

**Bailey Drive Gateway at Walnut Creek Wetland Park**  
Raleigh, NC

Transcript\* of Phone Interview with **Freddie Hicks**

Interviewed by Jackie Turner of J. Turner Consulting and Lindsey Naylor of Design Workshop  
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*\*The following transcription is provided for reference only. Personal and unrelated conversation has been omitted from the transcript. The transcript has been edited for clarity by removing stuttering, start-and-stop sentences, and filler words such as “um,” “just,” “yeah” and “like.” Clarifying information is notated with [brackets]. Periodic time markers are provided in minutes:seconds format.*

Jackie Turner (JT)

02:35

We don't have much structure to the call. We just would like to hear basic things, such as how long you've lived in the neighborhood, what are some of your fondest memories, how has the neighborhood changed over time. But you can, maybe tell us how long have you lived there.

Freddie Hicks (FH)

03:03

Well basically I grew up at 9232 Boaz Drive, and I probably stayed until I was 21 and then went in service, went away to school. And I came back and my mother was still living at that time. She passed away in '72. So I've stayed there probably from the age of 14 all the way up until 21. And I grew away. And my brother, he's named after my father, Roy Hicks the third.

And growing up, I knew when the homes got built I would stay around, I went with my parents a lot of times to view the property. I knew it was the Lightners' and Youngs' family farm.

My fondest memories there, we, basically was the first house that we have ever owned. We stayed in apartments, and we had a ranch, a pretty good size ranch. We probably had the largest home in the community right there, with a full basement. We had, the composition was four bedrooms, a big kitchen because that's where, normally the kitchen was the main family room now. We had the formal living room, no formal dining room. We had a basement and we had, with eight of us, we had three baths. One time we only had one bath. Then, we had built-in appliances, what have you. So everything became modern to us. We were bused to school to — there was not a school in the area at that time, and we were bused to Ligon, which was our high school and middle school at that time.

The people that migrated in were entrepreneurs, teachers, judges, doctors, lawyers.

JT

05:38

It was a nice neighborhood.

FH

05:39

It was a nice neighborhood. It was all made up of fabric, different fabric of people, educated and uneducated. But everybody got along and everybody was close-knit. It was a nice country -- it seemed to be country at that time because it was kind of built out when everybody used to stay into Raleigh a little bit closer in. But growing up there, I grew up there at Boaz, and the fondest memories that I had, my parent was an entrepreneur himself. He ran the park. It's mighty strange that we're talking about the park, and that's what my daddy did. He ran concessions at all the parks in what they considered to be Southeast Raleigh at that time. And we did all the football games from the high school to the university, well we call them university now, they were colleges then, with Shaw and St. Aug's. And we got a lot of the activities, we had \_\_\_ there, and what have you. I ended up working for Parks and Recreation for 30 years, for the City of Raleigh, and I ran programs for them.

JT

07:06

May I ask you a couple of questions before we go on, I find that fascinating. So I have a couple of questions. When did you retire from parks and recreation?

FH

07:16

In '98 I retired.

JT

07:19

And could you tell me your father and mother's names?

FH

07:26

Okay. My father's name was Roy Senior. My mother's name was Mayme Helen Hicks.

JT

07:34

Okay. I just like to, you know, it's always those little details that you need to distinguish, especially since your family has that legacy of part of the Hicks carrying down a name for five generations. And then you mentioned at one point there were eight of you in the house. So I imagine that was your mother, your father, you and Roy Junior...?

FH

08:02

And four sisters.

JT

08:03

And four sisters. Okay. Wow. And where are they now?

FH

08:09

Well I have one that teaches, that's a retired teacher down in Miami, Florida, the oldest one. The next to the oldest is in Plainfield, New Jersey, retired. My other sister's retired, and she's in Atlanta, Georgia. Retired teacher. And my baby sister is still here in Raleigh.

JT

08:34

Okay. And then I'm fascinated by the work for the parks and for the colleges at that time. When were you all selling refreshments, like the way that when we go to a game these days, we go get our peanuts and sodas?

FH

08:54

That's correct. We sold all the sno-balls, the cotton candy, the popcorn, the hot dogs. And that's how we grew up. We grew up as a family with a family operated business. And all the, the strangest things -- it was during segregated times a lot of it, and all of the, all the kids, people that were in the neighborhood had to go to that particular park. At the time the property that you're talking about now became flooded at one point and the houses used to flood out with the heavy rain, and then they got bought out by the City of Raleigh because that was considered to be in a floodplain.

