

Interviewee: **Robert Davis**  
Interviewers: **Ernest Demby, Julie Hawkins-Ennis, Linda Moore-Garoute, Noah Waters, Ryan Craun**  
Date of Interview: **January 23, 2020**  
Location of Interview: **Eagle Harbor Community Center, Eagle Harbor, MD**  
List of Acronyms: **RD=Robert Davis, JN=John Newsome, ED=Ernest Demby**  
**JE=Julie Hawkins Ennis, LG=Linda Moore-Garoute, NW=Noah Waters**  
**RC=Ryan Craun**

[Begin Transcript: 00:22]

ED: Let start of by stating your name?

RD: My name is Robert Davis.

ED: Thank you for doing this interview. Appreciate it.

RD: You're welcome.

ED: I guess, we start of by asking you, are you from this area?

RD: I'm from Washington DC.

ED: What brought you to this area?

RD: I have a ranch up on the hill. I also have land up on the hill.

ED: How long you had that?

RD: About 30 years.

ED: Wow. What was the deciding factor for you to come here and start that...

RD: Well, I'm familiar with the area somewhat and I'd always liked the area. I actually used to come down to Wilmar's Park. It was a little place I used to come, all the entertainers used to be coming from Rock'n Roll shows. And by coming here, I got the chance to come down to the waterfront and noticed how beautiful it is. So, I decided to come down, that's all. Just like to come down and just used to have time to come and I will come down just to enjoy myself.

ED: Do you remember the artists you've got to see?

RD: All of them... James Brown, , you had Enrico Franklin. Anyone that's about something in a big time entertainment or today, came down here to Wilmar's Park. Anytime you heard of any of this, *Soul Singers*, *Glad It's Night*, you had Roberto Flat, any of these people that you've heard of that's making big time money at just given time, but a lot of them are gone, but they all came down here to Wilmar's Park.

ED: What was it like amongst the people in that period of time? Especially around here.

RD: It was a lot of joy, as I say again, most of the folks that coming here was coming from Washington DC. And get out in the country and plus had this country wide open and plus this country music out here. Where you can just sing and enjoy yourself and you had all these different kind of people from coming all walks of life. It was just something really different, that's all. And every Sunday, music come every Sunday. When the weather break from April to the weather get cold.

ED: That's nice. So you have any memories that stick out to you?

RD: Well, I had one that I had a chance to talk with James Brown. When he had entertainment, he would come out and he would set around and I had the chance to talk to him. I was saying that I was trying to learn to play the Sax. And he was to tell me "That's something good, don't stop. If you want something like that, just keep on doing it and keep on trying". I find the entertainers Jackie Wilson, all of them very, Sam Cooke, they were always willing to talk with you, and always made you feel like you are as big as they were at that time. It was just really good to get the chance to rub elbows with them. That's about it.

ED: That's very...

JE: It's cool.

ED: Yes

RD: Yes. They were really everyday people. If you really had a chance to meet some of them, you'd say I never thought they were so much of this and so much of that. They were always feels like on the same level that you were.

JE: So in other words, Wilmar's Park had a lot of famous singers.

RD: Yes

JE: Just not local band.

RD: Yes. The best of the best that you've ever heard of was down in Wilmar's Park at some time. Sam Cooke, all of them. And as I say it again, Wilmar's Park is always going to be something that lives in my mind and many others. Because that's the only thing on Sunday that you had a chance other than church. You've tried to get out at church, get down at Wilmar's Park. Preacher's don't like too much of that – trying to get to the Rock'n Roll out of church. But that's part of entertainment we had in this area.

RC: Does Wilmar's Park influence you to becoming a musician at all?

RD: Yes it did. Because as I say it again, I had a lot of group. In fact, I had a group called *2000AD*, and I did a lot small things local myself. We did a lot of good things. We played... the guys I had were kids that all of them read music. And they used to do Country western, and it was just wonderful at that given time. Get a chance to go outside and get a chance to sing and people can hear you, That probably wouldn't heard you before because you were outside. It was really good, down here it was wide open. In fact the largest crowd we actually have visited down here was a group called... I think the guys they were actually a western group. Some western's song town and country and stuff like that. They had a huge crowd. People from all walks of life. In fact, they were down here for I think, three days. Night after night, they had tents, you know, outdoors. And just enjoying themselves, because this is wide open countries.

