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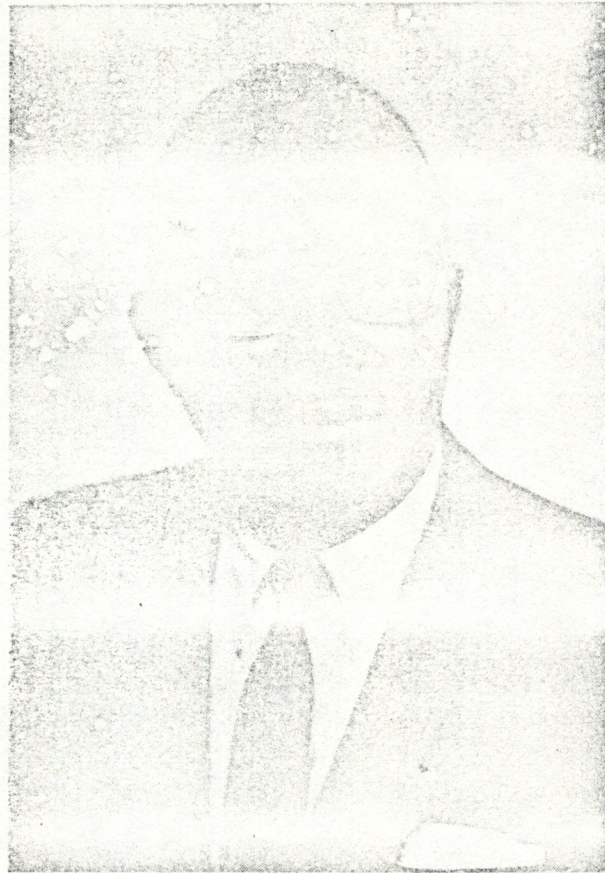
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Frank Leonic
Interviewee (Signature)

Jan. 4, 1983
Date

May 3, 1911
Date of Birth

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"WHAT'S NEW FOR TOMORROW IS AT CONIC SUPPLY TODAY"

Frank and Doris Conic

Returned 2/14/83

INTERVIEWEE: Mr. Frank Conic
INTERVIEWER: Dr. Alferdteen Harrison
DATE OF INTERVIEW: January 4, 1983
TRANSCRIBER: Terry McDonald & Herd Graves
FINAL TYPIST:
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Harrison: Today is January 4, 1983 and I am Alferdteen Harrison at Jackson State University. We are in the office of The Institute for the Study of History, Life and Culture of Black People. I have with me today Mr. Frank Conic and he is going to be telling us a little bit about his life and his experiences here in the city of Jackson.

Mr. Conic, just to get us started will you tell us something about yourself, who are you?

in the vicinity of
Conic: Well, I was born in Jackson and I have been in Jackson all my life. I was born ⁱⁿ 1911 and all my youth years were spent on Farish Street. My father was in business and I was part of his business as a boy. I grew from ~~there~~ ^{that} to a business for myself. I didn't intend for ~~the~~ ^{this} ~~it~~ to happen, but as fate unfolded itself I got into one thing into another. So, I have been right here all my life. There ~~has been~~ ^{was} some desire in my life to leave Jackson as a young man, but I had ~~made~~ ^{planted} some roots here and I didn't want to dig them up, so I stayed here.

Harrison: You said you were born in Jackson, where were you born?

Conic: I was born where it is now Bailey Avenue and Ridgeway.

Harrison: You lived there until you were how old?

Conic: I stayed there until I was about five years old. We moved from there to Erie Street and stayed there only about one year. The family moved about 1919 on Church Street, which is now on the corner of Church and High Street. I grew ^{up} ~~up~~ ^{there} ~~up~~, most of my childhood was there.

Harrison: Church and High Street. Is the house still there?

Conic: It is still there.

Harrison: What is the address?

Conic: 218 East Church.

Harrison: Do you live there now?

Conic: No. The property now belongs to my sister. She doesn't live there, but she lives in the neighborhood which is next door.

J. S. L.

Harrison: So, the Conic's still live in the Farish Street Historic District.

Conic: Yes, that's true.

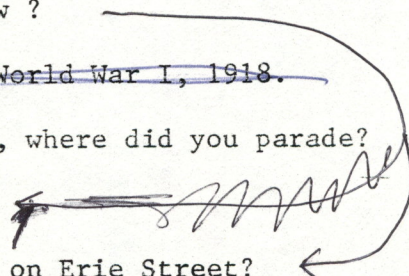
Harrison: What is your earliest recollections of being down there on Church and High Street?

Conic: That was right after World War I. I remember *Armistice* Day ~~when were living on Farish Street, we got flags and paraded the areas realizing that the war was over. But shortly after . . .~~

Harrison: Where was the parade, now ?

Conic: ~~It was about the end of World War I, 1918.~~

Harrison: You said you all paraded, where did you parade?

Conic: Around the neighborhood. 

Harrison: Just in the neighborhood on Erie Street?

Conic: That's right, with friends and pals around the neighborhood.

Harrison: Do you know of anybody that paraded up and down Farish Street *in* ~~or~~ organized efforts?

Conic: No, I don't. I was too small to know that. I was six years old then, I imagine.

Harrison: When you were living on Erie, not Erie, but Church and High Street when you came there, what was your home like, I mean what did it look like?

Conic: It was very much like it is now, some improvements have been made. The terrace has been changed, but the structure of the house is still there.

Harrison: What kind of games did you play when you first came to this area ?

Conic: Played baseball, skate ~~ing~~, hide and seek, and just the usual ~~things~~ things that young people played.

Harrison: Where did you play baseball?

Conic: There was a lot off Monument Street. It was large enough for boys to play baseball. We played there just about *every*

F. B. C.

Conic: day or whenever there was an opportunity. Very few of the fellow that played in that lot ^{are} around Jackson now. I remember ~~one~~, the Lockett boys ^{and} B. D., which are still in Jackson and my brothers. I ^{had} two brothers, Jack and ~~Lenzie~~ ^{Lenzie} which are now in Jackson. *Eddie Lockett*
Ernest Lockett

Samuel

Harrison: Where is this lot? You said it was on Monument Street. *Forrest Jackson*

Conic: Monument, it is near Dryfus and Monument on the north side of the street. Of course, now there are houses ^{there}, *George Howel* at that time it was a vacant lot. *+ others*

Harrison: Where did you go to school?

Conic: I first went to CMI for one year and then I went ^{to} Smith Robertson. I started there in 1919.

Harrison: Tell me about Smith Robertson?

Conic: Well, it was quite an experience. Professor Lanier was really a dedicated teacher and we enjoyed our ~~livehood~~ *experience* there with him and the teachers. It was just a wonderful experience. I can't remember all the things, but I remember the marching, going in and out of the building. We learned discipline. Professor was very sure that we obeyed. I remember very distinctly him saying that the most important command, is ~~to know~~ attention. That is why the Army's first command ~~they have~~ is to get attention. Unless you get a person's ^{attention} you can't teach them anything, so they always emphasized that point. They demanded your attention, I remember that very vividly.

Harrison: What did he do to get your attention?

Conic: He used a bell and he would tap his bell for you to march. Also, he would ring the bell to get the students together. So, that was his instrument to get attention. Also, he used his voice to request you to do one thing or another.

Harrison: If he failed to get your attention, what happen?

Conic: He had a persuader and that was a strap. Another thing, he use to use his head against the boys, especially. It would be a little butt against your forehead.

Harrison: I don't want you to demonstrate it, but he would just butt his head against you?

Conic: Yes, he use ^{to} say the expression like; "You are kind of hard headed and I am going to soften it up a little bit." He would give you a little bump against your head with

F. D. C.

Conic: his head.

Harrison: Did you ever experience that?

Conic: I don't think I had that, but I had some experience with the strap. He used to call it his "coffee". He would give you some coffee to arouse you. He always had that strap with him anytime you saw him. You could meet him on the street sometimes, you know how kids like to have fun, they would say, "Hey professor, I need some coffee." He would always give you one or two licks on the hand. It was just a jovial situation. I have quite a few of those.

Harrison: What kind of student would you describe yourself as being when you were at Smith Robertson?

Conic: Oh, probably an average, I was able to keep up with my class. I made fair grades, I think, I was an average.

Harrison: Why did you experience the "coffee" so much?

Conic: Well, sometimes you know how boys are, sometimes you do things you aren't supposed to do, talk when you shouldn't talk, get out of line, they demanded, things like that. I don't think I was such a bad fellow, just went through the experience of it.

Harrison: When you were in school there, were there other young men who experienced the "coffee" more than you did?

Conic: Oh yes, by all means, quite a few had to be ^{severely} ~~severely~~ punished, ~~I don't think I had any of those.~~

Harrison: What kind of things would they do?

Conic: Well, fights, and the boys had to stay on the back of the building and the girls on the front before school began.

Harrison: Began in the morning?

Conic: Yes. Sometimes a boy was found in the girls territory and sometimes they were penalized for that, but not so harshly. They used that method to keep them in their places, designed places.

Harrison: Why did they have to separate them?

Conic: I don't know, maybe just a rule of that time, of course, the boys and girls did mingle at that time, at the usual time, at the beginning of school the boys stayed on the back and the girls on the front, ~~the~~ ^{the} reason you can imagine anything you want to, but this was his method.

