

Speaker 1 ([00:00:02](#)):

Okay, I'm here with Frank Cameron. It is. Wow. Monday, April 1st, 2024. And we're not going to, we talked about not doing April Fools, right?

Speaker 2 ([00:00:18](#)):

If you'll remind me, I'll tell you a great story about that concerning Lithonia citizens.

Speaker 1 ([00:00:23](#)):

Oh yeah.

Speaker 2 ([00:00:24](#)):

Yeah.

Speaker 1 ([00:00:25](#)):

Okay.

Speaker 2 ([00:00:26](#)):

I don't get your needs on that, but it's very funny.

Speaker 1 ([00:00:31](#)):

Were you born in Lithonia, Mr. Cameron?

Speaker 2 ([00:00:33](#)):

October 8th, 1939.

Speaker 1 ([00:00:35](#)):

Okay.

Speaker 2 ([00:00:36](#)):

On Church Street in Lithonia, Georgia. In the front bedroom of the house, I guess.

Speaker 1 ([00:00:47](#)):

And what

Speaker 2 ([00:00:48](#)):

Dr. Stewart, who was Dawn's (Dawn Massey) granddaddy, delivered me

Speaker 1 ([00:00:54](#)):

Oh wow. On

Speaker 2 ([00:00:55](#)):

October the eighth and then on October 3rd he delivered what lived right street named Arthur Davis, who became a golf course designer all over the world.

Speaker 3 ([00:01:14](#)):

Oh.

Speaker 2 ([00:01:16](#)):

And then on November the third delivered Dr. Joe Sharp, who was a veterinarian in Conyers for many years. So he was busy on Church Street.

Speaker 1 ([00:01:27](#)):

Yeah.

Speaker 2 ([00:01:29](#)):

Alright. So my dad died when I was five years old. Well I just turned five, I think. He was born in nineteen, eighteen ninety-eight.

Speaker 1 ([00:01:46](#)):

Also, in Lithonia?

Speaker 2 ([00:01:47](#)):

No, yeah. Excuse me. Lithonia area. He up on Marble Road where the White House, the company is there, somebody they sold out. But anyway, I'm thinking I've got a cousin who went to Scotland and all over there where we were born came from Furnish Scott (?) outside of Glasgow and I've got that down somewhere. But when I moved here, I've been here three years, but I have no idea what it is. But I'm figuring since my daddy was born in 1898, he had an older brother or sister that my granddaddy probably came here around 1800, 18 80 or something like that. Same time Mr. Davidson, who the quarry over here. I tell everybody my granddaddy died a poor stone cutter. Mr. Davidson died a millionaire, but that's just what America's all about. So, I had one brother if you would need that information, his there, Carrie (?) Cameron Jr. Carrie Cameron, him same as my dad. Anyway, he was about four years older than me. My mother was born down in Walton County in 1901.

Speaker 1 ([00:03:24](#)):

And what was her name?

Speaker 2 ([00:03:26](#)):

Margaret Annette Smith or was it Annette Margaret? I can't remember. Anyway, her daddy was a old country doctor and then he moved into the city of Monroe and unfortunately when he was about 59 years old, he died from a flu epidemic. She had three brothers that were doctors. One of 'em I was named after my Uncle Frank. My daughter is a nurse practitioner. So, it went on down and one of my

mother's half-sisters, which she had no half, all of 'em brothers and sisters had one of them had a son that was a Navy doctor during in World War II. And then I came along and I couldn't pass the science test and had coaches teaching me in high school. So now what is it exactly you want me to tell you? I've been here all my life for 84 years. I've seen Lithonia, Main Street Lithonia, which if you've been down at the railroad track, coming up to the main big building on the corner, which was Cofer Brothers, which they have an outlet in Chamblee, one in Tucker. There was a clothing goods store, a drug store, which above it was office space

[\(00:05:12\)](#):

From time to time there, a doctors, a dentist up there. Next to the clothing store was a drug store. The People's Bank was there at that time. And then they had next door to the People's Bank was a lady's dress shop. I think that's where they got the Lithonia little jail now is area right there. Then the little next door to that was the grocery store. Evan's Grocery store, which my father was in the process of buying when he had a heart attack. My mother always said that World War II killed him because it was so hard to get groceries for people and things. And they had to go into Atlanta and then, I don't know, they had rationing stickers on the cars. You'll see sometime an old movie that's on tv, I have a sticker down there that what your occupation was allowed you to have so many gallons of gas. And then the farmers would come in and they'd bring the cow hides in. And every Wednesday my dad and later on, some of his associates, my brother and I'd go with 'em, come down to Atlanta to pick up the canned goods and out to the farmer's market and all that. But we had to take those hides by the hand (?)

[\(00:06:42\)](#):

And you ain't never smelled nothing like that. I said, whoa! So anyway, my father died when I was just turned, was in the process of my fifth-grade year. My mother remarried in 1950 to Mr. J.J. Summers, who she had known him through his first wife, also was a school teacher. My mother taught school and he died in 53. My brother, my daddy had three brothers. One, Aaron Cameron who he and his wife started Cameron Robert's Insurance Company down in Lithonia. And I know more about my mama's side of the family, I do about this, but I can tell you a lot about my uncles.