ED: Most of the interviews we've had, we've always had, someone say that it was a very more open kind of mentality here?

RD: Yes

ED: Do you think this area and itself what it has to offer is what it makes it that way?

RD: I think that's so. Because we had a different way of looking at things. They come from one particular thing to enjoy themselves. Music is everybody's. It's only word. It's not "my kind, your kind", music fits in with most people. And they kept made them very joyful. And majority of times, you never had a problem getting along and things, grateful dead. That group came out here. You talked about people, I have never witnessed so many people in my life. They had camps all up and down, and you could hardly come down this road here because people is camping all night long and no incident – everybody happy. Just singing, dancing and enjoying them self.

ED: It seems like certain things happen all at once. Seems like Cedar Haven and Eagle Harbor are two different places with the same kind of objective? Do you feel that way?

RD: I feel like it's a little different because the people are on one side is in one area, and the people on the other side, so do like – they are kept separately, just like you've said. Even though we are on the same area, but yet we want to be on this side, and I want to be with myself, and I'll be on this side and I want to be with myself. I never really thought that they were really trying to pull things together as one. So where there's unity there's strength. When there's strength there's power, they could have done lot of things, I believe if they would have come together. But by them wanting to stay on here and this one stay over there, I think it was... They didn't get as much as they should have gotten for the towns.

ED: Do you think that is something that needs to happen for this place to survive?

RD: Yes. I truly believe in unity. I believe in where there is strength. There's unity, there's strength. And when people would come together, they come with different thoughts, different ways of helping one another. Bringing them together, like definitely much better. And Together and everything else because they could get more, people would here what they have to say. You have a group of people, you may not listen to me. I can say some to you but you won't listen. But if I bring 20 guys down here and we talked, you'll going to listen. I believe in that. I believe in unity.

ED: Do you have like a personal vision that you would like to see happen in this area?

RD: Well, I just like to see as I think as John's (Newsome) thought a few minutes ago – that the rivers needs to be taken care of. And just the people to come as a whole. And the town, try to help one another at the town. Come together as a whole and say what can we do for each other. I believe that if people started to look at each other, and say come together, we can do this. We can make this town what we want to make it. And I think that's one thing that I can see at this given time. But I believe we could pull the people together like as nothing they can't do. Because I think the people from Upper Marlboro, would actually listen to them. It would help them by being a Black historical town.

JN: With the people here in Eagle Harbor, they are like have gathered together and they've created a group like they have the meetings and stuff. Over Cedar Haven, they have nothing like that. Most of the people at Cedar Haven were older people, they are sitting their ways like – let me have mine. But I think if Eagle Harbor got some brochures they maybe a group of people got together and just came over and talked to people and combining. Because as long as I've been, I've never seen anything like that, 'til I started talking to her and I found out about this place, and I came over to talked with them. So if they together and try to get the people from Eagle Harbor and Cedar Haven, come and combine, I think they can make this work. But their knowledge, they have to know what's going on down here.

ED: Do you think that the history is shared? Well, of course it is, but I think the shared history should be enough to bring them together. Do you agree with that?

RD: Yes, I agree. There's a young lady I think as some point of the meeting, I can't remember her name and she was from Cedar Haven. She came just to hear the mayor and how they were performing over here, and how they were doing. I think her name was Moore. She was trying to bring the things together like. And I think that was her words are, try to get the people to come... and I think that's her idea. And I think that's something that is very well needed.

ED: Okay. If anybody else has any question?

NW: Because of your business background and the revenue sources of the town have those that have to pay in infrastructure needs. And as far as attracting youth because of some type of economic base. So what do you feel that could improve?

