

Interviewer: Good evening. My name is Shirley Guion and I am here as your interviewer about "African American Voices Between Two Rivers."

Thank you so much for inviting me into your home.

Hosts: Good day, I am Jessie White. Welcome to 1904 Chestnut Avenue here in the city of New Bern, North Carolina.

My formal name is, Jessie Mae Annette Daves White, born on December 6, 1938 on a Tuesday at 416 Bern Street, New Bern, NC.

Presently married to Lee Alphonso White. Wedding date November 28, 1958 had two children Tonnye and Bradley Andre Daves White. Tonnye is now a lawyer living in Alexandria, Virginia with her family. Atty. Patrick Douglas Conner and Madeline Mae Conner (2006- ) Bradley was hit by a car at the age of eight (1974-1982).

Shirley my name was significant simply because mother insisted that I was to be her last child. Jessie originated from the first name of both grands (maternal). Jesse and Jessie Mae is taken from the oldest sister, Katherine "Mae". Annette (paternal family name and I married a White. (L.A.W.) I was the first Queen of J.T. Barber and robed in gold and white with a crown and float of roses was my eighth grade highlight.

My paternal grandparents were agriculturalist. As farmers they had fourteen (14) children that worked the fields and cared for the farm animals. My dad was the eldest work the mother lands and marketed the goods to attend college at Knoxville College in Tennessee. Later after undergrad, Dad attended ~~Megarry~~ <sup>MEGARRY</sup> Medical School and became a Surgical Dentist a D.D.S. (1924). As a Dental (Oral) Technician he was hired in the schools of North Carolina to care for school children and later after fourteen years he became New Bern's (1928) first Doctor of Dental Surgery. All races, colors, and creeds including prisoners were in his daily care. His testimonies are in our present day citizens minds and his work lives on today in the people to was cared for by Dr. Ira Alexander Daves, Sr. (D.D.S.)

Winifred Ernestine Turrentine Daves is from Athens, Alabama. Jesse Turrentine and Jessie Wilson Turrentine were married and had four children. Namely Katherine Mae Turrentine, Winifred Ernestine Turrentine, Emily Turrentine and Joseph Turrentine. All for the Turrentine children went to Taladega College except Winifred. My mother went to Knoxville, Tennessee, where she met my daddy, Ira Sr.

You see my grandmother, Jessie Wilson taught English at Talladega College. Grandpa Jesse Turrentine was a chaplain. (By the way, I visited the campus last year and saw all the oak trees Papa Turrentine planted on campus and saw the picture of my Aunt Emily in the Fine Arts Building.)

My parents: Dr. Ira Alexander Daves and Winifred E. Daves both attended Atlanta, Georgia's Atlanta University (1928) Today (2009) Atlanta University is Clark University in Atlanta, Georgia. Atty. Donald Pollock of Kinston, North Carolina read my mothers' thesis recently and called to tell me so.

The four children of Dr. Daves' family were: Gladys Marie Daves (Johnson-St. Augustine College), Dr. Ira Alexander Daves, Jr. M.D., FCCP, FACP (Los Angeles-Mount Siani Hospital), Wynona Elizabeth Daves (Rhem) (Eppo) Jessie Mae Annette Daves White. Our residence was 416 Bern Street, New Bern, North Carolina.

Lawyer O'Hara welcomed my daddy to New Bern in 1926. His wife, Mrs. O'Hara taught seventh grade at West Street School.

Interviewer:

Alright, let me ask you this. Could you describe yourself and your family that you grew up with in New Bern, like pre-school memories, games, and toys, and all of that when you were going to school?