F. A. G.

- Harrison: Then when the bell rang they all came in?
- Conic: Came to the front. Everybody knew what class they were in, what line they belonged in, and people would just line up in front of the building before they would go in, unless the weather was bad, ^{then} they would come right in the school, ~~but before school you stayed outside, unless there was very uncomfortable weather.~~
- Harrison: What are some of your better or best experiences or recollections of being at the Smith Robertson School, something that really impressed you, something that you really enjoyed?
- Conic: Well, I enjoyed most of the teachers. We had some very dedicated teachers. My first teacher, ^{was} Mrs. Davenport, ~~at~~ ^{at} first I thought she was very very mean. She was very stern and was sure that ~~every~~ ^{every} thing was done just like it should be. She impressed me because she instilled in me the importance of studying, you know sometimes a fellow goes to school without the idea of preparing himself for his class, ~~but she instilled that something in~~ ^{me}, that's one thing that she instilled in me. I think, I benefitted from her experiences, her help, her instructions.
- Harrison: When you were going to look forward to something exciting and fun at school what would it of been?
- Conic: Well, we had concerts. We would prepare speeches and plays and so forth. We had to learn the performances of those plays, they were quite enjoyable, I can't recall any of them right now but they were very interesting at the time.
- Harrison: Did you participate in any of them?
- Conic: Yes, I did. I tried to.
- Harrison: Were you more likely to have a leading role or supportative role?
- Conic: More ^{supportive} ~~supportative~~ role, I think.
- Harrison: Now what about some of the days you would dread going to school, you knew something was going to occur that you just didn't look forward to at all.
- Conic: I don't know, I can't think of anytimes I dreaded going to school, because I had spurs from both ends, at home and at school too, because ~~of~~ ^{made} my parents ~~was~~ ^{made} sure that I was there and making good contributions to my class, ~~so I didn't, well I'll say this,~~ I enjoyed drawing. As a young man, I thought I would be an artist. That's one thing I enjoyed.

Frank Conic

Conic: I would draw pictures, and most of my classmates would ask me to draw this thing and that thing, I enjoyed that but as time sort of passed on I kind of lost my interest in that.

Harrison: Why do you think you lost it?

Conic: This is kind of comical way to say it, I thought maybe most artists die ~~because, maybe,~~ of starvation (laughs) ~~is a hard way to travel.~~ Really, as I grew up I wanted to be an architect but I realized when I was in about the ninth or tenth grade, I realized that there wasn't much opportunity for a black man to be an architect, ~~I thought that was true or not,~~ so I kind of played it away from me.

Harrison: What kind of dream did you place that in your mind?

Conic: What now?

Harrison: What did you hope to find when you gave up the desire to become an architect?

Conic: Well, having the opportunity, I worked with my daddy at the barber shop. My father was a barber and operated a barber shop and I worked there, as I went on I realized that my father encouraged me to learn the trade of barbering, which I did and I followed the trade for twenty two years. I didn't have any great ambitions, just a matter of making an honest living was my goal.

Harrison: Did any of your teachers encourage your development as an artist, architect, or?

Conic: Not in that way; no nobody did.

Harrison: Okay. Now you spoke quite a bit about you father, what kind of person was he?

John Edgar Conic, Jr.)

Conic: I had a wonderful father, a christian, thrifty man, hard ~~working,~~ ^{made} believing in investing ~~in~~ what he ~~made,~~ don't spend all your money, invest some of your money, and my father was quite an inspiration to me. May I zero in on this, my father had the best barber shop in the state of Mississippi. My father learned barbering as a young man. He went to a barber college in New Orleans, to serve white trade, ~~at~~ ^{that} time it was quite popular, but after completing his course he didn't want to follow that trend, he did operate black barber shops. Between 1912 and 16, my father and another man, by the name of, Albert ~~Sharts,~~ ^{Shaw} started the City Barber Shop. In that shop there was ~~seven~~ ^{seven} chairs, and two bath tubs were there. Now you may not think very much about that but before 1920 very few white folks and no black folks at all had

J. E. C.

Conic: bath tubs. I say that in a general way, some did have them. Well one reason why, in the black neighborhood there wasn't any sewage, and you couldn't have a bath tub. That was a profitable business at that time, ~~cause~~ I remember it very much because of my job and my brother's job to clean the barber shop and the tub. It was a growing business, people were lined up ~~so~~, especially on weekends, to take a bath, running hot water which was almost rare in the neighborhood, so it was a good business and my father had some very ~~starch~~ *strict* rules, we had a real first class clean shop.

There was

Harrison: Now where is it located?

Conic: On Farish Street.

Harrison: What address?

Conic: The first address was 124.

Harrison: Is that where City Barber Shop is now?

Conic: No, it is not. My father operated that shop until 1944, and he sold it to a man by the name of Morgan, to make the Tyler Barber College.

Harrison: Oh, I see.

Conic: Tyler, that is.

Harrison: T-y-l-e-r, okay. Now I want to go back to the bathtub.

Conic: Yes, it is quite interesting.

Harrison: It is, in the barber shop. Now you have in the back of the barber shop, bath rooms with a tub in each one?

Conic: That's correct. There was a room just like a regular bathroom. In the room there was only a tub, of course, a place for a person to hang his clothes and cold and hot water, ~~It had a heater; course you don't see these now.~~ *and linen* Now we have automatic heaters, at that time they had what you call a sidearm heater.

Harrison: Could you describe this?

Conic: Well, some old timers would remember this. The tank was very much like a cannon, galvanized iron, on the side of it was a coil type heater that was generated by gas. At that time we didn't have natural gas, it was artificial gas in Jackson. You would light the heater and the heater would heat the water ~~first~~ for the tank, just like you have now, ~~but the~~

F. C. Co.

Conic: ~~automatic get hot enough you would have to cut it off and light it again when you needed it and so forth, course~~
The water was used for the barber shop and the bath service.

Harrison: Was a person limited to how long he could stay in the bathtub?

Conic: (laughs) No, I don't remember if there was anytime a person would spend too much time in the tub, we had a lot of customers waiting. I kind of dreaded that job, some of the jobs were very hard to do, ~~clean that tub again plus a man who was working doing labors job and the tubs would be very dirty and plus we had the things to with it, to clean~~ *the tubs* at that time the very popular cleaner was called Dutch Cleanser, I think, it's on the market now. We used a lot ^{of} that, to clean the tubs. The tubs were always cleaned when ~~it wasn't~~ *not* in use.

Harrison: Now how much would it cost to take a bath?

Conic: Twenty-five cents.

Harrison: Did you ever go up on the price?

Conic: I don't remember, because that service went on until the thirties maybe, 1940, around that. I don't remember it being any more than twenty five cents.

Harrison: Who were some of the customers?

Conic: Generally, men who did day-work. I remember the time when the railroad that goes across Capitol Street was built. At that time a lot of ~~Mexicians~~ *Mexicans* were brought in to Jackson to do that work, black and ~~Mexicians~~ *Mexicans* did most of the labor on that job. We would always depend on those ~~Mexicians~~ *Mexicans* to get their baths on Saturdays and sometimes during the week. Some people took maybe two and three baths during the week, but on the weekends you would always have a lot of work of that type. ~~But now on to the next one, I just mentioned that because that was part of the Jackson territory, I think, was going on, but a~~ lot of people who worked didn't have that *Convenience* ~~convience~~ at home because ~~of the advantage of having running hot water and cold water, because usually people used zinc tub, you know, at home to take a bath. At time it was really a luxury.~~

Harrison: Would you have different customers who would come just to get their hair done, instead of the ones coming to take a bath?

Conic: Yes. In fact, it was ^{an} open business, ~~anybody had customers.~~

Harrison: How old were you when you started cutting hair, I mean, being a barber?

F.2.6.

Conic: I was sixteen.

Harrison: How did you get started?

Conic: Well, my father instructed me. My brothers were barbers before me, ~~course I was the youngest barber~~, we all learned the trade of barbering. My oldest brother started, then my second brother, Lemuel, started, and then I started. I think, ~~my youngest brother~~, Jack started barbering about 1924, I started in 1927, so you can tell just about how the routine went. I never did want to be a barber, I don't know why, I think, it's just kind of a general thing ^{when} a boy ~~to~~ see his father working, scuffling, working hard, ~~and~~ ^{he would} rather do anything but what ^{his} daddy is doing, ^{but} it wasn't so much of that on my part, but I wanted to do something else, sometimes I think I wanted to be a postman, but that faded away. I wanted to leave home for awhile, that didn't happen.

Harrison: Why didn't it happen?

Conic: Well, maybe I didn't have the nerve at the time, I just decided not to go.

Harrison: Okay, now were you still in high school when you began to ?

Conic: That's true, I was going to Lanier at the time, Lanier High School.

Harrison: Did you finish at Lanier?

Conic: Yes, I did. I started at Lanier in 1925, that was the first year of Lanier High.

Harrison: The first year was 1925?

Conic: 1925.

Harrison: So then you graduated in '29?

Conic: '31. I lost a year because of an illness, an accident I had. 1931 I finished Lanier High, Professor James Gooden was the ~~Principal~~ at that time. The beginning of ~~school~~, Professor Rodgers was our first principal. *Lanier High*

Harrison: Do you know his first name?

Conic: Don't remember. Professor Rodgers left Jackson and went to Canton, I think, Rodgers High School is named after him, I think he passed, I don't remember his first name.