Speaker 1 [\(00:07:44\)](#):

Sure. Because

Speaker 2 [\(00:07:45\)](#):

My uncle Aaron started off as a shoeshine boy for his uncle that owned the barbershop. And about the end of World War II, he started a little insurance business in the back of the barbershop and then he became a barber and then Aunt Mary Grace and him started the insurance and a real estate business and they bought the building that the barber shop was in, which had been a bank and they had a safe in there. I remember that. But the jeweler was there when they bought the building. And I think if my uncle Aaron had lived just like my daddy, the whole family had that heart problem, which I got the same thing. He was an entrepreneur type thing. He was always, he trade cars three times a year, get a deal on sell and all that. Then my uncle Johnny, he owned the service station and I was telling Dawn, Dr. Stewart, her granddaddy and a bunch of others, and they still do own it down on the Altamaha River outside of Darien, Georgia. They'd go down there hunting and fishing and all that. And my uncle Johnny had gone out on his own in the boat after supper and he had a heart attack.

[\(00:09:13\)](#):

And the only reason they ever found him was his boat, by the grace of God went into the bank, had not, he'd gone on route to the Atlantic Ocean and never done. So, the heart problem runs in the family, some of my grandmother's side on she be my maiden grandmother or something like that.

[\(00:09:38\)](#):

And honestly now then as far as Lithonia, like I said, my mother taught school and it's during the war and it's hard to get help. So, unlike the way things are now, I started going to school with my mother a lot of times when I was five years old, 'cause she couldn't find nobody to look after me. Most of the, she did get to look after me was black ladies and I was kid, everybody I said ever found a white woman can cook, turn (?) salad like a black lady, I'm going to get married again because they can cook.

[\(00:10:18\)](#):

So is this what you want to hear? Oh you want hear? Alright. So, when I was, before I started in the first grade, Ethel (?) Ladder (?) was one of the black ladies that looked after me a lot. We had all these sirens and everything and up to Davison's Quarry they had seven, eight lateral (?) built board houses where the people that worked out and a windy March morning, it must have been, I think it was in March. Anyway, late one of 'em had a pot out there washing clothes and it got caught one house and all seven of them houses burned to the ground. I couldn't wait for my mother to get home from teaching school, so she'd take me up there, I want to see it because we had a 1928 A-model Ford fire truck, none of the stuff that you have now. So, all morning fire sirens was coming, people coming from Conyers and then when that didn't even have a DeKalb County fire department back then, I think Druid Hills had a big old truck and the Davidsons running a bunch of bad luck. They had that happen. And then a few years later they had a big fire, the main quarry and a crusher even fell down on that one. And they for a long time were the biggest employee of Lithonia.

[\(00:11:49\)](#):

And then right after World War II, Lithonia Lighting started up. The Freeman family. I remember the boy's name was Bob. They started in a little building, not much bigger than this duplex building. And as they grew, they went across the street and there's a sign up for rent right now where flea market is to be building next door to Martin Tire Company. Which it was at one time I think a Ford dealership, I don't remember it. And then Lithonia Lighting moved over there and it kept growing and they wanted to put on a second shift and politics and all I think to some point. But anyway, because it was right in the neighborhood, they told me they couldn't do that then so they jumped, they moved down to Conyers then. And it was a great thing for the people in Conyers because the Callaway mill down there, it just shut down. And all these folks that worked there at his mill houses they were stuck with. But Lithonia Lighting moved down there and gave him better jobs than they had. And the rest is history about Lithonia Lighting and the opportunity to let Lithonia get away from it.

[\(00:13:20\)](#):

Now around that time the (first name inaudible) Edwards built the movie theater, which is the biggest thing that happened in Lithonia. I'd say it was about 1946, 47, I believe it was 47 because I've got a book in there somebody gave me that's got all about movie stars and movies and all the movie that June Allison and Van Johnson was the opening movie.

Speaker 1 [\(00:13:53\)](#):

Where was it in Lithonia?

Speaker 2 [\(00:13:59\)](#):

If you went down all that stuff they got on Main Street of Lithonia, about middle ways down on Main Street there. The post office was there beside it and it stayed open, was still open in 57, 58. I graduated from high school in 1957 and I know it was still open then, but television was putting a lot of (inaudible) out.

(00:14:30):

But it was one of the biggest things that ever happened to Lithonia because the old theater we had, we used to laugh. So, you go down there in about twice to three times during the movie, the camera film would break and they'd have to work on and we'd laugh and say the rats would come out and dance on the stage. So, from that they had this Exchange Club, which the merchant started and the Exchange Club, I think they called it Lithonia Development Company also. I'm not sure whether they were connected or not, but between the Exchange Club and Lithonia Development and the merchants and Dawn's daddy, Dr. Stewart gave him all the property where the current Lithonia Park is also (inaudible). I go down to City Hall and wonder why they took his name off of the amphitheater down there, the man without him we wouldn't have had it. But anyway, between him donating a property and those clubs would have a carnival every year and everybody made money and that's how we were able to build one of the few, the first and the largest swimming pool in the DeKalb County.

(00:16:10):

That was around 46, 47, somewhere around there.

Speaker 1 (00:16:17):

Now did you go to Lithonia High School?

Speaker 2 (00:16:20):

Graduated in 1957 and when I was going to school, where the current middle school is, the old big rock building was there.

Speaker 2 (00:16:30):

That was the high school and the next door was elementary school.

Speaker 1 (00:16:33):

Did your mom teach elementary?

Speaker 2 (00:16:36):

Yeah, she taught. And I was telling somebody the other day, she used to get so disgusted. She told me one day, all the people going steady was hanging on each other, (inaudible). She said, I better never see you doing that. And I said, don't worry, you won't see me. But anyway, she taught school there and the way she got in the school teaching. She wanted to be a nurse. But oh, it was terrible for a woman to be a nurse back in the day, in the twenties "cause you might see a naked

Speaker 1 (00:17:09):

Man,

Speaker 2 (00:17:11):

Not that all the half girls teaching, half the girls in the world had little brothers changed. But that's just the way it

Speaker 1 ([00:17:18](#)):

Was. So teaching was a safe bet.