J. White: I traveled with mother. Winifred E. Daves was the supervisor teacher of Jones County, therefore the first grade was not clear as a beginning for me because I was always in school from birth:

2<sup>nd</sup> Mrs. Wyatt Redding; 3<sup>rd</sup> Mrs. Nann Seath; 4<sup>th</sup> Mrs. Buchanan; 5<sup>th</sup> Mrs. Esther Powell; 6<sup>th</sup> Mrs. Ruth Houston; 7<sup>th</sup> Mr. Percy Jenkins; 8<sup>th</sup> Mr. Wallace Booker (1<sup>st</sup> Queen of JT Barber); 9<sup>th</sup> Mrs. Mary Daniels; 10<sup>th</sup> Mr. Grover C. Fields; 11<sup>th</sup> Mrs. Martha Faison; 12<sup>th</sup> Mr. Warren Keyes. All the classmates of 1956 were the first class to graduate J.T. Barber.

Interviewer:

Could you name and describe some of the things that you took part in high school?

J. White: The choir, band, cheerleading, majoretting, baton competitions, basketball and talent shows. We played kick-ball, jump boards, jumping double dutch, bicycle decorating, piano recitals, Omega Talent Hunt, Debutante Ball, Proms and many socials, including mother and daughter teas and open street skating parties, trips to amusement parks and Washington, DC etc.

Interviewer:

What kind of community did you live in?

J. White: My neighborhood was first class Americana because I had a bricked streets with curbs and crepe myrtle's lined the streets with two story homes and friendly rich neighbors all who were sober and cultured.

However, my next door neighbor was a funeral home "Whitley's Funeral Home". The Dudley followed to the left. A family Daves garden of flowers was adjacent at the right driveway toward the apartments and Red Cross Building. A right to New Street and Bern Street intersection on to Queen Street called "Frog Pond." The Red Cross Building (1902) was the place where Dr. Ira A. Daves' Dental Office reside. Upstairs were also apartments and W.T. Lewis Insurance Office. The annexed building housed The



Burton Family upstairs and The Medical Offices of Dr. Burton, M.D. and Dr. Johnson, M.D. below on first level.

Mother planted in the garden daily. Verbenias, rose (variations of...) Southern orchids, Lillies, snowballs, snapdragons, hollyhocks, pertunias, fireflies, pansies, violets . . . Treces; pears; pecans, peaches, etc...

Dad never knew when he'd have a patient, therefore he'd water with the hose to assist mother in the garden. He had immaculate fingers and hands. So, I lived in elegance. Having sixteen (16) rooms; five upstairs bedrooms and two and a half baths plus a sleeping porch and hallway lined with classical library books and an attic for storage and huge closets to store our clothes toys and extras, Gladys had an evening gown closet built up of the floor.

Mother color-coded our rooms pinks on organza pink for Wynona and Jessie. Military blue with stars for Ira's room, mint green for Gladys with mirrors and oyster white and antiques with a bed with poles in my parents room. The entrance was a walk across on the fifth step level above the sidewalk and a panel glass (belved) paneled door back side and a belved door panel as well – The bells chimed on ring.

Down the stairs you entered two living rooms with an arch way onto the other with a fireplace adjacent to both living rooms off left was the front porch was enclosed in mirrors and windows before the terrace outer area. Inside toward the rear was the dining room, kitchen and laundry/bathroom and showing rooms. Moved on downward into the basement where the ping/pong table and boilers, coal bins etc.

Our home was with Chipendale furniture, dishes went from floor to ceiling – Literacy – I washed dishes four days to have my valentine guest to come in. Dunkin' donuts – Beautiful curtain – heavy drapes. I know many think I fabricate – so please ask townsmen and neighborhood friends.

Mother loved people. Socializing was her forte. Guests from all over the world celebrated life in our home. We had concerts from pianist from Africa, Club meetings weekly. We all cooked and set the table from daily to weekly in different areas. We crocheted made tablecloths; bedspreads, pocket books. Painted panels, upholstered furniture, made our dresses, aprons, embroidered, tatted, macramé, corking arts, we made pocket books etc... needle point and stenciling.

Interviewer:

Did you and your sister give "Recitals or Concerts" YES

J. White: Wynona and I (Never with Gladys) She wasn't at home during our years of growing up. I would sing and Wynona would play. "Bless this House" was traditionally played before dinner. We all helped in Gladys's Senior Recital at Egan Hall. (1949)

Interviewer:

Has your community changed since you grew up there?

