

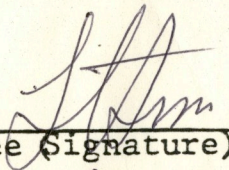
JACKSON STATE UNIVERSITY  
JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI  
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEW AGREEMENT

You have been asked for information to be used in connection with the Oral History Program at Jackson State University, Jackson, Mississippi. The purpose of this program is to gather and preserve information for historical and scholarly use.

A tape recording of your interview will be made by the interviewer, and a typescript of the tape will be made and submitted to you for editing. The final retyped and edited transcript, together with the tape of the interview will then be placed in the oral history collection at Jackson State University Jackson, Mississippi. Other institutions or persons may obtain a copy. These materials may be made available for purposes of research, for instructional use, for publication, or for other related purposes.

I, Leroy Smith, have read the above and, in view of the historical and scholarly value of this information, and in return for a final typed copy of the transcript, I knowingly and voluntarily permit Jackson State University, Jackson, the full use of this information. I hereby grant and assign all my rights of every kind whatever pertaining to this information, whether or not such rights are now known, recognized, or contemplated, to Jackson State University, Jackson, Mississippi.

  
Interviewee (Signature)

6/19/78  
Date



O.H. 78.03

JACKSON STATE COLLEGE  
Jackson, Mississippi

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEWER AGREEMENT

I, John R. McIntosh, in view of the  
(Interviewer, please print)

historical and scholarly value of the information contained in the  
interview with Mr. Leroy Smith, knowingly and  
(Interviewee, please print)

voluntarily permit Jackson State College, Jackson the full use of this  
information, and hereby grant and assign to Jackson State College,  
Jackson all rights of every kind whatever pertaining to this information,  
whether or not such rights are now known, recognized or contemplated.

John R. McIntosh  
Interviewer (signature)

O.H. 78.03  
Interview Number

June 24, 1978  
Date



JACKSON STATE UNIVERSITY  
Oral History Project

Farish Street Project  
Jackson, Mississippi

INTERVIEWEE: Mr. Leroy Smith  
INTERVIEWER: John R. McIntosh  
DATE: June 19, 1978 (Date of Interview)  
SUBJ: "Night Life and Entertainment in the Farish Street Community"

M: This is an interview with Mr. Leroy T. Smith for the Jackson State University Oral History Program ~~by John R. McIntosh in Mr. Smith's office at Jackson State University on June 19, 1978, at 11:57 A.M.~~ Before we get started into the discussion about "Night Life in the Farish Street Community," I would like a little information about you. Would you please tell me your age, sir?

S: I am fifty-nine. ~~I will be sixty in September.~~

M: When and where were you born?

S: I was born here in Jackson, Hinds County, 1918. I went ~~through the public~~ schools ~~all the way~~ <sup>at</sup> Smith Robertson, ~~old~~ Lanier High School, Tougaloo College and ~~here~~ at Jackson State.

M: Oh, you haven't been out of the county?

S: Well, I've been in and out. I worked at Brookhaven and taught school in Grenada, worked for the Pullman Company and I've been in the Navy. I've been in and out all of my life. I like Jackson.

M: Do you have any brothers and sisters?

S: I have one brother. He's in Washington, D. C. Most of my family are scattered all about. I have two aunts here and I've got three aunts in Washington, D. C., two cousins up there in Chicago, Seattle, Washington and all around.

M: About your parents, you said you were born here and grew up here and went to school here. Were your parents originally from Jackson, or do you remember?

S: My maternal parents on my mother's side came from Terry, Mississippi. They lived on First Avenue. We have one cousin down here, Herbert Terry, on my father's side. He came from Port Gibson. I have a couple of cousins in Vicksburg and some in Topeka, Kansas. On my paternal side they're just



DRAFT

-2-

SMITH, Leroy  
June 19, 1978  
OH 78.03

S: about all gone except one or two like that, but we are basically in this area.

M: Do you know the reason they made the move from Terry to Jackson?

S: I suppose like everybody else, mobility and getting a job. Everybody in Terry work in Jackson.

M: That's about like that.