Speaker 2 ([00:17:22](#)):

Yeah. So my mother, too many things legally for women to do is you watch enough westerns you and all that time. But anyway, she went to Normal School over at the university of Georgia. They had two years of high school and two years of college. In the small world we have, there was a lady that was in the yellow brick house at time who was also a member of Lithonia Methodist Church. I don't know where she originally went, but she'd gone to school and asked, she's a younger lady than my mother. But anyway, my mother went those two years and my brother and when he died and my sister-in-Law brought me some stuff my brother had and I was loving in that way. My mother had written it and said when her dad died, it was determined that she would keep teaching school so she could help her brother, my namesake, finish medical school. I wonder how many families to do that today. But anyway, my Grandpa Smith, her daddy, was born in the middle of the Civil War, War Between the States, I prefer to call it since I'm a southerner. And she and my daddy met, she taught school in Chickamauga, Georgia one year, then went to Stone Mountain and my daddy's first cousin and him who were running, they ran around together, introduced my mother and dad

Speaker 3 ([00:19:01](#)):

And

Speaker 2 ([00:19:03](#)):

I don't know what the deal was but teachers couldn't be married or what. But she used to laugh about it and they had to keep it a secret until the end of the school year for some reason. And she used to laugh about it. She said it was eight years later before my brother was born, she said nobody could say anything about our secret marriage, anything derogatory. So she married my dad and like I say, he was in the process of buying a grocery store. God intervened if he was going to die at the right time because my mother didn't even know how to order groceries to cook and all this stuff that Kroger and all of 'em got in there. Whatever they deliver your groceries to you can call. That ain't nothing new. All those grocery stores used to have that. I worked for another competitor when I was in the eighth and ninth grade and (inaudible) was on the phone. I had today talking to women and writing down and his scribbling and I had to interpret what he wrote down to try to get the order right.

Speaker 1 ([00:20:08](#)):

Yeah, it just shows you things come back around, don't they?

Speaker 2 ([00:20:11](#)):

That's right, that's right. I think it was Harry Truman said the history, you don't know the future. Don't know. Einstein might've said that too. I know Einstein made a comment that he didn't know what the Third World War would be fought with, but the fourth war would be fought with clubs and that is scary, isn't it? But anyway,

Speaker 1 ([00:20:33](#)):

So what did you do when you graduated high school?

Speaker 2 ([00:20:36](#)):

Well, my mother, being a school teacher, wanted me to go to college and I went off to Georgia Southwestern, which was a junior college in Americus, Georgia. I loved it so well I had to stay an extra quarter.

Speaker 1 ([00:20:56](#)):

And you studied education?

Speaker 2 ([00:20:58](#)):

And social work. Didn't study anything in the first two years, having a good time. And then I worked for about, well I went up at Georgia State, which is, and at that time, only the rich people had a telephone that they could talk to people in Atlanta, not like it is today. So, I got up there and I'd taken a business course in junior college for an elective and I can (inaudible) pretty good. And the teacher I had suggested I could get into accounting. So I walked in Georgia State and Dr. Wetton was the accounting teacher. He was co-author of the book he was using. And he looks around the room and he says, glad to see you Mr. Bailey. We had a good time last year or last quarter. Glad to see you back. And some in there was taking it to course for the third time. And I said, what am I doing in here? So, I stayed at Georgia State one quarter and we had a big ice storm come through in March of that year, that was 1960. And my Aunt Mary Grace, my uncle Aaron's widow, they had a place out here on Evans Mill Road that had a lot of pine trees. So, I ended up, I found out what a cross saw was I worked out there for. But while I was at Georgia State, we had a guy that had gone to Valdosta State

([00:22:39](#)):

And I don't know what kind of degree he had, but he had come back to Georgia State because his father-in-law had died and he had to get a degree in business so he could run the family business. But he talked about Valdosta State some much. So, I got in the car one Friday and rode down to Americus that Saturday morning we picked up a couple of my buddies and we went down to Valdosta State and I went to school there. I liked it so well I stayed seven quarters. I was on academic probation when I got there and I was on academic probation when they graduated. And then from there

Speaker 1 ([00:23:22](#)):

And you graduated with a degree in...?

Speaker 2 ([00:23:25](#)):

Social work, which my mother said, why am I paying money? You've been doing that all your life. So, from there, Uncle Sam called and they got out, hit Fort Jackson's, South Carolina, August 7th, 1962 and I had a beautiful 10 weeks there. And then when I finished up in the Army active duties, six months, which you have another five and a half years meetings and all that, I had a good friend that worked for Delta Airline. He got me lined up. I went to work for Delta Airlines in the reservation office. Spent three years there, which during and them three years and never shaved two Mondays in a row at the same time. All them weird hours back then. So, I left there and I think we counted up part-time and full-time jobs, I've had over 30 jobs, like many of people that do stuff like that. You end up retired trying to live on SS and that don't do good. So back to Lithonia. Like I said, I graduated in 62, I mean 57 and was gone

most of the next five years. And then when I came back out of the army, went to work for Delta rather than get into the apartment, had the foot up with roommates. My mother had retired, so stayed here and lived with her until 1973 when I got married.

Speaker 1 ([00:25:34](#)):

And how did you meet your wife and what's her name?

Speaker 2 ([00:25:37](#)):

Judy. Judy Puckett. I met her at Rock Chapel Methodist Church. A friend of mine was grew up in that church out there, Dan (inaudible), who happens to be David Chandley's uncle. And she introduced me, Dan died recently back in January. And David's mama introduced me to one of some lady down there is her brother

Speaker 3 ([00:26:16](#)):

Because

Speaker 2 ([00:26:16](#)):

That's how close the whole family was. So anyway, while I was working with Delta Airlines, I had spent three years there and traveled a little bit, but they had a deal back then. If I didn't take my vacation, a lot of companies would pay people when they went off to summer camp, the difference in their regular pay and went the Army pay.

