

## **Lacy & Harriet Haith**

### **Tape I, Side 1:**

Lacy couldn't go to graduate school in the South because of segregation, but NC gave money for tuition in the North. In 1943 he earned a master's degree from the University of Michigan and took summer courses to receive a degree in vocational training. After receiving his degree, he worked in Atlanta on V-24 bombers and renewed his certificate in the summers in the Agriculture and Technical (A&T) College.

[44] He retired from teaching in 1972 after 35 years. The highest pay he received was \$10,500 a year.

[51] During the summers, for 3 1/2 years, he built his present house. He used his savings and bought material as he could pay for it.

[61] He had three children with his first wife. He taught carpentry and taught black students how to appreciate fine workmanship.

[76] Black boys said white boys were holding them down. He told them that white boys said Chinese were holding them down.

[90] Some blacks were jealous of his success, but whites admired him.

[110] Because he was teaching skills, he was allowed only a certain number of students (under the Smith-Hughes Act), but he felt he was really teaching philosophy and attitudes, not just vocational education. Often his students went into other fields to become doctors, lawyers, or ministers.

[130] He and Harriett have been married for 23 years (1970). His first wife died. His oldest child, Pamela, went to Warren Wilson (at that time a junior college) and married a Nigerian. He has two other children. [Bessie Madry Haith, Pamela Marnee, Lacy, Jr., and Rosanna Alease]

[157] He came to Asheville as a job opened. North Carolina was not a labor-union state. Some trades were restricted, not allowing blacks to join.

[192] His wife, Bessie, wanted fine furniture, so he opened a store and bought wholesale. He supplemented his salary while building his house by teaching veterans at night and running the store. He, in running a store, wanted to show that, "if you couldn't make it in a big way you could make it in a small way."

[227] He purchased land behind him, cut lots, and developed a new settlement - Oakland Forest-Haith Drive. (See photos)

[234] He and Harriett traveled the U.S. when they married.

[255] He was honored at the Martin Luther King, Jr. breakfast (see enclosure). He had attended all of them. Oralene started them (see her tape), and they grew over the years. Now they are held at the Civic Center. His health broke down. He has Parkinson's. All of his co-workers have died. [Oralene Simmons]

[287] When his first wife died, his oldest child was 13. He was upset and turned to his church. He didn't have a master's degree in theology so could not be a minister in the Presbyterian Church. He could, however, be ordained in the African Methodist Episcopal Church. He was too old to pastor so built the education rooms and the kitchen on to the church off college street - St. James AME Church on Hildebrand (photos enclosed). It took 5 years to complete. He and one man constructed the two-story building, and it was paid for as work progressed.

[380] He used his house as a model for teaching his students.

[400] A-B Tech was not open when he built his house. He got boys who were problems in the High School. Some of his students continue to contact him. When he was teaching, the only carpentry classes in the city were in his school.

[526] Harriett said that the black faculty members were forced to go out of state to study. A lot of whites didn't get advanced degrees and didn't have exposure to cultures beyond Asheville. The black students couldn't understand why, if their education was so good, the whites weren't having the same advantages.

[569] She talked the principal into letting her teach the "new math" to the freshmen. She needed extra funds for books. This was not taught in white schools because their teachers had not been exposed.

### **Tape I, Side 2:**

Under the Smith-Hughes act, he could not have more than two classes in the morning and two in the afternoon every day. His students were trained to make good apprentices. At first people looked down on his field [because it was not cultural or classical]. He was given tuition and travel funds by NC to get a Master's degree in Michigan.

[2/28] There were three scale rates: white male - \$125 a month; white female - \$100 a month; black - \$75 a month. He had been working for \$1 a day on the farm.

[2/37] The Master's degree in Michigan did not correspond with NC degree, so he had to go back to the North and do summer work and write a thesis.

[2/48] Harriett said that education outside the state brought ideas in. She came to the city in 1959 to work. Before coming to Asheville, she took a year off to earn her Master's degree. Until the integration of the Asheville school system, she taught at Stephens-Lee High School.

[2/62] She was brought up in Raleigh where there were two black colleges and missed the plays, lectures, and concerts. When she moved to Asheville, it was a culture shock.

[2/83] Lacy came to Asheville to teach in 1937. He served as chairman of the YMCA board. He tells the history of the YMI. Because blacks couldn't stay in Biltmore all night, Vanderbilt built the building on Eagle Street for \$30,000. When it began to run down, there was talk of restoring it for \$450,000 or tearing it down. He offered to buy it, restore and sell it. This galvanized the people who obtained a white fund raiser (who got 10% for his work) and bought it from the Vanderbilt Estate. [George Vanderbilt]

[2/127] He sold his building (store) to the redevelopment project. Baxter pushed to get the YMI valued by the city and placed on the Historic Preservation list (see Ray and Holt tapes, Baxter interviewed by Silveri). [David Jones, Larry Holt, Jesse Ray, Johnny Baxter]

[2/174] When she came to Asheville, the city was in transition. There was one high school for blacks and one for whites. The YMI was a busy place. Asheville schools were integrated in 1970.