S: Yes. That's the way it is. That's the way it was then and just about the way it is now. So my grandparents lived in Terry. They worked down there but all the children left and went to Chicago, Seattle, Washington and some came to Jackson. My mother moved to Jackson. My father came from Port Gibson and he came here as a carpenter with his brothers. One is in Vicksburg and one is in Topeka, Kansas and that's how that came about.

M: About how far is Terry from here?

S: Eighteen miles.

M: And Port Gibson?

S: Seventy-eight or eighty miles, something like that.

M: You said your father came as a carpenter, did your mother work?

S: She was a domestic cook. She cooked for a lot of big people. She worked for M. A. Lewis, the Vice President of Deposit Guaranty Bank for fifteen years or twenty years. That's what she did all her life. She was a cook. She was sort of a gourmet cook.

M: Oh!

S: She really cooked. That was her training.

M: Your father, he was a carpenter all his life?

S: Yes, all his life.

M: When you were growing up who was the chief disciplinarian in the family, father or mother?

S: I suppose my mother took the initiative. Every once in a while my father would intercede or something. I think they worked it out pretty good. I don't remember too many controversies over me. Every once in a while somebody would intercede to stop the other one from beating me up. But they were pretty well together.

M: Was this sort of typical in the Black community during that time that the



SMITH, Leroy  
June 19, 1978  
OH 78.03

M: mother would probably take the initiative?

S: Fortunately, back in those days it wasn't quite as bad as it is now, as far as the father image is concerned.

All around Bloom Street and downtown Jackson, the area that we came up in is now called the ghetto. I suppose it could have been the ghetto then, but we didn't look at it as being a ghetto. People had flowers and fences and everybody lived as neighbors and like that. I guess we didn't know about the ghettos.

M: The word hadn't been coined yet?

S: Well, that word hadn't come around, so now I guess downtown Jackson where I came up, around Bloom Street and Henry Street is now called the ghetto. That didn't have any influence on my life.

M: You say you lived along Bloom Street?

S: Yes, right in the vicinity of old Smith Robertson School.

M: Smith Robertson School?

S: Smith Robertson School is closed up now but I understand that there is a move among some of the leaders in Jackson to make that a historical place. Fact about it, it was the first school for blacks in Mississippi. The oldest school in Mississippi.

M: In Mississippi, not just Jackson?

S: Not just Jackson but Mississippi. Pretty near everybody in Jackson went to that school. The older people went to Smith Robertson.

M: What grades did it cover?

S: Four to six.

M: That was as far as a Black could go then?

S: That's as far as you went. Oh, Professor Lanier was the Principal of that school, then he got to be the principal of Lanier High School. He got to be the first Assistant Superintendant of school back in those days before he died. W. H. Lanier, I remember him well. That's Lanier.

M: Do you recall any of your teachers other than the principals?

S: Professor Golden Smith, Mrs. Betty Marino, they named the Marino YWCA after her, the G. N. Smith School was named after Professor Golden Smith, Mrs.



SMITH, Leroy  
June 19, 1978  
OH 78.03

- S: Mary Morrison, they got a school named after her, Morrison Elementary School. Yes, we had good teachers and I think all of them had a lot of influence. I still remember it that way.
- M: We mentioned the disciplinarian in the family, was it kind of typical that the mother and father both played sort of an equal role when it came to child rearing?
- S: I would say so. Most of the families had both parents. There wasn't as much one single family then as it is now. The last few years the discipline has really grown but maybe I didn't know about it as such. As I remember, most everybody who had children had parents, except somebody that had died. It was more less a legitimate situation to me, as far as I can recall. The Blackmon family, the Danky Family, Buckley Family, the Miller Family, the Walton Family, the Robinson Family, as I can recall, everybody was a family situation. There wasn't many single people back in those days, single families, not like it is today.
- M: Were the families predominantly Black or were there any Whites at all?
- S: No, they were all Black.
- M: All Black, everybody in the area?
- S: Yes, there was segregation at that time.
- M: Oh yes.
- S: Yes.
- M: While you were growing up in this particular neighborhood, we want to deal a little around the years of 1929-1930 if you can remember those, what kind of entertainment did the young people have say in the late twenties or early thirties, was available for the young? Maybe the forties?
- S: Yes. At least from the thirties on Farish Street was the local point for social activities in Jackson. They had the Gypsy Tea Room and on going restaurant during that time. They had the Coconut Grove, they and Scotties' Chicken House, Stevens Restaurant, the famous Crystal Palace Ballroom and they had the Savoy Ballroom. They had Willie Stevenson's. They had two bands, Don Dunbar's orchestra and Doc Palmely's Orchestra. People would use