And so Carnage was built, and my uncle, which you're fixing to talk to his wife next week, he stayed around the corner. That's my daddy's youngest brother. And then the oldest brother stayed down the street was Van Hicks. So we all stayed in that area. Two of his brothers stayed there right within, maybe, two blocks of each other.

JT

10:13

What are other family memories and happenings in the neighborhood, or being with the neighbors? Do you still get together and talk about the long timers?

FH

10:42

We used to. Most of them are dying out. Basically what we used to do is get together, and the kids get together sometimes, is we ride through the neighborhood, we stop and fellowship with each other. But we used to do it on Thanksgiving and Christmas, Fourth of July we would always have something there where we'd visit. We did a lot of visitation, and we walked from one house to the next house. And so that's how we grew up. It was a very, very, very quiet neighborhood. Very, I tell you what, we were wanted, we were loved. We thought everybody was family.

JT

11:27

I like that. 'We were loved.' Now do you have children?

FH

11:33

Yes I do. I have five kids, and all my kids are grown. I got one that's with the sheriff's department here. He's probably the second in charge with the sheriff's department. He's a major. I have another with the gas company here, he's second in charge with the gas company. I have a daughter, she has two degrees working on a doctorate, and she's a recruiter for Meredith College. I have another son, he works with the stock market, and he's the youngest boy. And then I have another one that's a police officer with the Dallas area.

JT

12:24

You must be so proud. I mean, wow, everybody is so accomplished.

FH

12:29

Well. I hope they, all of them — I always preached that I hope you find your niche. You know. I can tell you the best way to go about it, but all the kids feel for themselves, like my parents did. They didn't force me into anything and let you go where you thought you might be successful. And my dad always wanted me to be an entrepreneur, which — I became a caterer, and I'm still in concession business. I'm still in catering business. That's the family history of business. We all were in food service, we had three restaurants at one time. We did the concessions, and my daddy worked as equipment manager out of State College. And then we had a cleaning service. So we stayed pretty busy.

JT

13:29

You sure did. Wow. So and then did your — is your wife also from Raleigh? What is her maiden name?

FH

13:43

Yes. She had an uncle down the street that grew up from me. He was Vernon Malone, ran for —

JT

13:52

I know that name.

FH

13:53

Yeah he's — they have a school named after him. But he died all of a sudden, maybe within the last three or four years. But he was a prominent one. He belonged to the Malone brothers. I married John Malone's daughter, the oldest girl, which was Paulette. And she had taught school — in fact she taught school longer than any teacher in Wake County, probably. She stayed in for 48 years.

JT

14:24

Oh my gosh. I don't know how she did it! Bless her, with being a teacher, I swear.

FH

14:35

And so she was a director of a child care facility out there at this high school. Unique situation. In fact her and my other cousin's wife, Harriet Webster, they wrote up the curriculum for that program, and she ended up running that program for a length of time that, about 37-some years. And I finally got her to retire because I told her the taxes was eating me up. (laughter)

But she loves kids, and, you know, the fun thing about it is that all the people in that area loved kids, loved children. And I guess that's why we're so successful, you know, because everybody looked after each other, and each -- all of those people in the community could chastise you. So you had a tight rim, but you had a loving rim. You know, that's how I would put it.

15:42

My aunt around the corner that you're gonna talk to, she's a teacher. My uncle was a coach and teacher. So, everybody you were going to meet, either they were in your church, if they weren't in your church they were in your school.

JT

15:55

Yeah. I had a question— when you started out working in the concession, you were a young man. You mentioned that in terms of the park, folks in the southeast, things were segregated, and so everyone was sort of clustered in one area and I think possibly that fostered that sense of neighborhood and maybe made it even stronger. But what sort of changes did you see, or did you see any at all, once there was desegregation and African-Americans, our people could move more freely through the community?

FH

16:38

Basically they were people that didn't move out the neighborhood, they stayed in. So we had a pretty, still, tight-sealed neighborhood even though we had \_\_\_ that came in.

As people, as the older one died out, now we have different ones we see moving in the neighborhood. And I had moved away by then.