Speaker 3 ([00:26:48](#)):

But

Speaker 2 ([00:26:49](#)):

Delta, I had to take you on my vacation. So those three years I had no vacation. And that's one of the reasons I left. And there like most people living in Lithonia ended up working with Coffee Granite Company all in granite that they built walls and about all over in Atlanta. And during that period of time, I called it Lithonia destruction, powers that be, and some property owners, they took down Stone Mountain Street. They used to go straight to where Wakefield is now. Are you familiar with that?

Speaker 1 ([00:27:47](#)):

No,

Speaker 2 ([00:27:48](#)):

No. Some beautiful old homes there. And they put shopping center in there. Which,

Speaker 1 ([00:27:57](#)):

What period of time was this?

Speaker 2 ([00:28:00](#)):

Let's see,

Speaker 1 ([00:28:01](#)):

Seventies?

Speaker 2 ([00:28:02](#)):

In the seventies, I'd say mid-sixties. Anyway, they got a few nice homes. It had to be after 68 because they named that main drag Max Cleveland Boulevard and Max got injured in 68, year I got out in the National Guard. He got injured the same year Martin Luther King was killed. In fact, my mother was at a meeting at the church, Lithonia Methodist. We got a woman's meeting. They called the National Guard up because, unlike Chicago, Detroit, and Washington DC, Atlanta didn't get burned up and going up the assassination of Dr. King. They called all the National Guard. And that's when I found out my good friend Max had been injured in Vietnam. So I'm going to say they did that shopping center after, well it was there a few years before they named it after Max. So, it was probably in the late, early seventies, some around that time. And the shopping center (inaudible), there's a hardware store out here on (?) Mill Road originally was in it, but nothing else. And not too many, I can't tell you a year now. When I was in school I would take a good A paper and make it a B because I never could remember dates, events, events. And I can't spell cat to this day. So between the two of them.

([00:29:50](#)):

But anyway, they tore down and built those apartments there now, and I can't tell you. Dawn would be able to tell you more about the modern history of Lithonia, but as I said earlier about 1948, 49, they had a drive put on to replace the old 28 model A model fire truck, another big event in the history of Lithonia. I think it was a '48 model Studebaker fire truck. And like I say, and I don't know a lot after World War II, things started popping. They built, put up a bunch of lights down the main street of town. They called 'em a white way or something like. And I don't even know whether any of them exist anymore, but they were all up down. That was another big event on (inaudible),

Speaker 1 ([00:30:51](#)):

Getting the lights up,

Speaker 2 ([00:30:54](#)):

Made on, put us on the map. But for some reason it was a one mile square when I was born and it's still one mile square. They sat on their rear end and see the main drag used to come right through. One of the great stories is the one Saturday afternoon the People's Bank was still on Main Street and the chief of police was talking to a gentleman who was a (inaudible) that lived in Lithonia and they were chatting and like I say, the main drag before I- 20 was built, his car had stopped and had traffic backing up. So, the chief finally walked down there and asked him about it moving and a guy driving the car said I'd be back in just a minute and my friends in there, in the bank, the guy comes out, the bank gets in the car and the drive off he had just robbed the bank.

Speaker 1 ([00:31:51](#)):

Oh my goodness.

Speaker 2 ([00:31:55](#)):

I don't know what they put that down in.

Speaker 1 ([00:31:58](#)):

Did they catch them?

Speaker 2 ([00:31:59](#)):

They caught 'em and didn't get to. I think they caught 'em over at Norris Lake.

Speaker 1 ([00:32:03](#)):

But

Speaker 2 ([00:32:04](#)):

That's one of the great stories about Lithonia, Small Town USA.

Speaker 1 ([00:32:09](#)):

Wow.

Speaker 2 ([00:32:11](#)):

And of course, when I-20 was built, it knocked off a lot of the traffic into the town, which has happened all over the state of Georgia. My second home, so to speak, was down in Seminole County and they'd done that lot in little towns down there which bypassed and they dried up and that plus the farming community. Then I moved over to Gwinnett County after my divorce in 83. I lived up the street here. I told Dawn when I moved out here, we was looking at apartments. I said, don't put me up there on the hill. She says, why? I said, that's where I was living when I got married back in 73. And I had, like I said, I got a daughter that lives in Dallas, Texas. She is a nurse practitioner. My son unfortunately had been a diabetic since he was six years old and he lives with his mama. He had to quit working legally blind, can't see distance. He does make things of

Speaker 1 ([00:33:16](#)):

Oh he made that. Oh wow.

Speaker 2 ([00:33:19](#)):

Yeah, this hardly ever would go anywhere that nobody wants to ask me about this.

Speaker 1 ([00:33:25](#)):

That's amazing.

Speaker 2 ([00:33:27](#)):

For the record, this is a walking chain that's was made out of a piece of wood and it does look like a

Speaker 1 ([00:33:32](#)):

Baseball. It looks like a baseball bat.

Speaker 2 ([00:33:35](#)):

And had he not discovered girls, he may have gone some life playing baseball. He had scouts looking at, but his mama, she's married to a guy. I hadn't seen him in older than 11 years. Back to Lithonia. You see, we covered the park over there and I'm trying to think,

Speaker 1 ([00:34:04](#)):

Can I ask you about, I've heard from a couple of other Lithonia residents, there used to be a racetrack in Lithonia.

Speaker 2 ([00:34:12](#)):

Yes ma'am. Up on Rogers Lake Road.