SMITH, Leroy  
June 19, 1978  
OH 78.03

S: Farish Street as a "social mecca." That was like Fifth Avenue in New York on Easter. Everybody went down on Farish Street to show off. Farish Street was thriving like Beale Street in Memphis, or Rampart in New Orleans. That was big stuff. Downtown on the south end of Farish you had Proctor's Cafe, you had the Blackstone, you had three pool rooms, and back in those days the pool rooms had big pool tournaments like you have big football games and guys would bet hundreds of dollars. Back in those days even when times were tough during the depression that was during the time, in spite of that, Jackson was very thriving. I would think social life, what few clubs we had the dances would be held down at the Crystal Palace, and when Andy Kirk's Cab Callaway, Count Basie and all the Big Bands came in they came down there. I didn't have any money to go in there. A lots of people remember those days. Those were "The Good Old Days," so to speak.

M: You mentioned a few ballrooms here. I believe you mentioned the Crystal Palace, the Gypsy Tea Room, Stevenson's. Are there any of those buildings still around?

S: The Crystal Palace is there. They have Herman's Drugstore there and there is a pool room downstairs. Upstairs where the big ballroom was is now lawyers offices. Banks and a few others are still up there. They have been converted into an office building. The Savoy Ballroom is still down there but they have offices over there. The Gypsy Tea Room and the Chicken Shack and the Hollywood Hotel, all that's been torn down. Shepherd's Kitchenette building is still there. I don't think it's anything in that building. It was a cafe here recently. Stevenson's Restaurant burned down and so it has not been replaced. All his property has been sold and a big housing project is out there at Stevenson's. So, Farish Street looks almost like a ghost town now.

M: Compared to. . .

S: To what it was then. There is hardly any night life now on Farish Street. You got a picture show, a few show a few restaurants and things and a few women on the street. Now they didn't have that back in those days, the women on the street.



SMITH, Leroy  
June 19, 1978  
OH 78.03

M: I've read somewhere they had different names for different districts in Jackson and they did have an area they referred to as the "Red Light District." I'm not sure at this particular time but do you remember seeing. . .

S: Yes. The "Red Light District" at that time was down on Mill Street near the railroad station. They had a few houses upstairs down there with a lot of loose women---and people would go down there, those who were brave enough to go and would be ostracized if you were caught going into that neighborhood. Mostly railroad people went down there. That was considered the "Red Light District. Now down around Griffith Street, \_\_\_\_\_ down in that section, they didn't have that except on Mill Street then. Farish Street was a kind of fashionable area. The Barber Shops, Pressing Shops, Restaurants and so forth. It was sort of the upgrade. When you went down on Mill Street near the railroad, all night Sims, those kind of places. That's how that was then but not now.

M: Not now?

S: Yes.

M: You're saying that that was not on the Farish Street area?

S: Not then.

M: Oh.

S: So Farish Street now has sort of deteriorated to that status.

M: Okay. At about what age did you start **exploring** this night life in this area? Was there any age limit to say attending the Crystal Palace? Did you have to be a certain age to go in the Chicken Shack or Willie Stevenson's place?

S: I think the only place that you had restriction was the pool rooms. The pool rooms, children just weren't allowed in the pool room where they gambled, shooting pool for money or dominoes or something like that. The rest of the places were legitimate. Family packed restaurants but they did not drink beer in there.

So not having any money and then being young, under parental restrictions,



SMITH, Leroy  
June 19, 1978  
OH 78.03

S: you didn't get out there too much. Every once in a while you could get up there. I started going up there when I got around about the 11th. grade. I had gone up there when they had big dances and things. I'd like to say this, they use to play the big eighth championship basketball tournament down on Farish Street behind Central Church outdoors. They had lights strung up in the air over the court and they played the Big "8" Championship Basketball Tournament down there. Lanier, Meridian, New Orleans, Vicksburg, and \_\_\_\_\_ would come in. So I was in and out quite a bit down there so I sorta went out there officially without so much parental restriction when I got about the eleventh grade.

