

Neighborhood Histories: Interview with Will Ann Avery/Lake County 2015

Zahria Benson: Hello my name is *Zahria Benson*???

Briana Mays: And my name is Briana Mays and we're a part of the focus group on team for success. Today is June the 16th and first we're gonna just ask you some questions so you can get comfortable and some questions for us. So if would, can you please tell us what your name is.

Will Ann Avery: My name is Will Ann Avery.

Briana Mays: Okay Ms. Avery. Where were you born and raised?

Will Ann Avery: I was born in Richmond September 10, 1937. I moved to Lauderdale County when I was in the third Grade and I stayed there until I was in the eighth grade. Then I went to high school at a private high school in North Carolina.

Briana Mays: Okay. So you went to school in North Carolina. What made you come to Lake County?

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Will Ann Avery: My grandparents were still here and my father lived in Lauderdale County so I came back home.

Briana Mays: So like around what was the year that you went back to Lake County?

Will Ann Avery: Uh I came back to Lake County to live in 1960. I got a job in 1960 and I've been here ever since.

Zahria Benson: Okay. When you moved to Lake County, where did you live in Lake County?

Will Ann Avery: I lived in Richmond until 82 then I moved to Tiptonville since.

Zahria Benson: Okay. Do you have any children?

Will Ann Avery: I have three step children.

Zahria Benson: Okay I heard you say you had a job in Lake County. Can you tell us what that job was?

Will Ann Avery: I got a job teaching at

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Lincoln school in 1960.

Zahria Benson: Did you like teaching there?

Will Ann Avery: I did.

Zahria Benson: How long did you teach there?

Will Ann Avery: Uh six years.

Zahria Benson: Oh what was it like to teach back then than it is compared to now?

Will Ann Avery: Well um. That's a serious question. What was it like back then? Back... it was a lot different. I'll put it that way and different may not be a good word but it was very different back then. Um the schools were not integrated when I started. I taught my first year teaching in 1959. I taught at Chattanooga public schools. And then when I came here, I had uh just high school students. I taught

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eighth grade and ninth grade English Language Arts, then later I became Guidance Counselor and I was there for a couple of years before I came to Lake County High School in 19. No before I went to lake county high school I went to????????? I taught Social Studies and English.

Zahria Benson: Where did your main students come from?

Will Ann Avery: My main students the students that I had at Lincoln came from Lake County because we only had a black high school and all the students went to Lincoln, Ummm... some lived in Ridgeley, some lived in Ridgeley, some lived in Morn some lived as far as Philippe.

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Will Ann Avery: which is almost to Kentucky state line so took in all state line so took in all of Lake County.

Zahria Benson: Okay did you have like any problems or did there were problem or?????

Will Ann Avery: Ummm.... Not before the schools integrated I would say there wasn't any problems. Integration was relatively I guess you can say smooth in a since the students didn't have a serious choice about where they wanted to go to school because of integration was done by grades and as Lincoln

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closed they ummm... the 12th graders went down as well as 11th graders until Lincoln was a 6th grade was just 1-6 elementary, so the junior high took in all the 7th and 8th graders and the high school took up all of the 9th through 12th grade so the students didn't have a choice so they went to school were it was integrated.

Zahria Benson: Ok so where was Lincoln?

Will Ann Avery: Lincoln was over close to the cemetery over in Tiptonville.

Briana Mays: How was life when you lived in Ridgeley?

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There were more people both black and white ummm.... I don't think there was really a no more of a race than not as much as now because we went where we were going, and they went where they were going in all kinda things it wasn't like we had sit-ins in our area or anything like that.

Zahria Benson: Ok so why did you move from Ridgeley to Tiptonville?

Will Ann Avery: I got married and we bought a house in Tiptonville, and I was working in Tiptonville, and my husband was working in Tiptonville so it was more convent

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cause at the time we were living in Ridgley we were both working in Tiptonville and we drove and we had an opportunity to move to Tiptonville so we did.

Zahria Benson: Ok so both of ya'll worked in Tiptonville were there a lot of businesses back when you were in Ridgeley back when you were there more than right now?

Will Ann Avery: More than there are now and more in Tiptonville yes.

Zahria Benson: So ok when you look at Lake County now you see that all the businesses are now in Tiptonville and Ridgeley doesn't have very many why do you think that is?

Will Ann Avery: Ummm.... probably because there is more people in Tiptonville and also maybe because of the high school and you have 2 schools in Tiptonville

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and only 1 in Ridgeley I don't know if that is a serious problem but Tiptonville is a little bit larger population wise so that may have something to do with it.

Zahria Benson: do you think like there is ways for Ridgeley to get businesses back there you think?

Will Ann Avery: Ummm.... kinda sort of doubtful because Tiptonville has had less and less as well also so you don't have as many people coming back, and you don't have a lot of job, and don't have a lot of thing to encourage people to come back.