J. White: We couldn't maintain the residence and had the property cleared. It's a vacant lot today all but the name hidden under the grass surfaces unknown to anyone except me. The expense of cleaning up has been enormous, but I know that would be what my parents would have expected. I was thirteen years old when my daddy passed in 1952. That was my ninth grade year. In 1958, my mother died my sophomore, first semester while attending North Carolina Central University.

Interviewer:

Tell us more about your college life.

J White: All of us completed college. Gladys had a BA degree in Music from Howard University. She also studied at St. Augustine in Raleigh, Ira, Jr. attended Howard University undergrad and Howard Medical schools. He finished with all A's and now has Endowment Fund honors in his name in Cardiology. Wynona finished St. Augustine and not only has a BA degree but was Queen in (1959-1960). Jessie received a BS degree (1960) from NCCU. Dormitory counselor and on the Student Council, Library Staff and taught 110 and 120 Biology my junior and senior semesters. Was hired but wanted to go home instead. My name was among the listed for Queen my senior year. Lee Alphonso White and I married November 28, 1958 in the court house of Raleigh. He was attending A&T University in Greensboro. As he and I look back fifty years of marriage I see that we were destined to be one.

While sitting in the balcony of St. Peters Church during his graduation from high school, I told mother that Lee and "Jacque" Alphonso White was going to be my husband.

Interviewer:

What was your home known for and what made it unique?

J. White: My life was special before I was born. My mother was a Magna Cum Laude and dynamic in four languages fluently. She spoke to us languages daily in given conversations German, French, English (Latin), Spanish. My brother, Ira, knew how to read German and this helped him in Med School. Wynona played for St. Augustine Choir. I, Jessie, sang in NCCU choir under Sam Hill and traveled throughout the USA. I also, marched as a majorette and stunt girl at NCCU during football seasons. During my first semester of my freshman year I pinned Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.

Interviewer: Who were some of your favorite teachers?

My friend, Irene Overby Richardson at J.T. Barber, Dr. Farison, my English teacher at NCCU, Dr. Lee in Biology and Dr. Townsen in Biology, as well as many others, because I loved being a student. Studying was a joy. My teachers were my friends, we worked physics, chemistry and math problems together. Mrs. Hobbs in Basketball, Mrs. Eva Adams in Tap Dancing, Sister Saint Hughes in Piano, Gladys - piano.



Mr. Bill Reid-clarinet and alto sax. Band Mr. A.D. Smith in Bible Study Rev. C.H.C. White Caticism. I could go on and on. Education is the heart of the Daves' Family.

Ted and Gladys's children: (1) Brendalyne Ernestine B.A. East Carolina College, (2) James Godwin Johnson BS MA Math MA Military Science A&T University(+) (+) Col. Air Force, daughter Zenita Gareel, BA from UNC (2008).

Alice and Ira's Children (1) Ira III, Attorney Harvard University No 2, Validitorian (1990), Stanford University undergrad (BA) (2) Cathy Arnetta Daves, Stanford University (All A's) (3) Angela Patricia Daves-Daley, BA Berkely California University (4) Pamela Kristy Daves, Berkely California BA Howard University JD

William and Wynona's children: Daughter "Debbie" Donald and Debia Irastine Rhem – Lightfoot BA, MA East Carolina University - UNC Superintendent Edgecombe County (1) Brian Daves Lightfoot (2) Brea Chare Lightfoot (both Brian and Brea are A's – Magna Cum Laude of A&T University)

Brian and Monica's children: (1) Madison Grace Lightfoot

Brea Chare: (1) Kameron Dyon Lightfoot (2) Jaidon Brian Lightfoot (3) Kylon Bejohn Lightfoot

Lee & Jessie's children: (1) Tonnye P. White, all A's throughout high school and elementary. Wake Forest University BA, University of Georgia JD, Law School, Lawyer in District of Columbia. Her husband Attorney Patrick Douglas Conner UGA, BA, JD Tonnye Conner, (1) Madeline Mae Conner

Jessie: (1974-1982) (2) Bradley Andre Daves White – Read at two years and lived 8 years. Car hit him on Chestnut Avenue [H.B.D. Jan 20<sup>th</sup>] My daddy was January 20<sup>th</sup> also.