M: You started to hanging around a little bit?

S: Yes. (Laughter)

M: Yea. I guess that's what we kind of call it today. You mentioned that when you youngsters were not allowed in places where they shot pool for money, what about the authorities back then?

S: Well the authorities was tough.

M: On gambling?

S: Well, on. . . I never really came in contact with the Law too much but I had heard about more than I actually saw. I heard a lot of things about the police. Back in those days they had a police squad car called the "Blue Goose," and they had a couple Police Chiefs, Walls and Simmons, Pretty Boy Floyd and some other police that was suppose to been bad on Blacks. I never really had much experience with them. I suppose I was a good boy. I never been arrested on anything like that and most of the people around there in my neighborhood conducted a pretty clean life. I had heard more about it than I actually saw. It was evident around there that if police came you was in trouble. They didn't play.

M: Just a little experience of mine. When I first started coming in the Jackson area, the area called across the river, were there . . .

S: Yes.

M: Did they allow the police, or somebody tolerated gambling? I just wondered if they tolerated anything like that?



SMITH, Leroy  
June 19, 1978  
OH 78.03

S: Well, no.

M: They just didn't tolerate it?

S: At that time across the river was called the "Goldstrip Line," where you had the playhouse, the Last Chance, the Buckhorn, the Stamps Hotel. It was nothing to see people drunk or dead or stumbling in the street and and people had to drive around them to keep from running over them. Yes, I remember that. I can't think of the White dude that owned the place over there. You'd have to get permission from him, sell his whiskey, sell his mustard, his hot dogs, everything. I can't think of the guy's name. He had a cadillac truck and everything. Moose is all I can. . . something like that. Smokey or something. White dude.

M: Most of these clubs and businesses on Farish Street, were they owned by Blacks?

S: Yes. They were owned by Blacks. Proctor owned his, Stevenson's owned his, Chism owned his, Fred Scott owned his, old man Hardy owned his, Dotty Cab, Willie Johnson owned his. They were actually owning, not like it is now.

M: Yes I . . .

S: Absentee owners, run by Blacks. They didn't have that then. Edward Lee Hotel and well the local cafes' they were actually owned by Blacks. So that's the way. . .

M: It was a fashionable neighborhood then?

S: Well, Farish Street was like Fifth Avenue or like Beale Street or like Rampart. It was fashionable in those days. That was the main street, the main drag.

M: Did Whites frequent these? Say if you had one of the main bands come to town, would you see any Whites there in attendance?

S: No, it was strictly segregated.

M: Strictly segregated?

S: They didn't want any part of it. They don't care. It was strict to the letter. They would have Guy Lombardo or somebody at the City convention



SMITH, Leroy  
June 19, 1978  
OH 78.03

S: Hall this summer and Blacks didn't go down there. Now Blacks did go to the restaurants. That's where they had sections for Blacks and they had sections for Whites in the restaurants in the City Auditorium. So, that's how that was. It was strictly segregation to the letter.

M: Well, I recall that there was an Opera House in the community, maybe not on Farish Street but a Black Opera House. Do you remember that?

S: I don't remember that.

M: Well, maybe not. I read that somewhere.

S: The Crystal Palace was the focal point for whatever little club activities we had. They didn't even have a gym back in those days. Tougaloo College had the only gym. That was during the time when Jackson played basketball outside in the Johnson Hall parking lot. That was a basketball court and Lanier High School didn't have a gym. It wasn't a gym in the City. I remember during that time you use to play basketball and when it rained, the next day they'd throw five or six gallons of gas on the field and throw a match and set it afire and burn it. They'd burn it dry. Then they had chairs all around for a few spectators. They had that all the way round Jackson. Campbell College played outside, Lanier High School played outside, Tougaloo was the only one who had a gym.

M: Campbell College played there?

S: They played up here on the hill outside. Jackson played outside, Lanier played outside. Even the tournaments was outside.

M: Did the Whites. . . did they have gyms?