Harrison: Now did you ever decide to go on to school further?

Conic: Yes, I wanted to, but I was working at the time. At that

F. B. C.

Here
believing

Conic: time my father was operating three barber shops in Jackson, and he wanted me to manage one of them, which I didn't, ~~he~~ ^{do,} wasn't so enthused about it but he insisted that I ~~do~~ and I did. That shop was operated on the corner of Church and Farish, I worked there, ~~believe it,~~ I would save some money and go to Southern, I wanted to go to Southern University.

want to do,

Harrison: In Baton Rouge?

from 1931

Conic: Yes. As time went on and I was making money, being a barber and going to Lanier High, I had a lot of friends. I operated that shop until 1949. I got rid of that. I realized that the world was bigger than a path around a barber shop, a barber chair, so I wanted to do something else. My experience as a barber learned me quite a few things, ~~in fact, I despise, not despise I didn't like the idea,~~ all of the supplies that I got came from white establishments. Some of the supplies came from houses in New Orleans, Baton Rouge, Mobile, and Memphis, salesmen selling equipment for barbers and beauty shop schools. I decided well, if that man can do it so can I, it's a larger field. ~~I was back in comfortable living, I imagine, as a man.~~ I wanted to do something else so the idea came to be a supply man myself. That idea laid in my mind, I bet you two or three years before I decided to do something about it. ~~Having been married at that time for about several years, you know when you're married you have conversation with your wife about things.~~ I decided to do it myself, some black man ought to have this type of business. ~~I think it is a good business, that stayed on my mind for a long time. I said, it looks like nobody else is interested maybe I ought to start doing it myself and I did.~~ Let me go back a little bit, during the time of the war, 1940, 41, 42, and 43, business was very good and we worked from can to can't. I would open my shop about 7:00 and would stay there until around 10:00. You know, at the time there was an Air Base here, a lot of ~~soldiers~~ were here, so it was a lot of business, work, work, work, having the opportunity to make a little money. I kind of over did myself, ~~cause I wore my feet out, standing, I had some foot trouble, that really made me get away.~~ I had this idea to go into the supply business, this was a good opportunity, so I did. I had a struggling business starting in 1950. I operated Conic's Beauty and Barber Supply, in fact, my business was named first, Superior Service and Supply Company. I named it that because my barber shop was named Superior Barber Shop. Later on with my wife, she said, "You don't have anything in your name, why don't you name it after your own name?" I thought this was a good idea, so I moved from where I was on Farish Street next door to Farish Street Baptist Church, which is where my business began. I named it Conic's Beauty and Barber Supply and I operated that business until 1975 and I sold it to two men who worked for me, ~~which~~

soldiers

F.D.L.

Conic: ^{the business} is still in operation.

Harrison: Who are the owners now?

Conic: The owner ^{are} now ~~is~~ Willie Broome and Albert Hart.

Harrison: Now, when you decided to go into business for yourself who were your suppliers?

Conic: Well, I got my supplies directly from the ~~manufactures~~, no middle man. ^{manufacturers}

Harrison: You were the middle man. Then did you become a supplier for barber and beauty places here in Jackson, at that time?

Conic: No. My idea was, and I did fulfill my idea, to supply barber and beauty shops in the state of Mississippi, and my area ^{radius} was a hundred miles ~~radius~~ of Jackson. It took me a long time to get it established, it was a lot of work and I have to give a lot of credit to my wife, who worked with me right by my side, in fact, we worked very very hard, ~~I almost affected my wife's health. In fact, if you work real hard and don't count your hours everything gets told, you may not realize it.~~ In establishing that business I worked sometimes eighteen hours a day to get started, if anything is heavy you have to shovel it off you to get started, and this is very very hard work. My idea was to operate and supply all that I could, ^{because} ~~cause~~ I wasn't going to get all the businesses, don't need all the businesses. ~~The black barber shops and beauty shops in Mississippi.~~ We were the first complete beauty and barber supply in Mississippi, very few in the whole country. Since ~~we're~~ talking about that, ~~we gave~~, Conic's Beauty and Barber Supply, a lot of the things we are enjoying now. We gave the first permanent; ^{for black women} we brought the first to Jackson ~~and the state.~~

brought a lot of "firsts" to the black business

Harrison: Permanent for women?

Conic: Yes, ^{for black women.} that's right. I think, one of the first ⁱⁿ among the whole country. The first one we used was made by Helene Curtis. ~~I believe, they awarded a market, experimental market and I think Mississippi was one of the best~~ ^{places they} ~~parts you could get use~~ without having much kickback. I have some pictures of those demonstrations, with demonstrations of beauticians from all over the state and some out of the state.

Harrison: You would supply the service to this, demonstration?

Conic: Yes. Probably five or six demonstrations a year, and they were free, didn't cost them anything. We ^{used} ~~serviced~~ some of the best artist ^{from} all over the country, New York, California,

F. D. C.

Conic: Chicago, ^{etc.} ~~is just mentioned interest~~, technicians were common work to make those demonstrations. I think, I know if fact, we were the first permanents in Mississippi, and among the first in the United States. The name of the product was Ever-Perm made by Helene Curtis.

Harrison: What was the attitude of black beauticians at the time you gave the first demonstration?

Conic: ~~I think~~ ^{The demonstrations were} was well received.

Harrison: When was that, about the late 1950's and 1960's?

Conic: ~~That was the late 1950.~~ About the middle of 1950's! 1955-60, when they began. Most of our demonstrations were done at the Elks Rest, we had more than two hundred people there. ^{at times} I think, we came to Jackson the first hair spray ^{brought} for Black hair.

Harrison: Black hair?

Conic: ^{yes} Black hair. Black beauticians didn't use ~~it~~. The first product of that was called, ~~I can't think of the name it's been such a long time ago, I may get back to that, so many events of it really. A lot of items, I think. We were the first to bring to the market. I think about a lot the money I missed by not knowing, when you have a new product sometime you can demand certain amount of money or franchise to establish a new product. A new product, a person has never seen it, is like spade work to start a new product. We have started a lot of new products.~~ ^{of a lot of new items.} ^{sprayed liquid} ^{spray at that time}

Harrison: What you're saying is, you didn't have the foresight to demand the franchise?

Conic: Yes, that's right. ~~Some I did later on, but if I could have latched a lot of royalties if I had known. That's what experience should do to you.~~

Harrison: ~~You have to learn.~~

Conic: I'm trying to think of another item that I think was the first one, Artra.

Harrison: What is it now?

Conic: Artra. Artra is a bleach.

Harrison: Oh!

Conic: We were, I think, the first demonstrators of that. We sold a lot of it. Conic's Beauty and Barber Supply ~~is~~ ^{was} the first

F. C. C.

distributors

Conic: ~~users~~ of Ultra Sheen. The first ~~demonstrators~~ of Johnson Products, ~~in fact, before their products Johnson made only product and it was called,~~ Ultra Wave for Men and men only. That was before Ultra Sheen, and we sold that. Later on Ultra Sheen came out and it was a very good product and has been very popular the world over.

Harrison: Now, it sounds like you rendered a great service. How would you evaluate the quality of service you rendered to black barber and beauty companies or shops relatively to what was available to them prior to your entering the business?

Conic: Well, allow me to ^{good} say this, I have always believed this, you need to do a service, not ^{just} the idea of making money, you'll make money if you do a service, a worth while service, and I've always believed that. To do a real service, you will make money. Sometimes people go into business to make some money and think about nothing and you don't make nothing, don't know what kind of service they're doing just want to make some money. I think, the first thing is do a worthwhile service, and I think, I have always believed that and we've always tried to do that.

Now, you asked a little question, maybe I can answer it now.

Harrison: Okay. I was concerned about your evaluation of the quality of service that you rendered to the black barber shop and beauty shops, as compared to the service that was given by the white suppliers before you entered the business.

Conic: I think, it's a different thing, ~~cause I think,~~ our service was real conscientious, ~~alot of the whites weren't interested at all.~~ I remember, ~~it was~~ in 1955, I went to New York, Clariol gave us some tickets, there was a show going ^{on} at that time. I joined the Barber and Beauty Institute, at that time I found out there ^{were} only two black people in this industry at this time. That's an industry that belonged to the suppliers, they get all the products together. You can go to this ^{place} and buy ~~out where you find these products, who makes them~~ and so forth, where they are demonstrated, this is a yearly thing. I had the chance to go to New York to this show. At that time I was ~~handeling~~ Clariol, too. We ~~were getting some tickets for some things there.~~ ^{handling}

meet the manufacturer and see the demonstrations

The main topic of that show was carried on, I think, about three days. They ~~relaised~~ they had gone to the limit ^{as} far as their product ^{is} concerned. We have overlooked millions of dollars that we haven't even looked at, you got to get this business, and that was the Black Market. Before then

realized

F.2.6

manufacturers
 Conic: the ~~manufactures~~ ^{manufacturers} weren't ^{greatly} interested in the Black Market. That was the main thrust of these meetings to get the Black Market. The ~~manufactures~~ ^{manufacturers} weren't making anything especially for the Black Market, very few ~~was~~ ^{were} doing that. During the beginning of my business, I sold only hair oil, curling wax, shampoo, hair pens, combs and soforth ~~like that~~. All the things like people are using now, curly curls, waves and soforth ~~wasn't such a thing~~ ^{were not being used}. That only began around 1960 or before but now it's a big market. ~~now~~.