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You have very little industry you think right now the prison is our largest employer and most of the people even who work at the prison drive people live here work there and there are numbers of people who work there and most don't live here I don't think if we don't get more industry and enticement. Unless we get more businesses to bring more people back I don't think we will have that much more. There is not a lot of enticement. The Lake caused people in because people come to fish and the river.

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Like the men do but we talk to a couple yesterday and they were here visiting from Chicago the men were going fishing and the women were asking where can we go what is there to do to encourage people while the men went fishing what can the wives do. She asked about thrift stores and gift shops and we don't have a lot of that here.

Zahria Benson: So do you remember what year Ridgeley started lying down?

Will Ann Avery: I would say maybe the late 80's and the early 90's.

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or something like that.

Briana Mays: Do you remember the names of the?????????

Will Ann Avery: Well there was Nathan Dragus which is where the center is now ummm.... There were few or couple or so grocery stores and there has always been????? Where the store is now Best Way is where Best Way is now that's always been a grocery store there, There was another grocery store down on the end of the street Wise Grocery. On Bishop Street you had a black grocery store and several other places that were there.

Zahria Benson: Would you say there is a

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separation between population and people in Ridgeley today?

Will Ann Avery: Yes because Tiptonville I guess wants to be where they are Tiptonville somehow or another I guess they think that there bigger and I guess a lot of people in Tiptonville believe there better because there more of I think more populations and more people concentrated in Tiptonville that work you had farmers, landowners way back when and a lot of them were in Tiptonville and a lot of them owned land and property around this area and they lived in Tiptonville so

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You also had outlining in the areas like Morn was their own community, Maiden was their own community and everybody was just kinda concentrated in little patches and we had a lot of I don't know I guess people just felt they belonged to that area even in Weinberg you had people concentrated there I don't think now that there is a black family see because there used to be a school in Weinberg, there was a school in Morn, there was a school in Philippe so every community had their own group of people.

Zahria Benson: Where do you??????

Will Ann Avery: Hmmmm.....

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Morn, Maiden, Philippe see Lake County goes from the Kentucky state line all the way back to on the other side of Ridgeley to Obion county line.

Zahria Benson: You said Morn, Maiden, and Philippe they had their own schools, what happened to their schools?

Will Ann Avery: Those schools were closed and consolidated of Morn some went to Ridgeley at the time and of the ones in Philippe they came to Tiptonville and Morn was kinda of split because some of the ones that lived in Morn if they lived in Weinberg coming this way

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and those coming this way they came to Tiptonville, but if they lived in Weinberg going the other way they went to Ridgeley.

Zahria Benson: Back then was it a hard to get transportation to and from school?

Will Ann Avery: There was before well we had school buses but as far as transportation in and out of Lake county you didn't have your own vehicle you were kinda up a creek without a paddle because if you were going anywhere way back when we had taxis and then we had bus serve but the bus went from Tiptonville to Dyersburg then you had to get a bus from Dyersburg to go wherever you wanted to go and that was years and years and years ago. So in the light years

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the main transportation was an automobile.

Briana Mays: Do you think they contributed to the separation of these cities?

Will Ann Avery: Transportation maybe because there were people in Tiptonville possibly because people had automobiles and more transportation it could have.

Zahria Benson: So looking at Lake County now in and back then do you think it was more of a separation now or do you think it was more before?

Briana Mays: Ooh that's kinda hard that's kinda hard because the separation is

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you have so many separation on so many different levels ummm... the school system its self has its own separation you have the churches I guess have their separation it seems like every little organization or every little community is a community with in it's like the churches in Tiptonville are Tiptonville and the churches in Ridgeley you know concentrated that way and the thing with the schools I don't know why, have no idea I have never really thought about it being ummm actually

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separation, but it is.

Briana Mays Ok well those are all the questions we have.

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is there anything else you would to add on to this or anything?

Will Ann Avery: I no I don't think so unless you think of something else I guess we're always gonna be maybe we're always gonna be separated I don't know It's just a mind thing I think, but you talk to people and it seems like it's getting I think it's getting worse of a lot of students that seems like they just blend in and it's ok, but then there others that you we're from Ridgeley you're from Tiptonville

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So you know we're just not ever gonna be together.

Briana Mays: So what would be your solution to this problem if you couldn't come up with it?

Will Ann Avery: If I could come up with a solution wow like I said it's kinda of a mind thing and I think people would just have to accept ummm... like when the school are going to have to accept school we have one school it's kinda like the Bible says "One Lord, One Faith", no it's gonna have to be a mind set for people to really realize that we're just gonna have to be the gether you gotta live to together so we gotta get along and we just miss a break down and

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we just get along, but you can't make anybody feel that way you just gotta try to give em opportunities and things that they can do to feel like their a part or whatever going on.

Zahria Benson: Well thank you for coming out during your busy day to be a part of our project.

Will Ann Avery: Ok I think you all did very fanatic job.