S: Central High had a gym and they had a gym at the City Auditorium but I don't think they played basketball. They didn't start playing basketball until they built the Coliseum, but Central High had a gym. I think Belhaven and Millsap had gyms. Campbell College didn't have a gym, neither did Jackson State have a gym.

M: Okay. Did you say anything about movie houses or places for movies?



SMITH, Leroy  
June 19, 1978  
OH 78.03

S: Well, there were three movie houses. They had the Rex Theatre for Blacks on Farish and they had the Alamo Theatre right around on Amite Street, and they had the Century Theatre up town on Capitol Street, but they did have accommodations for Blacks on the 3rd. floor. You had to go around the side and go up those steel fire things to go up on that 3rd. floor. They had two mezzanine floors and the Blacks occupied the top mezzanine floor. You could go up there but the Rex Theatre and the Alamo Theatre were the two main theatres.

The Alamo Theatre had a stage and they use to have a lot of real shows down there every once in awhile. They had a lot of Minstrel Shows at the Alamo Theatre and they had Minstrel shows down on the Greens on the Corner of Mill Street and Hamilton where Rabbit Foot Green and Silas Green would come down there. Those Minstrel shows, I saw them.

M: I heard my father talk about them.

S: Yes. That was how they traveled. That was about the only thing close to opera we saw was the Minstrel show.

M: What was a Minstrel show?

S: A vaudeville like. It was slap happy entertainment. Jokes and dancing and things like that. Clowns, dancing and women with short dresses on and kind of burlesque like.

M: Yes that was kind of unusual huh?

S: Yes. That was always exciting. They'd come in and have a parade and the dancing, whatever might draw a big crowd down there. Minstrel shows, revivals used tents quite a bit back in those days. Tent shows and so on. The corner of Hamilton and Mill Street had a big \_\_\_\_\_ down there. That's where we use to set up tents. Of course at the fairgrounds we use to have circuses that come in once a year or something like that.

M: At that time the fairs were segregated also?

S: Fairs were segregated. Now they also had two fairs. One out on '49'



SMITH, Leroy  
June 19, 1978  
OH 78.03

- S: that was the Black fair and then the one down in the. . .State Fair. They had one or two days allocated for Negro day. One Friday they'd be down there for two or three weeks and they would have one Friday or Saturday for Negro day. All the Black schools would be permitted to go out to go to this fair. But now the Black fair went on for a week and they had it out on '49' and Lanier High School use to play one of the big ballgames on a Friday for high school day at the Black fair. That's how we did that. So you had a choice of going to two fairs. One, two days at the White fair or a full five or seven days at the Black fair.
- M: If you went to the White fair would all the entertainment still be there, all the rides and what have you or would they. . .say we decide well we just don't want to cater to the Blacks, we're going to pack our stuff and leave?
- S: Especially the last day. It would be breaking down but that Friday they probably would still be there and they would start breaking down Saturday morning. By Saturday night you still would have a few, but it was not always the same. There were some shows that folded up. The rides stayed but some of the other exhibits were closed. So, that's what we had to do. I don't hardly remember going to the fair. Neither one of us too much. We didn't have no money.
- M: Oh!
- S: So I hardly remember going to no fair too many times. Back in those days the had street cars that went to five points, out near the '49' Highway. Five Points now is what you call Highway "49" - Delta Drive, Woodrow Wilson and Bailey Avenue, up in that section. That's where the street car stopped. You'd have to walk about a half mile to the bank up around where the Churches Chicken is, somewhere up in there on '49'
- M: Oh yes.
- S: We had to walk up there. Then you'd have to walk all the way down to the fairgrounds and that was always a problem, walking down Pearl Street



