

Erline McQueen

Side 1:

She, the oldest of 5 girls and 4 boys, grew up on a farm in Uree, just below Chimney Rock [now called Lake Lure]. Her father sold vegetables on Lexington Ave. [Garfield and Lillie Bell Logan]

[16] She told of a trip on the wagon through Hickory Nut Gap where the men stopped. Her father's uncle was on his way back and, rather than going to Asheville, as she had hoped, she went back home. [Hickory Nut Gap, Will Ledbetter]

[31] Later, her father bought a hard-tire truck. He didn't know how to drive and, after loading up, he discovered that the man who was going to drive wasn't going to show up. No one had taught him to drive, but he started out anyway. When he got to the city, someone helped him sell and he returned home and said to his wife, "Lord, Lillie Bell, I'll never do that again." From then on he got a man to drive and help him sell.

[55] When he learned to drive he took the children with him. They would stay with friends above the stalls on Lexington Ave. As there were no restaurants there, they went to Market and Eagle for lunch.

[70] The family had a lot of friends in the city. Young's Produce, which sold chickens and eggs, was on Market (1941 Asheville City Directory: 90 N. Lexington). She thinks there was a market and stable behind the police department. [Sam R. Young]

[90] Her friend, who had an insurance office on Haywood Street, told her about the beginning of Pack Square and had a picture of the early days. [Sly Williams, Carl Simms]

[116] All of the businesses on Eagle and South Market Streets were run and operated by black business people - barber shops, a doctor's office building, supper clubs, restaurants, three funeral homes, one market, Social Security office, a jewelry store, hotel, cleaning establishment, barber, and the city library in the YMI. [Dr. Robert Hendrick (dentist), Dr. Lee O. Miller, Dr. John Holt, Dr. Bernard Smith]

[149] The YMI was beautiful. The children would go to the drug store for ice cream and go to the library. Parents would shop and visit friends. [Mrs. Irene Hendrick (wife of dentist Dr. Hendrick)]

[167] She owned the Ritz Restaurant (she chose the name to give it a little more class) which seated 28 people on South Market Street. She now owns the building (42-44 South Market) and rents the restaurant now called the New Ritz - to Shuley James. (see enclosed). All the food was fresh - from the farmer's market on Lexington or from her cousins who would bring produce. [Shuley James]

Her husband was out of town when she bought the store in 1946. He didn't want his name on the deed because he might have to draw unemployment payments. He was a porter (see enclosed).

The restaurant was on the corner of Eagle and Market (Club Del Cardo snack shop has it now. She went into partnership with the Burtons and Treeces; The Burtons sold their share and when Bert Treece and Irma got sick she had to buy them out. The day she finished paying, Steel [Steel's Drug Store] called to say that he had bought the building. She was unable to buy it and had 6 weeks to move. She moved into the Mason building but had to spend \$1,300 to bring it up to code as it had been condemned by the city. Crouch, a builder, brought it up to code. In 1951, she moved in and started buying from the Masons. She owned the building until it was recently sold. [Hooney McQueen (she calls him "Mac"), Club Del Cardo, Harold Burton, May Burton, Bert Treece, Irma Treece, [?] Steele, Crouch and Co. (Garland Crouch, contractor, 183 Clingman 1950)]

[248] She ran the restaurant from 6 am to 11 pm. for 32 years. She had to get up early to serve clients at 6. At night she prepared the foods that would be served for breakfast the following day: the molded sausage and salmon croquettes, the grits and gravy. She charged 25 cents for two biscuits and two sausages, plus 5 cents for a cup of coffee, making a good take-out breakfast for men on their way to work. Grits, gravy and 2 sausages were 35 cents.

[285] She had good help and had 4 working for her. She felt responsible for them and their families. Some went on to college.

[302] Truck drivers tended to make a stop in Asheville. They would park their rigs as close as possible, eat and carry food with them. There were no places for African-Americans to eat. She had customers, who became friends, from all over the country.

[320] Stew beef and ribs were on the menu all the time. Roast beef, chicken, ham, steaks and French fries were always available. She had fresh vegetables all summer, and when they were no longer obtainable, she had frozen vegetables. She served dinner and supper every day except Tuesday. People would stop by after church until she changed her closed day - closed Sunday and open on Tuesday. She said "The Lord has helped us so much we need to go to church." (enclosure)

[370] Her husband was a railroad man but, being the youngest in the class in which he was hired, he was the first to be laid off. When he was not working for the railroad, he worked with her. He was a good cook. He did not cook on the railroad but was a Pullman porter. [Hooney McQueen]

[388] She met her husband at Palmer Memorial Institute, a two-year college 10 miles out of Greensboro. She had attended a school in Charlotte, and her parents and the Bishop of Hopkins Chapel wanted her to go on. She had to work to stay in school. Logan Delany from Raleigh brought his sister Nan Delany to Palmer, where they became good friends. The Burtons, Logans, and Rays were all in the vicinity of the YMI (see Ray tape). Her Aunt Jo and Uncle Len ran a dinner place - a supper club - on Wilson Alley. [Bishop Walls, Logan Delany, Nan Delany, Logan family, Lonnie Burton, Jesse Ray, Len and Jo Robinson]

[459] Marjorie worked at the S&W (see her tape). She worked with Erlene for a number of years. She danced with her husband until they "decided to disagree." [Marjorie Maxwell, Elizabeth Jackson, Lomas Maxwell]

[501] Delany came to Asheville for a job, and his wife was the first black to graduate from UNCA in 1966 (see Jackson for Francine Delany and Bob Smith for Logan Delany). McQueen's job kept her from being involved with the urban renewal.