Speaker 1 ([00:34:15](#)):

What's the name? Riley

Speaker 2 ([00:34:17](#)):

Rogers

Speaker 1 ([00:34:17](#)):

Lake Road. Rogers Lake Road. What kind of racing?

Speaker 2 ([00:34:21](#)):

It was Lithonia. The house was a Doctor Rogers's house, I believe. The big old house. And they turned it into a black nightclub, Lithonia Country Club.

Speaker 1 ([00:34:35](#)):

So, it was a racetrack first and then a nightclub?

Speaker 2 ([00:34:38](#)):

The racetrack was built afterwards.

Speaker 1 ([00:34:40](#)):

Okay. So nightclub first and then a racetrack.

Speaker 2 ([00:34:43](#)):

I don't know whether he owned the place or not, but a guy named Otis (last name inaudible) ran the country club.

Speaker 1 ([00:34:48](#)):

Otis, what was the last name?

Speaker 2 ([00:34:51](#)):

I think Ely or Edy or something like

Speaker 1 ([00:34:53](#)):

That.

Speaker 2 ([00:34:54](#)):

Just say Otis. Everybody.

Speaker 1 ([00:34:56](#)):

Okay.

Speaker 2 ([00:34:58](#)):

In fact, I got a good friend, Freddy Rutledge used to race over there and it was a dirt track. Dirt, dirt track. I never did go over there. My only acquaintance with the country club was, I'm trying to think what year that was. It burned, the whole building caught on fire one afternoon and the volunteer fire department had to go try to put it out.

Speaker 1 ([00:35:29](#)):

Do you remember sort of which era the racetrack was there?

Speaker 2 ([00:35:35](#)):

Yeah, it started, I remember I got hit on my bicycle on the 4th of July and the country club was open then. I was probably about 10 years old, about 49, 50 something around there.

Speaker 1 ([00:35:57](#)):

Do you know about how long it was around?

Speaker 2 ([00:35:59](#)):

Well, when I was going to college at one of my many jobs, I had part-time or full, I delivered phone books and it was still open then. And Otis lived next door in the house and of course it was in the summertime and he had a refrigerator on the front porch with a padlock around it, chained the padlock and he offered me, he said, you look like you're hot. I didn't take it, but he said I got a cold one. Nice. So it was about that time

Speaker 1 ([00:36:38](#)):

That

Speaker 2 ([00:36:38](#)):

It burned

Speaker 1 ([00:36:38](#)):

Forties, fifties.

Speaker 2 ([00:36:39](#)):

And the reason I remember the volunteer fire department, we had several big men around Lithonia and the hose, water hose we had for the fire truck wasn't like it is today. It was big old, was two and a half, three. My cousin Larry and I together we probably weighed 290 pounds and several of these men weighed close to that, but they hollered for them to leave and go and help them on trying to put out this fire and left Larry and I were the big old hose and then they hollered at us, get it on the building, get it on the building. We were the best thing. We were trying to keep the us out of the building and finally

they sent somebody over. But the whole house was made out of lot of wood, wanted the best fire department in the world couldn't have put it out. But I can hear the beer popping now.

Speaker 3 ([00:37:34](#)):

Wow.

Speaker 2 ([00:37:35](#)):

And they used to have a big name entertainment. I don't know why anybody told you that Black entertainment (name inaudible). A lot of the, I'm trying to think who always started that, but

Speaker 1 ([00:37:49](#)):

Cool

Speaker 2 ([00:37:50](#)):

And just like the Royal Peacock, downtown Atlanta. I've been there one time too. And so Brooke Benton.

Speaker 1 ([00:37:59](#)):

Okay.

Speaker 2 ([00:38:00](#)):

Watched the women go crazy.

Speaker 1 ([00:38:02](#)):

Okay.

Speaker 2 ([00:38:05](#)):

So anyway, that was about the time the country club burned. A friend of mine had an insurance agency. His daddy died, left it with him. He said he sat there and watched three cars that was spectators get hit that he had injured. Car came off the track. He said that wasn't his profit for the year. They also raced motorcycles on that track.

Speaker 1 ([00:38:39](#)):

Now, your uncles that have the insurance business, is that family business still in Lithonia?

Speaker 2 ([00:38:46](#)):

Cameron Roberts is down in the main town.

Speaker 1 ([00:38:48](#)):

It's

Speaker 2 ([00:38:49](#)):

Not a Cameron or Roberts in it, but they made,

Speaker 1 ([00:38:52](#)):

They still have the name.

Speaker 2 ([00:38:54](#)):

It's right next door to the yellow brick house.

Speaker 1 ([00:38:56](#)):

Okay.

Speaker 2 ([00:38:57](#)):

Mr. Goddard owned the house where Cameron Roberts is and right next to it he had a little merchant service station, a couple of gas tanks. Max Cleveland worked there when he was a teenager and Max's daddy was a traveling salesman. He was in the Navy in World War II. And he told me that he made up his mind if he hadn't lived through that, that he was never going to work for anybody else the rest of his life. Then he got in, the wax spins back when everybody used to wax the car. And one time we was sitting on the wax to the Atlanta Fire Department. And like I say, I grew up with Max, the last, to my knowledge, the last tennis he ever played before he lost his legs, he and I played a 13-13 set and quit.

Speaker 1 ([00:39:59](#)):

Wow.

Speaker 2 ([00:40:02](#)):

That's

Speaker 1 ([00:40:02](#)):

A long match.

Speaker 2 ([00:40:03](#)):

When he came back, back from Walter Reed and then we started running the states, we'd play doubles, get him up on the net and I of course 20 pounds lighter in a lot better shape. My head on that. I played the back court and he still was a good athlete.