SMITH, Leroy  
June 19, 1978  
OH 78.03

- S: or walking down Amite Street at night was always a problem.
- M: That was the White neighborhood?
- S: The White neighborhood yes, that you had to walk through getting to the fair. So it was a hassle getting to either one of the fairs. I just never cared too much about it one way or another.
- M: You have made reference to not having money several times.
- S: Yes.
- M: What was, say a few of the entertainment, what would it cost to get in, say a movie at that time?
- S: 25¢
- M: 25¢
- S: Yes.
- M: What about the balls that were taking place?
- S: Probably if you had 50¢ you could go. Maybe for a dollar you could hear Count Basie or Cab Callaway, or maybe a dollar-and-a-half. Seventy-five cents for local and I believe a dollar for some other kind of band. But the big bands like Count Basie, Cab Callaway, Chick Wells, those guys maybe a dollar-and-a-half. So we had to save up money for that. The average salary back in those days was around a dollar a day, \$7.00 a week. If you were a carpenter or some trader you make a dollar-and-a-half a day. Eleven (\$11.00) a week, something like that.. Hotel men use to make \$3.00 a week and they lived off tips. I drove elevators in 1937 and 1938 at the King Edward Hotel and made \$10.00 a week in 1938..
- M: If I expected to have a good night, a lot of fun . . .
- S: Well, you could spend 10¢ for a Coca Cola or a nickel. You could spend fifteen (15¢) or 20¢ for a hamburger order of fish would cost about 35¢. Order of chicken was 50¢. You could make it.
- M: (Laughter) Look, would this food be served right here in the place?
- S: Right in the place.
- M: Right in the place? Didn't make you leave-where you eat and drink?
- S: Waiters would bring it out there to you. You could easily find some



SMITH, Leroy  
June 19, 1978  
OH 78.03

- S: place that sold (bootlegging) corn whiskey for 75¢ or a dollar. What they call half a pint now they called it 8 ounces. People would drink that, then you could go. . . somebody could smuggle whiskey from across the river (East Jackson) the Gold Coast over there and bring back a half a pint of sealed liquor with the seal on it. That would be \$2.00. You could make it with \$4.00 or \$5.00 a night. You could splurish with ten (\$10.00).
- M: Oh!
- S: Set the whole house on fire.
- M: (Laughter) I assume that liquor was not legal then?
- S: No it wasn't.
- M: In the city?
- S: No it wasn't. Liquor didn't become legal until about 10 or 12 years ago. During the time of Governor William Barnett or somebody. It hadn't been too long since they legalized whiskey. I forget the exact date but it was less than 10 years ago. This is 1978. . . 1960 or something like that when they legalized whiskey. Back in those days it certainly was not legalized.
- M: But you said you could get some seals from across the river. It wasn't legal there either was it?
- S: It wasn't legal there either but they managed to get it in Vicksburg and over there they had it.
- M: It wasn't legal? Was it legal anywhere in the state?
- S: No, it wasn't legal in Mississippi. They just shut their eyes to that situation over there. Back in those days those men could give some preacher a \$100.00 for contributions in a church and they wouldn't say anything about it. Nobody would know. They just saw and didn't see.
- M: A sort of observation, it seems that over in Rankin County now somebody is giving the preacher a little money to tell him to ask his congregation to vote.



SMITH, Leroy  
June 19, 1978  
OH 78.03

- M: Over there it just seems that way.
- S: Yes. It was changed.
- M: A lot of the people. . .
- S: Yes. Pearl is dry now. It used to be the Gold Coast.
- M: Pearl is the place that was the Gold Coast?
- S: Yes. Planning road for Blacks and the rest of it for Whites.
- M: You mentioned some of the accomodations for hotels. What would it cost a night for a hotel?
- S: You could sleep for 50¢ a night, 25¢ a night at all night Sims. Fifty (50¢) a night, maybe a dollar or 75¢ at the Hollywood Hotel. We had the Hollywood hotel, all Night Slims and that other lady's house. Most of it was tourists. We didn't hardly have any hotels, motels than we have now. Even Ebernice Hotel and Summers Hotel didn't come up until later, around 1950 or something like that. When Ebernice opened up the Black hotel and now since that time you can go to, since 1960 after Martin Luther King, you can go to the Holiday Inn and all these places. For a number of years there was no place for you to stay unless you knew people and people stayed with people in houses.
- When the teachers came for the Annual State Teachers Convention they lived in people's homes. They were called delegates in those days. I guess they still are called delegates.
- M: Yes.
- S: But that was a kind of a strange odd word and people use to look forward to the delegates when they came. Save up food and stuff so they could sell to the delegates and that was during the time when people and the churches had cookouts on the outside. People sold stuff like a bizarre to the delegates. They didn't have hotels and things as such like today.
- M: I noticed on Farish Street that if you visit it now you'll notice that there are homes, residents right in with businesses. Was this sort of typical at that particular time in other communities?