Harrison: Now, I have a question about that. When you had your barber shop how would white salesmen approach you?

as it
 Conic: I'm glad you ^{asked} ~~said~~ that. Quite often a man would come in and say, "What you want boy, what you boys want today?" Well, sometimes they would joke, but the respect wasn't ~~what it~~ ^{given} should have been, ~~I think~~, that was one of the good points. I ~~was sincere, I would go to Miss so-and-so's shop or Mr. this-and-that.~~

~~Harrison: When you were selling?~~

Conic: Yes. ~~That was one of my selling points, of course, it didn't work on everybody, but it was a good point. The courtsey that the salesman gave you wasn't what it should have been.~~

Harrison: Were there more than one or two people who came around to sell you products?

Conic: Oh, yes. This business has always been a competitive business. There ~~was~~ ^{were} quite a few establishments that have been here for years and years. I'll mention this because it is no more, there use to be a ~~Barber and Beauty Supply.~~

Harrison: White? *and they had several salesmen.*

Conic: Yes. ~~I just mentioned that. My father, would send us there to get products, sometimes the salesman would come in too, of course, but we use to go the store to get it, course you still have that same situation now. A salesman would call on you sometimes, and sometimes they wouldn't maybe it wasn't their business to attract them.~~

Harrison: So you were in business as a barber on Farish Street, who were your competitors on the streets with barber shops other than the Conic's?

Conic: At that time in supplies you're speaking of?

Harrison: Further back.

F. D. C.

Conic: As a barber?

Harrison: Yes, as a barber.

Conic: Yes, barber shops were all over town.

Harrison: Now, when you went into being a supplier did any other blacks catch on to this idea?

Conic: Well, there was one even before then, Mr. Garrett, ^{P.G.} ~~but~~ Garrett of Garrett Products.

Harrison: Garrett Products?

Conic: Yes, they're still in operation. Mr. Garrett ^{was} is a very fine man, matter of fact, he was a competitor, ~~of course~~. We got along very fine, wasn't anything between us. Mr. Garrett made a product and he sold some other products also. He sold equipment, he made a very good contribution to the trade. My business, ~~idea was to give~~ ^{was} a complete barber and beauty supply, we sold from hair clamps to complete shops, the smallest thing to the largest thing, everything that is used in the shop.

Harrison: ? Why did you go into barbering business or beautician business contributing you with the supply?

Conic: ? Anything you want.

Harrison: This Mr. Garrett, where is his business?

Conic: On Pearl Street.

Harrison: Is it still there?

Conic: Yes, it's still there. I think, Mr. Harris, is a distributor of it now, John Harris.

Harrison: Oh, yes.

Conic; Mrs. Garrett, still lives, Mr. Garrett has passed away. She is still a manufacturer of the product.

Harrison: What was the product?

Conic: Pressing oil, waxes, shampoo, and so-forth, those sort of things.

Harrison: Now, I know, that you weren't the only product line on Farish Street, who were some of the other prominent black

P.G. prominent

Harrison: leaders in that community?

Conic: Well, I can go way back before 1920. Maybe, you've heard of Mr. Rusler, Harry Rusler.

Harrison: No, I don't believe, I don't think so.

Conic: He ^{had} was the first and only bakery in Jackson. You heard about him?

Harrison: The bakery, yes. Is it Rusler, how do you spell it? I have heard.

Conic: Rusler.

Harrison: How is it spelled.

Mrs. Conic: It's spelled, ~~R-I-C-H-E-R-R-S-H-E-R~~. *Risher*

Harrison: I had heard the name of the bakery but I didn't know, go on and tell me about it.

Conic: I was very small but I remember him, he was very outstanding. All of this that I'm talking about now was in the first block, where the Federal Building is, from Farish to Amite Street.

Harrison: The bakery was in this area?

Conic: Yes, within that area. Let me go right down on the east side of the street as I can remember, I might miss some. There was ~~Richersher~~ *Rishers* Place, City Barber Shop.

Harrison: That's your barber shop?

Conic: That's right, *my father's shop* ~~Pocket's~~ *Proctor's* Cafe . . .

Harrison: Pocket's Hair?

Conic: Restaurant ~~or cafe~~, you've heard of that?

Harrison: Right, I'd ^{for} gotten the name, I just didn't know the fellow.

Conic: His name was, Myles Procter. He owned a business and a profitable business, he operated twenty four hours a day.

Harrison: What kind of foods would they serve?

Conic: Breakfast, dinner, supper and sandwiches.

Harrison: Any specialities?

specialties?

F. B.

Conic: Yes, they had a special Sunday dinner. I remember, a very popular thing that people would get there, ~~sasuage~~ ^{sausage} and rice which was about fifteen cents at that time.

Harrison: Was this a breakfast or dinner?

Conic: No, anytime you wanted it.

Harrison: Anytime you wanted ~~sasuage~~ ^{sausage} and rice?

Conic: Ham and rice, weiners and rice (smile).

Harrison: Rice was a special at that time.

Conic: Yes, that's right it was.

Harrison: It was cheap and fulfilling and it was very popular at that time. It would beat a Big Mac, I'm telling you (laughs). Only fifteen cents and your drink was a nickle at that time. He made a sandwich, ham or either pork, or a combination which was a double-deck sandwich.

Harrison: With just plain bread, which you called light bread?

Conic: Bread, that's right, and meat, mustard or either ~~mayonise~~ ^{mayonaise}, and pickle, which ever ~~one~~ you wanted.

Harrison: Did it have lettuce and tomatoes in it?

Conic: Yes, they had that too, if you wanted it. A sandwich like that would cost only fifteen cents and it was really a meal in itself. Your regular meal or dinner was only thirty-five cents, that was daily.

Harrison: This was the '20's now, I guess.

Conic: ^{yes} Yea. After you leave that cafe there was the Alamo Theatre, it was owned by a white man, his name was Bell, it was operated and managed by a black man, by the name of John Gray.

Harrison: Is Mr. Gray still living, or do you know?

Conic: No, neither of those two people are still living. Later on that theatre was bought by Arthur ~~Laymon~~ ^{Lehman}, a white man. Eventually they moved on Amite Street, they moved again on Farish, ~~which~~ ^{it} is still there.

Harrison: What you're saying is initially it was on the east side of Farish Street, it would be facing the Federal Building.

Conic: Yes, ~~man~~. Leaving that was Latham Funeral Home.

F.2.6.

Harrison: So Latham started around here too?

Conic: Yes, he was there. Upstairs was Dr. Miller, this Dr. *W. E.* Miller's daddy. ~~Dr. Miller that was on the corner.~~

Harrison: You're talking about the Miller Family that lives on Robbinson Street now?

Conic: That's right.

Harrison: Their father's office was down there, ~~from~~ *over* Latham Funeral Home.

Conic: Yes, within that same block.

Harrison: Building? Was it in that same building?

Conic: I think, it's part of that same building.

Harrison: Now, what is Latham's first name, this person that started this funeral home?

Conic: H. L., I think, I'm not sure.

Harrison: Okay.

Conic: Then there was Bynum's Shoe Shop, shoes repair.

Harrison: Did Bynum have any other business down there?

Conic: No, I don't remember. Then there was a man down there by the name of John Hatch. He was a ~~jeweler~~ *jewelry*. He sold and repaired watches.

Harrison: Was he a black man?

Conic: Yes. In fact, the man ~~happen to be~~ *was* my uncle.

Harrison: Now, his name is Hatch?

Conic: John Hatch.

Harrison: What did he have inside the shop other than watches? *Jewelry* ~~Jewelry~~ or other kind ?

Conic: *Jewelry* ~~Jewelry~~. At that time clock ~~was~~ *was* very popular, home clocks. He repaired and sold those

Harrison: You were talking about your father being an officer in the

Frank

Harrison: Christ ^{Temple} Holiness Church.

Conic: My father was Barber. He later on distributed the Chicago Defender and the Pittsburg Courier, Ebony and *other magazines* ~~so forth like that~~. He got out of the barber business after about 50 years, he got tired of it. He ~~wanted outside more~~. My father was robbed and killed in 1949, no 1948 not so far from where ~~I am right now~~. *Jackson State University is now.*

Harrison: He was carrying the papers around?

Conic: Yes. This boy wanted to steal a car and rob somebody to elope with a girl. My father just happen^{ed} to be the target. It happen^{ed} early in the evening, about first dark.

Harrison: What position had he held in the church?

Conic: He was a trustee and a Deacon. He also ^{held} ~~had~~ other offices through the years.

Harrison: Is that a very young church?

Conic: No, the church is about 85 years old. It is about 86 years old now.

Harrison: The denomination itself is 86 years old or just the church?

Conic: *The denomination is 86 years old.* ~~It is quite a few other churches. There's one on Morehouse Street, part of the same church.~~

Harrison: Now, so far as you know, your father has always been affiliated with the church?

Conic: Yes.

Harrison: Your mother worked with the church also?

Conic: Yes.

Harrison: What kind of positions did she hold?

Conic: I don't remember. I don't know of any outstanding offices.

Harrison: She was just one ^{of} the women in the church and all.

Conic: ~~And a part of the _____ and so forth.~~

Harrison: Of the two parents, which one do you think had the greater moral impact on your life?