[564] She was married in 1937 and she and her husband helped open the Bent Creek Ranch, ten miles south of Arden (see enclosed). She did the food buying from Teague's Market in West Asheville. They set up the bar at 4 pm and were ready to serve dinner at 5. Her husband was cook. She did a little bit of everything. [Mr. and Mrs. William Casselberry]

[623] Morris did the books for the ranch on weekends with a secretary (see Morris Jr. tape). [Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Morris Sr., Miss Chapman]

Side 2:

She worked with the Casselberry's 4-5 years but, when she trained another woman to work there and she wanted to take over, she gave two week's notice and left.

[2/16] She and her husband had met people in the city and started buying property. Her husband worked for the Biltmore Industries and for a number of years she was a private maid for Mrs. Seely. (see enclosure). [Mrs. Fred Seely]

[2/27] Her husband decided to go with her brother and Harold to work for the Pullman Co. Some of the Pullman porters were trained in Atlanta but, when Mac joined, there were enough men to train here. They attended sessions for 5 days where they learned how to make beds and take care of the customer. [Mac McQueen, Phillip Logan, Harold Burton]

[2/65] Not many porters lived in Stumptown. A number lived on Oakland, Beach Hill, Congress St., French Broad and in Kenilworth.

[2/75] When he got a regular assignment he would go to Chicago and back (5 days) and New York and back (5 to 6 days). When he was home for 2 or 3 days he worked in the restaurant which made it easier for her.

[2/80] They lived on 2 Avon Road in Haw Creek, 6.5 miles from the railroad. He would take a bus to the restaurant. He worked 10 years before he got a regular run.

[2/101] The Southern Railroad bought the business in 1963. Mac and Jeff rented an apartment in Washington. When his work with the railroad was over, Mac worked in Black Mountain at the sanitarium as a cook but didn't make much. [Jeff Friday]

[2/118] Mr. Bell, of the Southern Railroad in Washington, was told by Gus, a railroad man, that if you want porters call Erlene who is chair of the ladies auxiliary of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. Bell called her saying that he was thinking about a car from NY to Asheville and needed 6 porters. She told him she could get the men if he would give her husband a job. She got her husband back on the railroad and he worked part time to NY and part time to Washington for 10 years. [Gus Morrison]

[2/159] She went to a number of conventions - Washington, NY, Montreal, St. Louis, and California. Seven sleeping cars, made up in Chicago, went across the country.

[2/167] Delegates representing their unions met to discuss hours, wages and ways to improve the company. She was with the ladies. The Pullman Company ran on all of the lines and owned the cars. It was established in Chicago. Her retirement comes from the Pullman Co.

[2/227] She was a member of the Transit Authority for more than ten years, having been asked to serve by the City Council. The committee's concern was the routes taken, hours and number of busses needed. [The (bus) system is run by the Asheville Transit Authority, a seven-member board appointed by the city council. The ATA in turn contracts with CCL management, a transit management company based in Jacksonville, Florida, to handle the actual day-to-day operations of the city: quoted from Discovery, Winter 1993, page 5, enclosed].

[2/307] The bus transfer station will be moved from Pritchard Park to Aston Street (see enclosed).

[2/328] The redevelopment of the once thriving black community is long overdue. The young people need something to hang on to.

[2/360] She just sold her property to a black person, lawyer Larry Linney, and carries a note on it which will go to her grandchildren [her son, Harry C. McQueen died]: Sanya, who lives in Atlanta, and Harry Jr. and his children by marriage. Her grandson works with Magnavox, which makes parts to be assembled in Greenville. He lives with her. [Sanya McQueen, Harry C. McQueen Jr., Scherrill McQueen, Shakeya McQueen, Dominique McQueen]

[April, 2001 telephone update on the Market Street property: Larry Linney defaulted on the note, and McQueen repossessed the property and sold it to lawyers Eugene Ellison and Howard McGlohon. They restored the building, and the restaurant Mr. Gene's, remodeled to seat 75 people, reopened in April, 2001]

[2/427] Regarding the redevelopment project: a man was hired to study "the block" (see enclosure). She hopes it will come back to what it used to be.

[2/471] She met with Johnson who is doing a "beautiful job" working out ways to revitalize the area (see Citizen-Times 11/17/94 enclosed). [F.A. Johnson]

[2/483] Glenda told me about Saturday on "The Block.". Erline said that she stopped going to the Plaza Theatre because the curtain dividing the blacks from the whites offended her. She told her husband they would just have to get a TV set for their son, so they bought one on time. [Glenda McDowell, Harry C. McQueen]

[2/533] She knows Alfred Whitesides and his father. They knew the change (from segregation) was going to come. It wouldn't continue; it couldn't be tolerated. Desegregation was welcomed by whites too. She has been to Woolworth's in Greensboro where the "sit-in" began [the counter is in the Smithsonian now]. [Alfred Whitesides]

[2/568] Things are looking positive, she said. She is glad she has been here to see the change and been able to serve on so many boards.