Speaker 1 ([00:40:25](#)):

Where did you play tennis?

Speaker 2 ([00:40:29](#)):

Where the park is, the amphitheater and the building down there, the rock building up on the hill,

Speaker 3 ([00:40:39](#)):

The

Speaker 2 ([00:40:40](#)):

Swimming pool and up the next level up tennis court, tennis courts we old country boys, we had asphalt tennis court to play on and I played up until the time and Dr. Piper, who was the druggist in the Lithonia and another guy who originally was from Moultrie, they were probably 20 years older than me and I would've hated to play tennis against them when they were young men.

Speaker 3 ([00:41:07](#)):

Wow.

Speaker 2 ([00:41:09](#)):

I think I beat (name inaudible) one time. Singles, we played a lot of doubles, but they don't have, and then the little boy came down, Daniel boy, who much younger than us, he would play with us because they didn't have anybody in high school in Lithonia that could give him any competition. But then he got in the region with some of them private schools in Atlanta and that was the end of his winning because those little rich kids had all lessons all the time.

Speaker 1 ([00:41:47](#)):

Did Lithonia High School have a tennis team when you were in high school?

Speaker 2 ([00:41:53](#)):

Yes, and that was another regret of mine. I had played in a baseball tournament when I was 14 and pitched 17 days and three and a half days and basically ruined my arm, but I stayed on the baseball team. If I had my life to go over with, I'd have played tennis and not baseball. So

Speaker 1 ([00:42:14](#)):

You started playing, when did you start playing tennis?

Speaker 2 ([00:42:18](#)):

fooling around with it and I was a little fat boy until I got about to ninth grade. So I came, played tennis too fat. But I went off down to Georgia Southwest and started dating a girl from Edison, Georgia who was a state class C tennis champ. Because of my serve, I could beat her on occasions. She was a junior college All-American basketball player, so I didn't even shoot HORSE with her. So that's when I started playing

Speaker 3 ([00:42:49](#)):

Tennis

Speaker 2 ([00:42:50](#)):

And played up until we got married. My ex-wife was a great singer but no athlete. And I found out you don't win playing sports with women. They either not any good and drive you crazy or they beat the hell out of you so you just can't win. I think we have a good example of that now, this star woman's basketball player, I dunno whether you keep up with, but they got a gal out at Iowa that just became the all-time college top score of all time.

Speaker 1 ([00:43:36](#)):

Men or women?

Speaker 2 ([00:43:37](#)):

Men or women. I don't think they would've put her in there with Pete Marvis so she broke his records. But because I still believe men's basketball is a bit rough than women, mainly because the men are bigger. Other than that, back to Lithonia, see if I can help anymore on that.

Speaker 1 ([00:43:56](#)):

You got married at Rock Chapel Methodist. Did you also attend church there?

Speaker 2 ([00:44:00](#)):

No ma'am. When we got married and we built a house out there on Klondike Road and my wife, as I said, my ex-wife, to this day is my favorite female singer and she didn't too much what was going on with the choir out there at Rock Chapel. And they had a dynamic young preacher, Lithonia Methodist, Gil Watson. And we decided it was sort of foolish to ride by there every day when we could be going to church there. So, we moved Lithonia Methodist, which I grew up next door to life of Lithonia Methodist Church. There's a fig bush out there right now that was in my backyard. Won't be long before everybody be over there trying to eat some of my figs too. We had a little girl preach here a few years back and she asked me, she says, how can you tell when they're ripe? I said two things. They start turning brown and the blue jays are all over the place.

Speaker 1 ([00:45:13](#)):

That's when they're ready to eat, huh? Yeah, that's when

Speaker 2 ([00:45:15](#)):

They're ready to eat. So anyway, I can still go to Lithonia Methodist Church. I was raised in Lithonia Baptist Church. I left there because of my friendship with Dan (last name inaudible), who just recently died in January. He's, there again, David Chandley's uncle.

Speaker 3 ([00:45:40](#)):

In fact,

Speaker 2 ([00:45:40](#)):

David did a little eulogy at the funeral and every time I see David on TV now, he said that Dan never would call him by his name. I always call him nephew. And he says I always call him uncle. So now when I see Chandley on tv, I think about him being nephew. So he is one of the, he and Brenda Lee and Max Cleveland I guess are the three most famous people ever come out of life.

Speaker 3 ([00:46:15](#)):

But

Speaker 2 ([00:46:15](#)):

I knew all of 'em. In fact, Brenda, she was in my mother's fourth grade when her mother got married again.

Speaker 1 ([00:46:28](#)):

So, she was in your mom's class?

Speaker 2 ([00:46:30](#)):

She was in my mother's class. A third grade teacher was named Mrs. Norton and Lily adoring Ms. Norton, it and a mother got remarried and she signed a contract with Red Foley country music. And then there was, I don't know all the details on that, but she's one of the few people in the rock and roll and the country music Hall of Fame. And I had the occasion later on in life, I had one of my favorite adventures with the carpet business and the company Ogle Brothers out of Memphis who I bought my vinyls and all every year or maybe twice a year, they'd have a big deal for the dealers. One year it was at the Grand Old Opry and they'd just shut it down for their dealers in there. And this was in Asheville, I believe it was. Brenda was the entertainer there. And she had afterwards sign autographs, sell CDs type

Speaker 3 ([00:47:39](#)):

Thing.