Conic: They both had their contributions, ~~I'm sure of it~~, I think, my father did. I loved and respected both, they had their roles.

F.B.C.

Harrison: Now, as a young boy, if you were going to be discipline^d by anyone, who did it?

Conic: It was my father. In fact, I use^d to beg my mother to whip me, rather than report me. He was very sincere, could be severe almost. I had a wonderful daddy, I have no regrets.

Harrison: When your father was carrying the paper, was there anyone else in this business, I just thought about it?

Conic: I don't think it was anybody at the time. It was thought for awhile that some white people did that because at that time people didn't want newspaper^s circulated in this area. That wasn't the fact of it, I don't think so.

Harrison: Was the person white or black that killed him?

Conic: Black. It was a young fellow.

Harrison: So, he just needed a car?

Conic: That's what it all seems to boil down to.

Harrison: What happened to the young man?

Conic: He was caught in Chicago, and was given life in Parchman. He served twenty years of it.

Harrison: Then he got off?

Conic: Yes, he got off. I heard about his death not too long ago, about two or three years ago. He didn't live here, he finally came here, I think, he died here. I didn't know him, I saw him because of the trial.

Harrison: Now, about your mother, did she ever have any interest, like taking over the business or controlling the business?

Conic: Not at all.

Harrison: She was the traditional^{ly} mother.

Conic: Yes, that stayed home.

Harrison: Was taking care of the house?

Conic: Right. I never ^{saw} ~~seen~~ my mother ^{work} anywhere but home. (laughs)

Harrison: Another area before you quit on me, there are a lot of things we could talk about relative to the Farish Street area. There

F. A. B.

Harrison: must have been some social life once you finished high school and you managed the barber shop and all. Where would you go for entertainment, let's say Saturday night you work till 10:00 and you're tired, maybe you wanted to go out on the town, what would you do?

Conic: There ^{were} ~~was~~ parties, clubs, club parties, dances, games, baseball and football games, ~~of course~~, I always liked to travel, still like that now, ~~but far as preparation~~, I like good music, I like good entertainment, I like good ~~comedy~~. *Company*

Harrison: If you went out in the Farish Street area, where would you go?

Conic: Now?

Harrison: No, well let's say when you took over the business in 1930's, ~~'40's~~, was there any place down there you would go out for an evening?

Conic: I imagine I had friends that I would meet and talk.

Harrison: Where would you meet?

Conic: One of our favorite places was at the drugstore, Lindsey's Drugstore where Dr. Harmon is now. All in that block there ^{were} ~~are~~ businesses and nice, what we called sociable area, ^{were} ~~where~~ friends would meet.

Harrison: Do you remember the Crystal Palace?

Conic: I do.

Harrison: Did you ever go there?

Conic: Yes, I have. I remember when it was built and the man who built it.

Harrison: Tell me about it. Was it Hodges'?

Conic: Claude Hodges. I lived on the same street, diagonally, ^{from} ~~from~~ ^{him} ~~one block~~. So, I have known Mr. Hodges all my life.

Harrison: What kind of man was he, is he just a business man?

Conic: Yes. Mr. Hodges had a grocery store near Smith Robertson ^{School} on Bloom Street. Apparently, Mr. Hodges was a very thrifty man and he had an interest in investing. I understand that he had some property in Chicago and some here. Among those

F. D. C.

Conic: things, he owned a building. He saw the need for it, ~~and it was.~~ It served a very good purpose at that time. Of course, that was the place to go at that time.

Harrison: Do you remember when the Crystal Palace opened?

Conic: I can only guess, about 1930 *s*.

Harrison: What did it look like, specifically, when you walked into the Crystal?

Conic: It was a beautiful place.

Harrison: If we wanted to decorate it like it was in 1930, what would we have to put in it?

Conic: I think that is kinda' of hard for me. I don't know. I am not that gifted to evaluate a thing like that.

Harrison: Were there paintings on the wall?

Conic: No, there wasn't. I don't think they had any paintings.

Harrison: What about the ceiling, did it have a crystal ball?

Conic: *Yes* ~~No, the original was just ordinary lights for illumination.~~

Harrison: Did you ever attend any social affairs there in the '30's?

Conic: Quite a few.

Harrison: What kind of affairs did you attend? *sororities*

Conic: Club dances, parties, and ~~sorities~~ affairs.

Harrison: The big band, do you ever remember them coming there?

Conic: Sure, that was the only place that they came.

Harrison: On Farish Street would be the Crystal Palace?

Conic: Right. Louis Armstrong, Chic Webb.

Harrison: Who was Jake Webb?

Conic: Chic Webb, Earl Hines, Duke Ellington and all the popular ones at that time. I don't know ~~nothing~~ *anything* about when they came.

Harrison: I was trying to think of a man to ask you about, but I can't think of his name now. I want to go back to Mr. Hodges and

P.2.b.

Harrison: the store he had on Bloom Street, where was it, do you know what part of Bloom Street? Would it be in front of Smith Robertson School or on the other end towards Church Street?

Conic: North, on the end of Bloom Street. ~~Do you know where . . .~~

Harrison: Toward Church Street?

Conic: Yes, he lived on the corner of Church and Bloom.

Harrison: On the east?

Conic: On the north east corner, no, the south east corner.

Harrison: Okay, got it.

Conic: His store was right behind his home.

Harrison: Was there anything different about his store than ^{any} in of the other stores in the area?

Conic: No, just a neighborhood store. On thing I can remember though, Mr. Hodges made what we call a Sardine Loaf. At that time we didn't have sliced bread, bread was just a loaf. Mr. Hodges, I don't ^{know} how it got started, but everybody liked his Sardine Loaf, at school or otherwise, ~~they would make a bunch.~~ The way you do it was ^{to} cut the ~~end~~ ^{side} of the loaf of bread ~~off~~ ^{out} you know, just pull it and lift it out, whether you wanted two cans or one can of sardines, ~~told him you want two.~~ Put ^{the} one can on the bottom and ~~take~~ ^{make} a slice of that bread and make a layer and put that on, in that he would put pickles, hot sauce, vinegar sauce; and that was some real good eating.

It could be made with sardines

Harrison: Now, you're the first person that described that to me, how you do it. (laughs)

Conic: ~~I think, you could get that for,~~ I think he just charged you for the material that went into ^{about 1'} ~~it.~~ *the loaf.*

Harrison: Didn't charge you anything extra?

Conic: No. Maybe a nickle more, I think it was a nickle more.

Harrison: Now was those large loaves of bread, like we have now or smaller loaves.

Conic: It wasn't very long, I guess, you would call it a smaller loaf.

Harrison: A small loaf?

F. D. C.

Conic: Yes. The regular loaves were only a nickle, the sardines were only a nickle.

Harrison: So you paid fifteen cents and got you a nice sardine loaf.

Conic: That's right.

Harrison: What would you eat with this?

Conic: Nothing, you don't need nothing. (laughs) ^{Others} ~~he~~ used to make a oyster loaf like that.

Harrison: Mr. Hodges use to do that?

Conic: No, he ~~didn't~~ ^{didn't} do that, but I'll tell you a man who did.

Harrison: Who?

Conic? David Sheppherd.

Harrison: The Sheppherd Kitchen?

Conic: Yes. Long time ago Mr. Sheppherd used to be the ^{chief} ~~chief~~ cook of an outstanding white restaurant, The Panpaize: ^{Pantaise}

Harrison: Where was this, here in Jackson?

Conic: Yes, it was on Capitol Street. It was a white establishment, ^{Mr. Sheppard} but ~~Mr. Hodges~~ was the ^{chief} ~~chief~~ cook; he was known as the best cook in Jackson.

Harrison: Now was this Mr. Hodges, or Mr. Sheppherd?

Conic: Mr. Sheppherd. He used to make a oyster loaf, made the same way ^{as the sardine loaf.}

Harrison: Did he ever serve this in his cafe?

Conic: I think, he used to make it and sell it, ^{because} ~~cause~~ I know my father used to buy it sometimes, ~~you know~~. It was prepared in the restaurant.

Harrison: So you would use cooked oysters, pickles.

Conic: Catsup, and all those good dressing and things that goes with it. It's made the same way.

F. N. - b.

Harrison: There was Shepard's Kitchen on Farish Street, where was it?

Conic: ~~It was the block between--~~ ^{It} was on Farish Street right above the Crystal Palace. The first one was on the west side of the street. He eventually quit working for this man and started business for himself.

Harrison: You said it was first on the west side of the street?

Conic: Yes, between Farish Street Baptist Church--south of Farish Street Baptist Church in the middle of the block. You know where that vacant place is?

Harrison: That parking lot?

Conic: There ^{was} ~~is~~ a building there and that ^{was} ~~is~~ known as the ^{Cobb's} ~~Kolb's~~ Building(?)

Harrison: Who is ~~Kolb~~? ^{Cobb's?}

Conic: ~~Cobb's~~ ^{Cobb's} ~~Kolb's~~ was--Mrs. ~~Kolb~~ was a beautician who had a beauty school in part of that building. ^{The} Part of that was for rent. ^{other}

Harrison: So, he rented it and started his business there. Are any of the Shepard's still around?