RD: Well, I think of many things could improve. First of all, I think we should have something to eat down here. And also, I got a lot of guys that fish here, bring the kids down here and take them fishing, to teach them how to fish. And also, there's a lot of wooded area around here. Just get the kids out of the city, I think that was grateful. Like I was saying before, I was doing school at [Unintelligible], and I bought a whole bunch of kids down here and they was so impressed with what's happening here. And right today they still about it. They're grown now but just talked about it – the things that they were doing. Especially when they seen the bird, that Eagle. They were never have witnessed anything like that. You could see them close-up. It is so much that you can bring the kids down to historic that being down at the beach where the slaves come in, as so they're saying. All this I think is something that the kids could be introduced to. And I think there are some things that we had not... And then the hooked and cooked. For you to catch a fish and then you can clean it, and then you put it in a grill and barbeque it. I think it's something that they would be talking about for the rest of their lives. So many things that we could do down here with the kids. Especially... I don't really look at the four wheels something much as bicycles [12:37] to itself. And also, it's something that you can ride and get them trailed around the place, and I think of this kind of things would helped you deal with the children. Plus, the education. And the training center I think that would go real well with the children, knowing exactly the history of the place.

ED: I agree.

NW: I support your efforts to hopefully establish an eatery. Because my wife and I we used to travel all the way to Capital Heights.

RD: Yes

NW: She's vegan. We had to go so far to get such kind of food. So if you have items, it would be great to walk and explore and take advantage to support you. Because we spend quite big when we go out.

RD: Before I had a restaurant down the street. This area here is how many people are in this area and they will support you, especially I had ribs and fish like that. And plan to do the same here. If we could do the same thing here on a smaller basis, I think that would also help the town. And the revenue as far as the town also, to help the town to get money and can really deal with certain things here. Fix the town, help the people with homes. And also especially the river, without the river, what you have here – nothing. The river is the key, make sure we take care of the river.

ED: Definitely

RD: Yes

ED: The river is the key since... 1800's

RD: Yes, and I think that's the key. And we must pay more attention much to the river, and what we can do to help the people. And that's it again, both town towns coming together. If they come together they can do good things. When there's unity, there's strength. When there's strength, there's power.

ED: I understand.

LG: I would like to add one suggestion or opinion. At the beginning of the Cedar Haven, owned by the founder, they had an ice cream truck every Sunday, and for the kids to eat ice cream. And I think with the foodery, that would be a great idea to attract young families. Free for under the age of 12 or 11, free ice cream. And you know that children would encourage their parents to come down especially for the free ice cream. So that's a wonderful idea. Food and something to attract young kids to come down.

RD: Okay. One another thing I would like to add to that to brought a lot of kids down – had horses. Teach them horseback riding. I had a ranch up... I see the ranches up on the hill, and by children... again have never actually witnessed or test a horse and just seen horses in the movies. But by having the ranch, that brought a lot of children in. We used to have small rodeos, and something that they would never seen in this area, but the mothers would bring them and they would have a ball. In fact, if you get them chance to touch a horse, they would just feel really good about it. As I say, all the wildlife is good for the children. So this area, is plentiful of that, you can do anything and everything out here. Chickens, the farms, the whole nine yards, you could do to this area here. That's so much to offer, this is a beautiful area. And hasn't been really exploded yet. Just like John (Newsome) said, having a garden. There's nothing like today, is having food with chemicals in it. Organic food that that we can do it ourself. This place is plentiful, beautiful, and rich land. My friend used to grow watermelons at the ranch I had. He said that the watermelons get so big and it was unbelievable. This land is rich to produce.

ED: It's like it needs to return to its roots or whatever

RD: I believe so. Especially the people from DC. People from DC are coming from left and right because there's nothing near there that's doing some things down here.

ED: It's like – what's going on with DC, right now. Seems people want that kind of experience. This area being here gives them that opportunity...

RD: Exactly

ED: To learn it, they can contribute to that... it's just, like you said – it's a very rich area.

RD: Yes. Just minutes away, few minutes from DC, you're there. And I think that's so good. And it's good to have the kids to come in to the county, to get out of the city. That's something better, that's something good.

ED: Like outside of those concrete jungle.

RD: Yes, exactly.

ED: Sir, thank you. Appreciate talking to you.

RD: You're welcome. Thank you.

[End Transcript: 17:45]