Speaker 2 ([00:47:40](#)):

And I walked up and I had my business was Country Carpet House in Lithonia. And when I walked up I handed Brenda my business card and the first thing she said, my God, I didn't know anybody it, but my mama still lived in Lithonia. I thought kids around, she's got a great personality. And I told her, I said, on the back of my business card, Ms. Norton, her favorite teacher, was in the nursing home out here right behind McDonald's. And then a year or two later is when they had this dedication, the main street to the parks named after to Brenda Lee. Doug Henry, who owned the Henry Funeral Home, picked Brenda up at the airport and he told her, said, you got some time to kill, is anything you want to do? And she said, yeah I want to go to so and so and see Ms. Norton. So, Doug said that was something else when she came, walked into the nursing home, all these people. So one of the few good things I guess had done in my life.

Speaker 1 ([00:48:47](#)):

That's so nice making

Speaker 2 ([00:48:49](#)):

That connection. Of course, Brenda, it was an interview on a thing they did for was filming in 2023 was on Minnie Pearl I watched the other night on TV and Brenda was being interviewed about it. And Lithonia, I'm trying to think of anything important come out. We've had, like I said, the Davison quarry up there had two major fires, but I just sat back, of course the Baptist church was on downtown Lithonia. Cofer Brothers buildings here on the corner. Wakefield grocery store was in, like I say Stone Mountain Street used to go straight down where that is

([00:49:45](#)):

Behind probably where Wakefield is. And there was a little street that went by my Uncle Johnny's service station, which is about where Wakefield is now that we had the fire station. And at that time the police department and the little old jail. I can't remember the street unless there's a black person around here that's old enough. I ain't haven't found anybody that. And later on, had Eddie Moody who had been the county police chief, worked for Lithonia for a while after he retired up there, he then

became the city manager. I said, Eddie, he said, they didn't make any maps of Lithonia. He said, so I wish I too bad I could come with it

Speaker 1 ([00:50:33](#)):

Bad. Yeah,

Speaker 2 ([00:50:38](#)):

Because like I say, the fire department was on there and the police department was a little over the street, probably about longest from here to the road to cut through there. I'm trying to think of any other big events. Of course, the swimming pool opening- that was a big thing.

Speaker 1 ([00:50:57](#)):

You mentioned your brother went to medical school. Did he become a doctor? Did he work in the medical field? You said you had a brother that went to medical school? No, not my brother. Oh, not your brother? My uncle. Your uncle. I'm sorry.

Speaker 2 ([00:51:10](#)):

I had three uncles that were all doctors.

Speaker 1 ([00:51:12](#)):

Okay. And they were business owners too, right?

Speaker 2 ([00:51:16](#)):

Well, that was my uncle's on daddy's

Speaker 1 ([00:51:18](#)):

On the Cameron side.

Speaker 2 ([00:51:19](#)):

My uncle Johnny had a service station and Uncle Aaron started the Cameron Robinson Insurance Company. And my dad had, he lived, he had a grocery store. He was in the process of

Speaker 1 ([00:51:30](#)):

Buying. And you had siblings?

Speaker 2 ([00:51:33](#)):

I've got a daughter.

Speaker 1 ([00:51:35](#)):

Well, do you have brothers and sisters? I mean,

Speaker 2 ([00:51:37](#)):

Yeah, my brother Carrie Cameron Jr.

Speaker 1 ([00:51:39](#)):

Oh yeah, that's right. I did write that down.

Speaker 2 ([00:51:44](#)):

He went to University of Georgia and had a degree in journalism, which might interest you. I don't know. And after many years of working in small towns especially, I was over in Greenville, South Carolina, then he went to Tifton, Georgia and that's where he met his wife. And then later the same year I went and started at Valdosta State and he got a job, the Florida Times Union

Speaker 3 ([00:52:13](#)):

As

Speaker 2 ([00:52:14](#)):

Their rep in Valdosta. So I was able to see them the last two years in college. Pretty regular.

Speaker 1 ([00:52:21](#)):

So on both sides of your family, how many cousins do you have?

Speaker 2 ([00:52:26](#)):

Living

Speaker 1 ([00:52:27](#)):

Or just yeah, living and deceased.

Speaker 2 ([00:52:30](#)):

Well, all my cousins, my granddaddy Cameron's family, I'm the only one left. I've got my cousin's kids still living. And my cousin Larry had two kids. One's retired military who, he's in Germany right now, has a civilian job doing the same thing he did at the Army and didn't have that thing on. I'll tell you my speculation on why I think he's in Germany.

Speaker 1 ([00:53:06](#)):

What was the April Fool's story you wanted to tell me? Okay,

Speaker 2 ([00:53:11](#)):

Wheeler Davidson, whose daddy was Wheeler Davidson Sr, was a brother of the Davidson's that daddy started the rock quarry at Davidson Granite Company. Well they had one sister named Rachel, and her married name was Strickland and she owned Lithonia Gas Company. And Wheeler was a 23-year man in the army. And when he came back every April Fool's Day, he pulled something on his aunt and she knew it was coming. I mean it's April the first. What's he going to do? She had a driver, I can't remember what his name was that had been with her for years.

([00:54:02](#)):

And somehow Wheeler found out about, she had a delivery to make up on the highway, about halfway to Avondale. And he had somebody call Ms. Rachel with the pretense, he was this person that lived with

this gas was to be delivered. And then told her that he was very upset with the fact that her driver came up and unloaded the gas and he ran over his private flowers up and down the driveway. Now this driver had been one of like 20 something years. He was a Christian man and Ramona Owens, dear friend of mine, worked for Ms. Rachel, a secretary. And the man, she said, I just don't believe my driver did it. So, the voice on the other end advised her that he's a good Christian man, he would not be lying about something. And about that time, she comes out with G__ D ___, I'm a Christian too. And my driver didn't do that. And then she realized she had been had again.

Speaker 1 ([00:55:12](#)):

Oh no. Oh my goodness. You know it's coming. But you're still surprised.