Conic: No, Mr. Shepard didn't have any children. He had a brother that I know about. The only ^{was} thing I remember ~~is~~ him and his brother. ^{family}

Harrison: If you were contemplating on going into business down in the Farish Street area, and you wanted to have some of the old ^{specialties} ~~specialities~~ that you remember from the 1920's and '30's, food that people prepared, that people might like to buy today, other than the sardine loaf and the oyster loaf, what other things would you specialize in?

Conic: Well, I can only think of that type of business, but I can tell you what I like, I don't think it would be a good business ^{though}. Let me say this first, for a black man to survive he doesn't need the black business he needs the public business. If you can ^{you would} create a business that would attract Jackson, black and white, ~~and~~ be able to survive and make good. ~~You mentioned about pork, I think it was good, I like shrimp.~~

I mentioned first the importance of doing a needed service, ^{create a good} ~~and~~ ^{patronage,} outstanding service, in that way you can ~~demand a tight customer.~~ I have known some places, ~~I've been out of town,~~ where people have prepared shrimp ^{expertly} ~~expertly~~. A person with a business like that, I think, ~~it~~ would attract business ^{in the Farish} ~~in the~~ ^{street area}

Handwritten initials/signature

expertly

street area

Harrison: Was there ever a place on Farish Street where you could have brought ~~ship~~ earlier?

Conic: No it wasn't, not as a speciality, ~~no~~.
bought shrimp

Harrison: Since you have informed me that this is the last side, I did want to pull one other area, there are a lot of things I need to go off into. You're a good narrative, you remember things well.

Conic: You kind of caught me off guard. Maybe you got me kind of nervous. (laughs)

Harrison: Oh, it's nothing to be nervous about, we just talk. (laughs)

Conic: Serious ^{ly} about Big Apple right across from Central Church, the man that started that is one ^{of} the ~~Mexician~~ ^{Mexicans} that came to Jackson to work on that.

Harrison: The vidox?

Conic: Yes, the vidox.

Harrison: Now, is that Edward Lee something?

Conic: No.

Harrison: No? What was the name? I know where Big Apple Inn is, I'm trying to think who the man was that started it, is it his son that continued the business?

Conic: His son, not the same as a Mexician, his wife is a black woman. His son now operates it, in fact, his grandson's people now is operating it. I think, his son is retired, he's still alive though, maybe he's gone to stay somewhere.

The man that started it was a Mexician and his wife was black, of course. It was a black community.

Harrison: Do you remember this man that started the business?

Conic: Yes, I do.

Harrison: What was he like?

Conic: Fair looking sort of fellow, I think, everybody called him Big John.

Harrison: Was he larger than average size man?

F. B. L.

Conic: No, small, maybe kind of fat. I don't know how he got his name. Before then he use to make hot tamales and have a cart and go on the streets and people would buy. Have you ever seen those hot tamales carts?

Harrison: No.

Conic: It's made very much like--it is very much like a cart that that you use in the supermarket. It is made out of wood. The wheels of it is just like bicycle wheels, definitely homemade. He had a big pan of hot tamales that he made. He would go around the area and sell them. Most of the Mexican did that after they got through with their jobs. They mad jobs for themselves by making hot tamales. This man is one of those men

Harrison: So, he survived?

Conic: Yes.

Harrison: Apparently, the response in the Black community was very good.

Conic: Yes, it was. *When I was* In fact, ~~as~~ a young man, Farish Street was a booming business area.

Harrison: If someone were to revive that, how would you look upon that? In the effort to revive Farish Street some of us think that to take it back historically and do some of those things would give it character. How would you view that?

Conic: I don't have the vision to think about it right now. I think it can be done. We are living in a different area than we use to. You remember the horse and buggy, it is to slow, it couldn't make it now. ~~Have~~ *Have* to be a different approach altogether. You have people now who have had more schooling, more skills; you have to have skills in order to survive. Old skills wouldn't match today's skills. ~~After creating an atmosphere or surroundings multitudes to meet today's economy, today's surroundings.~~ *With a* ~~It can be done by taking~~ a lot of thought and plans to do it, ~~but~~ it can be done ~~though~~, if you're willing to do it. Now, I tell you if you're going to do it, roll up your sleeve and get ready to work and don't be afraid of getting dirty as far as work is concerned. Success is not an accident, very few people accidently do things. If you're going to do anything worthwhile, try to plan it and be willing to work for it. I propose this question now, is today's black people willing to work? *If not forget it.*

F. C. C.

Harrison: Some of them.

Conic: Do you believe me then?

Harrison: Yes, I think so, un hum.

Conic: A lot of our people ^{want} ~~what~~ things but, they want it handed to them.

Harrison: Right, that's true.

Conic: That's ^{in the} past.

Harrison: Well, now those of us who are interested in working, what we would like is, how to do it, you know, like what to create and the information that you've given me about the colorful things on Farish Street, if work the ideas in to something like the French Quarters, only the French Quarters were never in Jackson. We would have to find out what was in Jackson, that is why I keep asking you these questions in searching for the flavor of what it was. If that can be captured it maybe ^a possible market.

Conic: Mrs. Harrison, I've seen the French Quarters, I'd hate to see Farish Street be a French Quarter.

Harrison: What do you dislike about it?

Conic: I don't think . . .

Harrison: Yes, I think, I understand.

Conic: I think, we need something that is ^{competitive} ~~competetive~~ that will fit today's market in order to survive. You can do anything for ~~a little season and make money. I think, what we need, I think~~ ^{businesses like} about McCarthy-Holman, now it's ~~just~~ ^{was} Jitney Jungle and Warehouse. I remember S. P. McRae, now it's ~~just~~ ^{was} McRae's. S. P. McRae, that ~~a little~~ ^{was} humble store. I remember it, I used to buy from S. P. McRae, the father of Richard McRae and his brothers. If S. P. McRae was living now, he couldn't ~~visit~~ ^{envision} McRae's. ~~He wouldn't have it, you couldn't see it.~~ ^{of today} We ~~got~~ ^{must} to have a new breed of people who have business ^{ideas} higher than my daddy. If fact, my daddy used to say, I think of it still, you all are suppose to start from my shoulder not from the ground, I'm starting from the ground, you build from my shoulder up. I think that's what McRae did. I understand that Henry Ford didn't want to go any further than the T-Model. ^{Jord Co.} He gave us the Mercury and the Lincoln, so I think in those terms.

D.L.C.

Harrison: You were talking about Jack Young . . .

Conic: Yes, he worked ^{at a shoe repair shop} there when he was going to school.

Harrison: Jack Young, Sr. the lawyer, the attorney?

Conic: The lawyer.

Harrison: He was working for Mr. Bynum?

Conic: That's right, in the evenings, ~~you know~~, as a boy.

Harrison: What was he doing, learning to repair watches?

Conic: No, shoes.

Harrison: Oh, okay now I'm back, I'm with you.

Conic: Mr. Bynum was a shoe man. Let me see what else ^{was} there ~~was~~. ^{in the Farish St. area} At that time on the corner there was ~~McCarthy~~ and Holman Grocery Store, they were white. ^{McCarthy}

Harrison: Right, now where is the grocery store?

Conic: This is ^{no} ~~a~~ grocery store on the corner ^{anymore}.

Harrison: Of Amite and ?

Conic: Amite and Farish.

Harrison: That's still on the east side?

Conic: That's right. Now McCarthy Holman is ^{part of} Jitney Jungle Warehouse.

Harrison: They had the warehouse down on Mill Street, didn't they?

Conic: It was small, that was a grocery store that they had, at that time. That business has grown into Jitney Jungle ^{and the} Warehouse. I don't think that was the first of the stores, they had other stores too. I understand their first store was started on Adell and Grayson Street, which is Lamar now. ~~It's Lamar now, it use to be Grayson Street. I think, their first store was on Adell and Grayson.~~

Harrison: Now, where is Adell, is that a street now?

Conic: That is as far as you go on Lamar Street and Adell goes right into Millsaps, I'm trying to locate it.

Harrison: Yes, I know now. ^{College Campus}

Handwritten signature

CONIC, Frank

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white businesses

Conic: I was thinking about the ~~whites~~ start small and yet they're able to grow, grow, grow.

Harrison: That is interesting.

Conic: I was thinking about some other businesses here in Jackson, small businesses ^{are} now, main businesses.

Harrison: Yes, we have that potential.

Conic: Yes, that's one thing I talk about alot. I think about this, the fault of business opportunities, our businesses usually last only one generation. It takes a generation to make a ~~nucleus~~ ^{black nucleus} for a business. I've noticed through the years that every business negroes have ever started here last ~~one~~ generation and it's dead and gone with the exception of one or two. ~~Mine, I'm very proud about one of the two.~~

Harrison: What are they?

Conic: Peoples's Funeral Home is one, Collins is one. The other ones usually last only one generation. I'm proud I was a barber before starting the supply business, unfortunately, I don't have any children.

Now, I can get you on the other side, ^{east} north. I forgot one more thing on the same side, there was ^{Parish St. the West.} North Carolina Mutual Insurance Company, and there was Doctor Owen, a dentist.

Harrison: Who ran the North Carolina Mutual Insurance Company?

Conic: Mr. Bob Garrett, the same man that owned Garrett Products, and a man by the name of Cox, I don't remember Mr. Cox's name. Those two men were the managers of the insurance company. I believe, that's all that was on that side, ~~maybe someother places.~~

Harrison: So that's over there where the parking garage is now?