SMITH, Leroy  
June 19, 1978  
OH 78.03

S: Well, on Farish Street you had a few houses up on the north end of Farish. The Wells Family, railroad people were prominent, Dr. Barnes, the dentist, was prominent up there, Dr. Leroy Smith lived up there on Farish and then Mr. Bynum who had the shoe shop up there and the Lucketts who had the grocery store, they all had homes up there. You had a few other houses around them but most of the entertainment came down south of that area around the Crescent Laundry clear down to Hamilton Street and ending the first block off Capitol. You had a few houses in there. There was one or two rooming houses in front of the Savoy Ballroom. You had a few houses in front of Dotty Cab next to Dr. Leroy Smith's Clinic. They had a few houses in there. Most of them were stores and like that.

M: Let me ask you one final question here.

S: Alright.

M: Mr. Smith, if you were asked to compare night life on Farish Street today with say 1930, or 1940, what would you say?

S: We don't have any now.

M: You don't have any?

S: We don't have any. We don't have a single decent restaurant now in Jackson for Blacks. I don't know whether you could go to Peaches, which is the most popular but as far as I'm concerned, I kind of stay out of. . .I'm afraid of Hepatatis and so many of our restaurants don't keep things clean. Once I started eating out of a nice China plate, I just can't seem to eat out of paper plates anymore, tin forks and big old thick jelly glasses. I just can't eat that way no more. Maybe I've lost something, I'm not sure but I'm more health conscious now that I was some years ago. We don't really have have it. We don't have a night club anymore. The Birdland is about the only bar that we have in the City. The Elks has gone down from a few years back. Stephens Restaurant is gone down so we don't . . .Shephard's Kitchenette has gone down, Eberny has retired.. We don't really have a place now that we can go. They got a lot of restaurants,



SMITH, Leroy  
June 19, 1978  
OH 78.03

S: the Jackland, Conney Island, Night Train, where you stand up and eat. You keep your bottle in your pocket. It's pretty bad. We don't have it. We just don't have it anymore, anyplace where you could be safe. Club 77 was and Two Spot was a nice place but Two Spot's leader died. They've had several other leaders but it never came back up to the quality that it was before. Something happened to Club 77 and we just don't really have it. The Playhouse is gone and really all of our nice places is gone. We just don't have anyplace now that you could carry people, guest from out of town, with pride like we use to. We don't have it anymore. Just don't know where you could go to eat to tell you the trust.

M: Especially to see a Black owned establishment.

S: No we don't have it.

M: Just don't have it.

S: Oh, I know one. Jobie's got a nice place down there but I don't know why people don't go in there. It's kind of quiet so it's no point in going down there eating by yourself. Most people like to eat where others are. I don't know what it is but Jobie's does have a nice place.

S: That's about the only one. It's so quiet down there so I don't know what you got.

M: Okay. Well thank you very much for your time Mr. Smith.

S: Okay. I hope it comes out okay.

M: Okay.

S: Now if you go down Farish Street or Lynch Street with a nice suit on you're subject to get mugged. Gotta take that nice hat off of you, gotta take them nice shoes off you<sup>or</sup> snatch a woman's wig off or snatch her purse. So now people don't walk too much now. It's all cars.

M: You know we've. . .when we enrolled in this class the, we looked at the name of the project and lots of people said, "Farish Street," you know, like I was afraid to go down there. One of the young ladies told me



SMITH, Leroy  
June 19, 1978  
OH 78.03

- M: "You gotta go with me down there." She was afraid of it. That was . . .  
it was nothing like that in the old days?
- S: No, it was a beautiful place and it was sort of like, I would think the  
way I would picture Fifth Avenue in New York sometime ago, like that.  
But now, Lynch Street and Farish Street, you go at your own risk. You  
got a new suit, somebody subject to take it off you.
- S: You can't park your car down there, they take the battery out.
- M: I've had one taken.
- S: They don't play down there anymore.
- M: Yeah.
- S: So that's the way that is.
- M: Yeah.
- S: Yeah.
- M: Well, thank you sir.

END OF INTERVIEW