had people going off the board so they asked me about would I join and thank be to God. Had my name and said just a few people and round there that really knew me you know got a lot of young people. So I had to vote that night and I regulate they said he had-need to have some more Blacks. Uncle Oscar he was on a black on the board. {Laughs}. Do you know I got the most votes. It was kinda of funny really. But anyway so he died, {Inaudible 16:15} and them there probably bout eight year. I'm the only Black we had over and I asked the {inaudible 16:21} the fellow who head the church you know go here help if any of us know somebody you know see if they want to serve. Ain't get none of us to serve you know. So I'm getting ready to retire I mean, you know for both but my age now cause eyesight not-seems like I got glaucoma. But it's been good but I like I say you know some of us our race like when they opened the door integration, alot of us I don't know whether we just didn't fear for the white race or just what? But I mean I've always seen my daddy he was great work in the church. Didn't have any education but he's a head trustee or or took care of ground, grave digging, and all that stuff. Used to have to dig graves by hand. So i used to, me being the youngest boy after my little brother died twelve five years out I would go him up church, help clean the church, stuff like

that. And that what inspired me to do volunteer work you know and life been good to me I tell you. God has blessed me with good health all my life, up to about eighty years old when I started having glaucoma. And then I had some kidney stone. Had them crushed. Got that straighten out. Now then last year they found a little cancer in my bladder, took that treatment. It was a new treatment they had what you call b b c g. It's not chemo radiation. It's just some they like {inaudible 18:16} down to your penis so your bladder. Take about five minutes or so. Go in your bladder and then you go home. Lay down for two hour you have turn every 50 minutes, left side, stomach back and right side for 50-every 15 minutes for two hours. Then after two hours you know you go to the restroom and urinate because you can't urinate during that time for six treatment. So I went back last month after I finished the treatment. Run that thing down you the light be amazed at everything looked good. He told me I go back for January. You know see how thing that goin and he said now, on that if you need to go back through the same thing you know. It's not painful anything like that. You know? We just found in one of my physical cause I'll always say you get my age you'll have like your annual prostate exam and everything about then about once a year. You know what I mean? Like I wouldn't found it at that time. But everything been good. I've had a good life if I tell you the truth. Good Wife as I can say it.

JC: Do you feel your passion for volunteering? Your passion for volunteering? Did you pass that down to your children by any chance?

RL: I ain't understand you.

JC: Your passion for volunteering? Did you pass that down to your family members? Your children?

RL: I don't know? None of the boys don't have it yet. You talking about the cancer?

JC: Oh volunteering, like your passion for volunteering?

RL: Yeah my daughter, my oldest daughter. I tell her she doing too much though. Yes, she in everything. She a member here. Secretary of church {inaudible 20:19} grandson, he's on {inaudible 20:24} he just got out of college like a two years ago he came back working doing a good job. The oldest boy, Robert Jr., he's working. He be drive truck route too. But he starting now to be more involved in church and he hadn't been but he always been a member here but you know how some children do. My baby boy he lived down in Lake Walk Mark down next to white folk. He's a truck driver also and so he goes to his mother-in-law's a preacher down, holiness church. He go to her church you know. Then my baby girl she was the member, but she go to know another church out in Gibsonville . Her husband a member here. So he tryna get to come back. She was here with some {inaudible 21:19} . Some of them had bad one of the pastors one time and left you know. But her whole family belonged here at one time really. Now, but everything good really. See anything else you need?

JC: One last thing, so I like to end interviews with asking interviewees if they have any advice or words of wisdom to the younger generation anybody who's watching this video?

RL: The advice I have to all young, accept God. Accept Christ and when you accept Christ, then go to work, let the Spirit lead and guide the right you. Lean not unto your own understanding because our life has already plans the fact when you were born. Out life a plan from birth to the grave. {Inaudible 22:15} he tells us not to need our own understand so as long as we put our trust in him keep the faith, you're gonna be alright. But what happened when we make our own decision? See God got our decision I already made, already planned. But we go, "Well I'm gonna do this, I'm gonna do that". Everything that we go to we supposed pray and ask the Lord. He said, "Lord reguide direct me" because it's already planned. Did you know that?

JC: Mmhmm (affirmative)

RL: You did?

JC: A little bit.

RL: Oh, are you familiar with church?

JC: I mean, I mean yeah, I got to Sunday church.

RL: What have now-See now there's a difference between a Christian and a born again Christian. Okay. See now I can act like a Christian, I can walk like a Christian, and talk like a Christian. But the spirit tells we must be born again before we get into heaven. Okay, so when you put God first and your life and keep his commandments, 10 commandments, okay that's it law okay. The more you go to church, the more you read your Bible, more you pray for understand. See, now you got to be super real. I mean, just can't go to something like that. You read it and and ask the Lord for understanding. Okay. Then when you get in church you start alright attending Sunday school, Bible study. See cause like I says see you got to put God first in your life. He the owner of everything, okay. He give us free will. Now, we can serve him or the devil, he gives us a choice. That's how good he is. Okay. So once we accept him my Lord. Like us, he owns us anyway. Everything about him because like I say that you didn't pick your parents did you?

RL: Sorry?

JC: You didn't pick your parents. Did you?

RL: Oh, no I didn't.

JC: Okay, so that goes to us. He's the creator of everything he picked our parents. There where he tell us to honor thy father and mother regardless where they've separated or you born out of wedlock or what, you got to honor.

RL: Okay that's written by him creating us, picking our parents. That's where he planned now life before we born. He knew, from our birth to our death. What are life, what he had planned for us. But when we go lean in our own understanding, thing don't work right sometime with them, have it bad, no. Sometime he allow us to make mistakes, step back, "When, where, why am I here? We didn't follow his instruction. See we think we having bad luck sometime, but he got our, got

his hands on us to chastise us trying to get us to come on back me. So that's the advice I give people. Accept Christ. See just like I say, the sin that we commit like that once we accept him, he will for- Now he gonna punish us, but he throw the whole thing in a sea of forgiveness. They don't come up with it until you know regardless what you do. See, that's the good part about he will forgive me for all mistakes that we done If we truly earn his repent. They come back to him, he stand with Christ. When he died on the cross for sins of the world, that for all of us. So if anybody wound up in Hell, it's our fault. So he don't send us down and we send ourselves. Now think about it, If I'm not obedient to his word, I gon live like I want to don't never repent, get right him, downstairs I'm going. He didn't send, I send myself. See he give us a choice, free will. Okay, anything else.

JC: That's it for me. I appreciate you giving your time to come out and speak to me. talk to me.

RL: That's it.

JC: Yeah. Thanks, man.

RL: Okay.