Conic: That's true. Let's go on to the other side. There was Dr. Redmond's Drug Store.

Harrison: That was on the corner?

Conic: No, it wasn't on the corner, but just off the corner. There ~~was~~ ^{were} one or two other places there. At that time there was a bank on the corner.

Harrison: What was the name of the bank?

F. D. L.

Conic: Merchant Bank.

Harrison: Merchant's Bank?

Conic: Yes.

Harrison: Is this a white or black bank?

Conic: White.

Harrison: This was in the 20s?

Conic: That's right.

Harrison: Do you have any recollection of anybody having said that in that general area was a black bank at some point?

Conic: There was. That was before my time. I don't remember. ~~I have some~~, I know some things about it.

Harrison: Could you tell me what you heard?

Conic: I think it was on Capital Street. I have a book of Dr. Redmond that tells quite a bit about that bank.

Harrison: I wish you would share that with me at some point, or let me xerox out of it.

Conic: I ^{would} rather do that because I've had some books that got away from me and I don't want that ^{to} . . . but I would like to share it with you.

Harrison: You can xerox it?

Conic: Yes. I'll be glad to do it.

Harrison: Well, we can continue. I just want to get every little bit that I can.

Conic: That drug store was second ^{to none}. ~~I remember the tower, it had~~ ^a ~~the~~ marble counter; it was first class. There was a soda fountain and it run by Dr. Redmond's brother. He had a brother by the name of Gus Redmond. It's Augustus, but everybody called him Gus. There was another pharmacist there by the name of Pink Williams.

note insert attached.

Harrison: Now he, the pharmacist, was working in Redmond's drug store?

Conic: That's right. Dr. Redmond and Dr. Williams, ^{the} two pharmacists were there. They did a wonderful job.

F. D. D.

Insert for page 31

There was Redmond's Drug store that was second to none. It had a marble counter ^{top} soda fountain that was run by Dr. Sidney Redmond's brother. His name was Augustus Redmond, but everybody called him Gus. There was another pharmacist there by the name of Pink Williams.

Conic: It was clean and beautiful, first class. Leaving that, there were several barber shops, and upstairs there were two dentists. Two brothers, Johnson, *brothers.* ~~Dr. Johnson.~~ I don't remember their names. I should know their initials but I don't right now. There was a Dr. Barnes that past just *a few years ago.*

Harrison: ~~That's Theodore Barnes?~~

Conic: ~~Yes, that's right.~~ There was Dr. Redmond. Now at that time Dr. Redmond was practicing law. He was a medical doctor and he was a lawyer. He went back to school and got law and he practiced law. It's a long story about why he stopped practicing. ~~It's a long conversation by itself as I heard.~~ He was a wonderful doctor. Then there was Dr. Johnson, a medical doctor, R. L. Johnson.

Harrison: Could you tell me about this story? I thought you were going to tell me about Dr. Redmond becoming a lawyer.

Conic: Well, I thought I would make it very short. ~~I heard, and I am quite sure it's true.~~ Dr. Redmond ~~was~~ *was the* kind of man that comes once in a generation, very sharp man. ~~I understand there was a white girl in Jackson who had some disease or some complaint that no doctor could do anything for, and someone recommended Dr. Redmond. They said he was a good doctor, and I believed if anybody could do any good it was him. I understand that he was used, for this white girl, person. I don't know. I say girl. She got alright, got well and, Dr. Redmond had the white people just bothering him. They caused him to not stop practicing medicine.~~ *It was rumored that the reaction of the white people*

Harrison: Something like malpractice?

Conic: I don't know what it was. He wasn't no quack, I mean he was well schooled. I think he went to the University of Illinois I think before he got his practice *as a lawyer started* Anyway, he stopped practicing medicine and went back to school and got a law degree. Jackson feared Dr. Redmond because he was extremely shrewd. I know you've heard ~~this~~ the doctor was quite successful financially. He had a large holding. He was a very *useful* suitable man. He used to know how to do things.

Harrison: His law office was up there where he had practiced medicine?

Conic: Yes. Most of his business ~~was~~ was there. The buildings *F. L. B.*

Conic: belonged ^{to him,} . . . half of that block belonged to him too. Most of it was two and three stories, one section was three stories.

Harrison: I was talking about the personalities. Mr. Beattle, the photographer, he was in ^{Dr. Redmond's building.}
Also there were two lawyers, W. L. Mhoon and P. G. Cooper.
Was he upstairs or downstairs?

Conic: Upstairs. A long time ago he used to be downstairs, I think he was. Finally he went upstairs. There's Dr. Christain, Dr. Hair, a dentist, Dr. Price, who just passed. Dr. Price came here about the early 30s. No, in the late 20s, I think Dr. Price came. There was Dr. Smith, L. A. Smith, ~~he had later moved and parted on Farish Street.~~ ^{office} There was Mr. ~~Edward~~ ^{Atwood} who had a real estate and other businesses. ~~Makisic~~ ^{and there was a}

practiced and had a clinic

Harrison: ^{McKissack} Makisic, now, I've heard of him. ^{Mr. McKissack.}

Conic: They were related, ~~Dr. Edward and Makisic~~ ^{cause} One of those buildings ~~were~~ ^{was} built by them, ^{and named for them.}

Harrison: Now this is one of the buildings that would be in that first hundred block of Farish Street?

Conic: That's right. Part of where the Federal Building is.

Harrison: So they had a real estate office in there?

Conic: Yes.

Harrison: Was there a lawyer ~~Edward~~ ^{Atwood}?

Conic: ^{I don't know} ~~He did, I think Dr. Edward . . . It was a lawyer and a~~ I know he dabbled with ~~the~~ politics, politicians, and real estate too. There was a real estate man by the name of Smith, Joe Smith. Joe Smith, I think, built more houses for black people than anybody. He and George Thomas. You've heard about George Thomas?

Harrison: Yes.

Conic: Joe Smith was really the ^{negotiator} negotiator of buildings. Getting money and building buildings, homes, etc.

Harrison: Now was he a carpenter or one of the finances?

Conic: ~~Financer~~, well he was in the real estate business. ^{Financier}

F. D. L.

CONIC, Frank

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to build
Conic: He transacted buildings and money to build houses.

Harrison: So he and George Thomas would not be the same title. George Thomas would be a general contractor . . .

Conic: Builder *and contractor*.

Harrison: A builder.

Conic: Joe Smith would just deal only in real estate.

Harrison: Was George Thomas working for him?

Conic: No. There were times when they would work together.

Harrison: Were there other people in this block? I want to ask you some questions, but I want you to tell me who they were first.

Conic: Of course, Dr. McCoy came, that was later. ~~There was . . .~~

Harrison: You're saying Dr. McCoy came and this was later. How much later?

Conic: Could have been in the late 20s, *or early 30s*, I think.

Harrison: So he's not a native Mississippian?

Conic: Oh yes, Dr. McCoy's home is between here and Tougaloo.

Harrison: When you said he came . . .

Conic: I mean *he came to Jackson to practice*.

Harrison: He came and got in business?

Conic: Yes in business, yes.

Harrison: Were there some other people?

Conic: Yes there are a lot, I can't think of them all.

Harrison: Okay, maybe we will explore some other areas and you'll think of some other names. These men who had there businesses, they were all men I assume.

Conic: Yes.

Harrison: Did they have any sort of organization that tied them together?

Conic: No, not that I know of. There were times that the

F. D. L.

Conic: men would get together because of some condition. I remember on one occasion Dr. Redmond had tried to get the men of the area to do something, several things I should say. *at times* Have ^{any} a little trouble with the city government ~~but~~ they would do some things but it was a hard situation. Negroes didn't have ~~the~~ ^{no} vote. You always had a few voters, but not enough to make ~~it~~ ^{any} a difference.

Harrison: Would most of these men who would have been in business down there been among the voters?

Conic: I imagine maybe a few of them. I think we ^{did not} realize the importance of voting. But Dr. Redmond and some other people have always tried to encourage ^{voting} because Dr. Redmond was a part of the Republican ~~fraction~~ ^{faction} of politics at the time. He and Perry Howard, I know you know him.

Harrison: Yes.

Conic: They were cousins, I understand. Dr. Redmond and some other ~~people~~ ^{were} people too ^{are} very much political minded; Ed Patton was one of ~~his~~ ^{the} men that worked with Dr. Redmond. It's kind of hard to remember all of them. Now of all the people that I was ^{were in} talking about ~~is between~~ that block, ~~the business in the block.~~ ^{between Capital + Anide streets} It was a lively area. On Sundays evenings it was just like people would be ^{at} a fair in a way. Just people were there having a good time.

Harrison: What would they be doing?

Conic: Going to the restaurants. It would be just a place for people to meet just like you would go to the park. We didn't have any parks. I suppose that was the park we had just to meet for the evenings. One cafe there used ^{to} be called the Sunshine, I think. On Sunday it would have a band.

Harrison: Who owned the Sunshine?

Conic: A man by the name of Luckett. I don't know his first name, but Luckett.

Harrison: Not related to Earnest?

Conic: Could have been. I don't know that. I'm not sure about that. But it was ^{at} very good time. There wasn't any whiskey. It wasn't legalized anyway.