Interviewer: Tell me about some prominent African American owned businesses around here.

J White: Everybody knew each other in the Black community. Preachers, teachers, grocery (markets), etc. were needed to survive. My daddy sold fish at the Trent Rivers' edge for years just to build his Dental trade. This was needed to support himself in the forties (40's). On my, back we had postman Allen Dudley, postman Harold Bryant, Gracer Blount, Pollock George Moore, Rhodes Vines Bragg's Bar – BeQue Burger, Soda Shop, Mrs. Emma Line/Kete's Grocery. Pharmacy (drug store), Dr. George Hill, Morticians, Oscar Dove Mortuary, Rivers Funeral Home (place Theater/Rity Theater), Whitney's Funerals, Delux, Barber Shop, Winnie's Beauty Shop, Vail's Bakery Shop, Hatem's Shoe Repair Shop. Doctors: Dr. Fisher, Dr. Martin, Dr. Mumford, Dr. Burton, Dr. Lula Disoway, Dr. Johnson; Dentist, Dr. Ira Alexander Daves DDS, Dr. Samuel Bryan Midwife: Mrs. West Lawyer:: O'Hara, Lawyer Glass, Lawyer Frazier NCCU Senator White, Majorie Martin was our Congress woman at the time. We had many famous people in our backyard. Anna Day Donalson's grandfather founded NCCU, Dr. Sheppard.

Interviewer: So you didn't really feel the effects of segregation.

J.White: I said this because a toothache does not have a racial barrier. My daddy worked on all races, colors, or creeds – any time of the day or night, in fair or incimate weather. He always getting his little back bag and heading out to the homes to care for the people. Daddy worked with North Carolina oral hygiene program for fourteen years. He traveled from school to school. Dr. I.A. Daves worked for oral hygiene in prisons and later they came to him at the corner of Bern and New Street here in New Bern for my entire life with him.

I felt racism when we traveled. Having to go to the rear to purchase bus tickets, having to buy food, Mother made us feel up on ice cream which you could buy up front. Johnson Cleaners owners' home was on the Broad Street end of our house, and I remember being told to not come around the block or walk on the grass. They would call the police on me.

Interviewer: From what can you recall about Martin Luther King and John Kennedy's assassination?

J. White: We were all shocked. Stunned. Simply mezmazized.

Interviewer: About Health Services, tell us about the 40's & 50's.

J. White: We have the best. People knew they would have care without friends. People paid with bushels of food, lard, nuts, potatoes, vegetables, corn, bean, onions you name it. Dr. Disioway of the Good Shepherd Hospital and Dr. John Lettman were always ready to served the public's needs. Dr. Barnwell came later onto the seen. He was open and caring as the other physicians and nursing staff.

New Bern was blessed with Brownies, Cubs Scouts, Eagle Scouts and Girl Scouts. My daddy's Troop #149 traveled and were apart of the Annual Veteran's Day parades, Memorial Day, July fourth Celebration were float fines. Black's and White's Celebrated together!

Interviewer: Shirley Guion

We elected a black president (2008) Obama / We elected a white lady for Governor of North Carolina Beverly Perdue. What do you think about that?

J.White: As a member of St. Peters' A.M.E. Zion Church / I serve Christ first and under Jesus Christ leadership I respect presidents. To me, Barack Obama is our new age Joshua; whereas Martin L. King was our Moses. We are truly honored to have such men.

Interviewer: About our Governor

Beverly Purdue worked hard to get her now position, and as a New Bernian, I know now that our eastern counties will reflect her growth more rapidly in areas of communication, highway transits, local business receiving supplements needed and railroad improvements. We are honored to have Governor Purdue from New Bern as Governor of the state.