[2/190] She didn't eat out much, because there were few places aside from 'hangouts' to go to. The city had beautiful store windows. This, however, was not a hard time for her as her sorority sisters made her feel at home. The Jabberwock is a fund raiser (see Lucy Harrison tape).

[2/241] Harriett said there are four fraternities and four sororities, college based, and part of the Pan-Hellenic, black international and national service organizations. Their members continue after graduation.

[2/299] Lacy was asked to join the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, the first black fraternity to be formed at Cornell University in 1906 and the largest in the country. He was also a member of Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity. Each group has its criteria for membership, but good grade average is very important.

[2/323] The AAUW was not segregated when she moved here, but many black colleges were not on that list. She is a member now. College-educated women are identified by being a member. Black sororities had the same effect on black women for it was rare to find a member without a degree. (see Lockwood tape) [Marjorie Lockwood]

[2/366] She was here when the YWCA was segregated. She was treasurer (Phyllis Wheatley Branch) on the board when Caldwell came (see tape) and spoke of Ryan (see tape). [Thelma Caldwell, Florence Ryan]

[2/387] Lacy helped select the site for the YWCA on South French Broad. There was discussion of fixing up an old building, and he dissuaded them. His first wife worked in the Y. Lord was architect (pictures in Caldwell file). [Tony Lord, Mrs. Charles Bryant]

[2/448] Harriett joined St. James when she moved here.

[2/474] Lacy is on the board with a group which meets every month and is raising \$150,000 to build a chapel at Craggy Prison (see enclosures).

[2/511] On the phone Walter Boland told me about a principle she stood up for - she couldn't remember the incident but said that, while she is sensitive to the problems of blacks and whites, "You have to go on and do what you can do." [Walt Boland]

## **Tape II, Side 1**

She was on the school board and, during integration, there were many problems that took time to work through. She is beginning to see some rewards.

[II/1/33] Regarding changes in the young today as compared with 10-15 years ago, she feels that their needs are basically the same. They are faced with many problems - family instability and drugs.

[II/1/90] She, as a new teacher, was required to visit homes. This procedure was slowly phased out as teachers were afraid to go into a community alone, and the parents did not want them to come. There are still P.T.A. meetings and parents are encouraged to volunteer.

[II/1/132] She came on the school board as Price went off (see his tape). She was impressed with the R.O.T.C. The Jr. R.O.T.C. program initially was a place to send misfits. It is a leadership program and helps kids with low self-esteem. It is not like the college programs but run by retired military. [Patrick Price, Col. Alfred Thomas]

[II/1/170] Lacy took R.O.T.C. in college - it was required. The Boy Scout program is not strong with blacks.

[II/1/194] Both boys and girls are in the R.O.T.C. program. They have uniforms and march but put in hundreds of hours in community service. Students are also taught hygiene, personal grooming, and how to conduct meetings. They get course credit for this.

[II/1/258] Schools have changed names with integration. Lacy was considered one of the strict teachers. He stressed values.

[II/1/270] Lacy talks about teaching Sunday School at Craggy and gives an overview of his observations. There aren't enough blacks with intellect becoming policemen. If they have intellect, they go to college. There are no more black servants - they have developed pride. No more black Pullman porters [but many unemployed and many people need help].

[II/1/417] Teachers must be very dedicated. It is very hard work, but a lot of them are dedicated.

## **Tape II, Side 2**

Harriett said teaching is very rewarding, not in terms of salary but in friendships and ability to influence in a positive way. She still feels she is reaping the rewards as she meets former students.

[II/2/10] Harriett feels that communication between blacks and whites at a deep level is not difficult. Many workshops and meetings were held to learn how to deal with differences. She does not mind going into groups of all whites.

[II/2/47] Lacy feels that blacks have come a long way, but they are not using their ability to its fullest. He was considered one of the best teachers in the state. He demanded respect and showed there was dignity and pride in building. He has been retired 22 years. He has shown what can be done if one puts forth effort.

[II/2/134] He said Craggy needs a chapel. He is on the resource committee. His son goes to the Church of Christ. When blacks attend the Unitarian Church, Lacy said the people "love them too much" and make them uncomfortable. [Larry Holt]

[II/2/203] Harriett attended the service for Helen. She knew she was going to a doctor. They used to go to meetings together (see Reed tape). [Helen Reed, Florence Ryan, Dorothy Kirschbaum]

[II/2/252] Lacy said he was sick and "trying to get used to himself." His wife takes good care of him.