17:03

I had moved out here in the Garner area. And I've been out here for the last 20 years. I would go back through that neighborhood to see my aunt, or to go past the home house, you know how you ride and reminisce.

So that was the kind of structure that we did do and look at it and try to look at and see. And I noticed that our elementary school is going to be torn down to be restructured for a new facility.

17:41

But as I grew up there I ran the summer program for kids at the Fuller School, and it was like a fun program, a summer program camp. And the kids would go up, play checkers, marbles, that type of thing, and play ball, dodgeball, you know, and go swimming, different places like that. And I became interested in recreation because I saw how it built character in me, and I love people that love people, you know, especially who love kids.

18:34

But the parks — in a sense, we got to know everybody in the south side of town, because we went to church together, went to school together. You know, we lived in the neighborhood together. And so we couldn't help for knowing each other. And with us running — I guess Chavis Park was considered the beach of the South back then. People would come all over from different areas.

19:00

So in working with Parks and Recreation I used to — I was on a team called Environmental Inspection, where we go around and look at floodplains and areas of all the parks and see what needs to be improved or what could be done for those greenways and different things like that, so stormwater drains for example. And so that's what I ended up doing with them.

JT

19:31

Do you have any specific memories of the Walnut Creek Wetland Park area? About 10 years ago they built the Norman and Betty Camp Education Center at State and Peterson streets there. Have you ever had a chance to get over there?

FH

20:34

I've been there. I've used that place. I've catered out of that place. It's a real nice facility. We used to call it, we used to call the swamp area back then, we used to call it 'Snake Area.' We would never go through there. But I've had a chance to look at that and to use that facility. Maybe I've been in there about three or four times, and it's a really unique facility.

JT

21:14

So you all did not play down in the 'Snake Area' at all? (laughter)

FH

21:18

No. No, no, no. Look, when we played we either played in front of the house or we played in the backyard. And then we got to a point that we start getting involved in activities at school, so we would actually leave and play in different sports programs because that was pretty big during that time. Baseball, football and ran track or whatever. But we knew about that, I knew about the school there. And Lightner had a cemetery that's still there.

...

FH

23:32

People used to ask me, said, 'Where do you live?' I said, 'Boaz.' 'Who is Boaz?'

...

Lindsey Naylor (LN)

24:41

What did you say was the process for gathering names, and did you say that you were aware of the process that was behind that? What was that? How did people go about compiling names and choosing them?

FH

25:03

My aunt is going to take you through that when you talk. And so she's the historian with that. You ask her that, and she will go and give you that.

It was three months, I think, before we moved in there. And my dad and his brothers all got together and we all, they all built right there in proximity to each other.

...

[on the street naming effort] That was because of Black history ... All those people, by the cross section of different people ... I mean, they come up with terrific — and we loved it, you know, because we had no history of Blacks in Raleigh, other than what John Chavis had done for us, you know. But it gave us a lot of pride. That we stayed where — 'Who's the famous person in your neighborhood?'

27:51

My dad, being an entrepreneur, worked to build a home. And that was our first house, our only house. And then within a year and a half, he passed. So my fondest memories, that I had all grew up right there. That's the way I look at it. My mother came down with cancer at that time, and she was given for one year to live. She made it to the tenth year. My daddy was 42 when he died; my mother was 52. And all of us made it, you know.

JT

28:33

You all did. Oh my gosh. And what a legacy. Your parents would be so proud.

FH

28:40

Well you know at that time to have three in college at one time — that's tough. But he — and we had no grants. Everything had to be paid. So we're family, we work together to make that happen.

...

FH

29:34

The only thing I could say — back then the affordability of the houses being built. I think the one, the houses were built were nine thousand, some-odd dollars. And I guess we built the other, would run you about 14, 15 thousand dollars, somewhere around in there.

29:59

We all had our opportunities to get homes, you know. Because a lot of people being educated, a lot of people being uneducated, so it was geared toward everybody could stay in that community.

We come out of community where, there was a housing, not public housing but just private apartments where most of us lived. A lot of us came out of those apartments, and one of those apartments I remember is Washington Terrace. We came out from Washington Terrace, and a lot of us from Washington Terrace came in to that area right there. So we all knew each other a lot, and we migrated there.

JT

31:14

Well thank you so much, Mr. Hicks, and we will be in touch.

FH

31:21

Thank you again.