Frank

Conic: Not even beer at that time. So people just had a good time drinking ^{pot} and eating, ~~pop~~ and whatever it may be. People would ^{wade} ~~wade~~ between each other it would be so thick. The band there was the The ~~Lena~~ ^{Leaner} brothers ~~use to have a band.~~ ^{band.}

Harrison: Is this a local group?

Conic: Yes it was. And the day was Sunday.

Harrison: What kind of music was it, swing or jazz

Conic: Jazz.

Harrison: Do you know much about music? Why I ask you is because would there be such a thing as a Farish Street Jazz as being different from something they would play in the dancehall.

Conic: I don't think so. I don't know. To mention another thing too. There would be a lot of singing too, ~~not~~ organization. A few of us would just get together and sing, just have a nice time.

Harrison: Do you remember the kind of songs they were singing?

Conic: I don't know some of the old songs. "Sweet Adaline". I remember a song they used to sing a lot, "I Want A Girl Just Like The Girl In Paris". ^{that} Kind of a spontaneous thing. Any of the popular songs and things ~~people would sing.~~ They would get together and say come on let's harmonize. Let's sing some, ~~bunch~~ ^{bunch} of men, ladies too.

Harrison: Would you part, one of those persons who would say come one let's harmonize?

Conic: Oh no, ~~I'm not that.~~ At the barber shop we had a quartet.

Harrison: Tell me about it.

Conic: Well we had a barber, I think he had a very good voice. His name was ^{Richard Crawford.} I mentioned about ~~there was~~ a man and my father Mr. Shaw. ~~It was~~ ^{It was} two boys and ~~it was~~ ^{it was} three of us. ~~It was~~ ^{It was} five of us. Mr. Shaw was a musician. He played the violin. This other man, I can't think of his name, he use to get all five of us together and we sang.

Harrison: Just in the barber shop or . . . ?

F.D.C.

Stool
that married Dear Old Dad

another barber
the Conic boys

(Insert)

Insert for page 36

This belongs at the bottom of page 36.

Well we had a barber whom I think had a very good voice his name was Charlie Crawford. There was another barber, a Mr. Shaw who had two boys and ~~there~~ three of us, the Conic boys made five of us. Mr. Shaw was a musician. He played the violin. He used to get all five of us together with Mr. Charlie Crawford to sing.

Conic: No, just there. Somtimes people would come in and say you boys sing for me, we would response, ~~you understand.~~

Harrison: What kind of songs would you sing?

Conic: All the regular, popular, and spiritual songs.

Harrison: What kind of spirtual like Swing Low Sweet Chariot?

Conic: *Yes* ~~I suppose those songs are so old until they're moth covered. (laughs) Just like the moths do.~~

Harrison: Yes, I know. What are some of the songs now.

Conic: *because* I don't know but one song, don't ask me to sing it now ~~cause~~ I don't remember it, Lula. Nobody knows this song.

Harrison: Lula?

Conic: Lula the girl's name, My Girl Lula.

Harrison: Keep on and you're going to sing it for us in a minute.

Conic: It was a lot of fun.

Harrison: Was Lula a city girl or a country girl or what?

Conic: The song seemed to ~~take~~ *say* there's no girl like my girl Lula.

Harrison: So black folk used to just get together and sing spontaneously without any great adue?

Conic: Yes, just let's sing some. At that time there wasn't any music boxes. We used to have those automatic playing pianos. You used to have to put a nickle in it and the piano plays, ~~Self~~ players.

Harrison: Yes, I've seen them on the movies.

Conic: A long time ago they used to have those at the restaurants and other things instead of the music boxes as we have now.

Harrison: So the piano played and the people just sing?

Conic: Yes. Sometime we'd put a nickle in there and we all grouped around to sing.

Harrison: Why do you think we don't do that anymore?

Conic: Your ~~quest~~ *guess* is as good as mine. But I believe there

F.2.6.

Conic: are so many other things now. Back then there were no television, no radio. Those are newer things. I know younger people think those things maybe have been there all the while, but it wasn't. I remember the first time I ever heard a radio, It was in the late 20s.

Harrison: Would this have been in your home or barber shop?

Conic: It would be at home, the first radio I ever heard.

Harrison: Now we've heard a lot about your educational life your business life and things like that, what about your recreation as a youngster? A boy growing up in the Farish Street area, what would you do for recreation?

Conic: I imagine baseball and football for recreation. *This* . . . I bring to my memory though, my assignment of work was ~~through~~ *tough* took a lot of my time *from* for recreation. I had *time* recreation, of course, but it has never been ~~on~~ all day. I've always *worked*, I've never been without a job. I always had some assignments to do. ~~Say~~ My father operated the barber shop before my time and I had a job already cut out for me.

Harrison: You always had chores and whatever to do? What did your friends do?

Conic: Well, many people sought ~~many~~ little jobs like in grocery stores and some restaurants, any job, homework, just find some job.

Harrison: Homework meaning . . .

Conic: Cleaning up the yards or anything.

Harrison: Oh, I see.

Conic: Any little job to make fifty cents or twenty-five cents. You know twenty-five cents ~~is~~ *was* pretty good handout for a little job at that time.

Harrison: Right. I think we've talked a lot about your father, how about your mother. What kind of person was she?

Conic: I had a wonderful mother. My mother lived very long. I lost my mother about four years ago. My mother stayed at home. Reared ~~mother and~~ church woman *she was a*

her family.

F. D. L.

Conic: ^{and she} participated in surroundings of the neighborhood.

Harrison: What church did you all attend?

Conic: I belonged to Christ Temple Holiness Church on the corner of Monument and Lamar, ^{with} and my parents. I was raised up in the church, been there all my life.

Harrison: You were talking about these successful men and what I wanted to ask you was what about our generation being able to learn from your father's generation and your generation?

Conic: I don't think young people are listening. First you have to have an interest. As Professor Lanier use to say "I have to get a man's attention first if you're going to learn him anything." If you're not interested, you're not going to learn nothing. ~~If he's not interested he aint He'll say Ah yeh, um huh, but his interest is not there.~~

Harrison: Well, there must have been some way that your father got your attention.

Conic: Probably so.

Harrison: Now what was that? If we learn that then maybe . . .

Conic: I can remember a lot of things papa use to say, ~~little things he would say like this. Maybe I can say it like this.~~ Shortly before my father died, he would come and we would talk . . . ~~like he wanted to talk to me.~~ Sometimes I would be weary of him talking, but . . . a lot of things ^{Come} ~~came~~ back to my memory. Though I was doing alright I suppose He would tell me things like this, "It's not what you make, it's what you do with what you make." A man can make a \$1000 a week and if he don't do nothing with it, he'll come right back where he was. A man can make a \$1000 a week and spend \$1,500 and still he's in the hole. It doesn't do him any good. It's not what you do, it's not what you make, it's what you do with what you make. He talked to me about things like that and don't spend all your money on just anything. Try to put something back. Somebody may pass by with something worth buying and you can buy it. If you don't have any money, you

F. A. C.

Conic: can't do nothing with it. Opportunities will pass by you and you can't do nothing about it. ~~I remember, this is about my daddy's~~ Dr. Redmond lived right across the street from me. I wasn't his barber, but sometimes he would miss his barber and come to my shop because it was convenient. He would talk to me about the Redmond's, a lot of them thought it wasn't so ~~business~~, you know, it's very business-like, but he liked to talk. He told me one day, he said, "Frank, what are you doing on Sunday, why don't you come over to my house sometime and let's talk." ~~We'd~~ I had the opportunity to go to talk to Dr. Redmond and he told me ~~it's~~ a matter of conversation, his experiences and things that he knew and how to do. It didn't mean very much to me right then and there, but I was able to digest it.

Let me go back to Dr. Redmond

Harrison: Can you recall anything specific or generally that he said?

Conic: Well this was the 40s, I was barbering at the time. He told me if you're making any money, it's the time to invest it. Invest it now and be ready to retire in ~~best~~ about 1960. Don't make it . . . too long. I found out it was worth while. You know sometime you can buy something and in 30 years, 40 years, it doesn't matter. Well, if its big enough, but a small investment, a thousand a few thousand dollars, you need to get arrangement of your business so you can retire. So he told me about ~~how~~ he think it's going to be a depression, ~~like~~ and it was, I remember the depression. A lot of things like that he would tell me. He knew of some businesses or some property that was possibly for sale, if you're interested, you ought to get that. If you need anything like that, let me know and I can help you out. ~~But~~ he knew about a lot of things like that. So I valued his conversation.

Harrison: So apparently you were somebody he wanted to help out. Well, I'll like to pursue this but I don't want to just bore you so that we can't pick up this conversation at some other point. There are a whole lot of areas that we could explore if you, you know, after you see this and you're agreeable to explore in some other areas.

Conic: I hope I be ^{will} in a more calm . . .

Harrison: Well, you've done excellent, really.

F.R. G.

Conic: I like to talk, I like conversation. If anybody needs a lecturer, don't call on me . . . (laughter)

Harrison: Well let me close this out by saying for the tape that I appreciate your freeness in explaining and sharing your life experiences with us. And I need to ask you if you mind us using this for scholarly purposes here at Jackson State and in the community.

Conic: Well, I have no real objection, but I think it needs to be screened .

Harrison: I think you've been very selective in what you've said and all, but you don't mind if we use it, is that what you're saying?

Conic: No.

END OF TAPE FIVE

F. C.