Speaker 2 ([00:55:19](#)):

Yeah.

Speaker 1 ([00:55:20](#)):

Do you think you have any of your old business cards from your carpet business?

Speaker 2 ([00:55:25](#)):

No, because what I've done with my business cards and I just talked to Dawn into giving me some of hers. I asked her yes, I said, do you have any old business cards you don't use anymore? I use them right now my daily. So I don't think I've got any

Speaker 1 ([00:55:42](#)):

Of them. Okay. Oh well.

Speaker 2 ([00:55:46](#)):

But it was on Main Street and I, back in the day, I thought you could trust everything. I didn't think about these. Max gave me, when I opened up the business house where he lived when he was growing up before the daddy made a little bit more money and built a new brick house they had up on (name inaudible) Street and he gave me a flag and somewhere I got a picture of him in his wheelchair and me and him putting the flag up, it had come off Congress at one time it flown over Congress and I didn't take it in used to the banks and everybody. Every night that flag came in. It didn't stay in the weather like it does now. And the house was as close as here to your car to the drive Main Street. Somebody stole a flag.

Speaker 3 ([00:56:41](#)):

Terrible.

Speaker 2 ([00:56:42](#)):

Well, it was a terrible thing. I, it had been there for years, but it was meant something to me for that reason. And I went from the Country Carpet House to working the night shift from 12 to 4, security company. And I tell somebody, you said you need to see Atlanta. I wouldn't do it now with nothing. It's gotten so much bad every day, somebody getting killed. But 12, after 12 days, a lot of things happened. And I worked that for four years.

Speaker 1 ([00:57:22](#)):

Where was that? That was downtown?

Speaker 2 ([00:57:24](#)):

Well, the office was out of Clarkston, but we had all over Atlanta.

Speaker 1 ([00:57:31](#)):

Okay. I

Speaker 2 ([00:57:31](#)):

Laughed. Told people on the holidays when 'em to come around I-285 certain sections of Atlanta, you could smell the barbecue being cooked. So, I did that for four years and I started working with Doug in the funeral home, part time, and lot of nights, I'm surprised I didn't have a wreck because I worked him go get a couple hours sleep and then go to work and work and then on occasion then go right back to Doug Henry's. But when you're young, you do stupid stuff like that. When

Speaker 1 ([00:58:09](#)):

Did you retire?

Speaker 2 ([00:58:12](#)):

About 60, I'm 84, retired, about 65 something like

Speaker 1 ([00:58:18](#)):

So about 20 years?

Speaker 2 ([00:58:19](#)):

Yeah. My back got hurting and we had to pick up in caskets.

Speaker 1 ([00:58:25](#)):

Yeah. Not good for

Speaker 2 ([00:58:26](#)):

The back fact. Old Doug sold it business out this last year. But he's got some kind of

Speaker 1 ([00:58:32](#)):

Is that here in Lithonia?

Speaker 2 ([00:58:34](#)):

Henry Funeral Home

Speaker 1 ([00:58:35](#)):

Henry

Speaker 2 ([00:58:37](#)):

Beautiful old building. I was telling somebody the other day in 1929, my mother and daddy built a five room house, four \$3,100. 1968, she bought a Mercury Monterey for \$3,100. Henry Funeral Home that was built in 1891, I believe. Really?

Speaker 1 ([00:59:04](#)):

It

Speaker 2 ([00:59:04](#)):

Was one of the Johnsons built it, I think it was \$3,100. Wow. And downtown, are you familiar at all? You know where Dawn Massey lived? Her driveway is here on the Main Street. It's a rock building next door to it. Johnson's had a merchandise building and that's where my dad was working when he married my mom and she was teaching school

Speaker 3 ([00:59:37](#)):

Depression

Speaker 2 ([00:59:37](#)):

Came along. She said more than one time they'd had either one of those kids, they would've lost our house

Speaker 3 ([00:59:45](#)):

Because

Speaker 2 ([00:59:46](#)):

They wouldn't have had the money because he had groceries. But the school teachers, which I think she said they were getting paid with the script rather than money.

Speaker 1 ([00:59:59](#)):

What is that?

Speaker 2 ([01:00:02](#)):

I don't know. It's a promise

Speaker 1 ([01:00:03](#)):

Promise. Oh, like a promissory note. Okay.

Speaker 2 ([01:00:07](#)):

But she taught in Stone Mountain the year they got secretly married, she said. And then she came over, she taught broke, was off eight years while she was having (brother's name) and I, and then the war broke out. And the guy that can imagine knowing one with eight schools in the DeKalb County High School, and then you had to Redan Elementary, Rock Chapel, and she was teaching up at Redan when my dad died. And I remember just, well, I was sitting right beside him and Dawn's granddaddy was the Doctor, Stewart.

Speaker 3 ([01:00:49](#)):

And

Speaker 2 ([01:00:49](#)):

Was looking at the clock to see if it was time to give my daddy some kind of medication. Turned around and he was dead. Of course, doctor did all, they did what the news do back then, my granddaddy Smith, my mother's brother, like I say, he was a doctor. I think he had two years of college.

Speaker 1 ([01:01:09](#)):

Yeah, different times.

Speaker 2 ([01:01:11](#)):

Yeah.

Speaker 1 ([01:01:11](#)):

Yeah.

Speaker 2 ([01:01:12](#)):

So you do what you can do. I can't use that excuse for my not being a multimillionaire, but I always have wondered, had my daddy lied, lived

Speaker 1 ([01:01:26](#)):

With the grocery store.

Speaker 2 ([01:01:27](#)):

I say I can't use, it was amazing. At the time my brother and I was growing up, there was at least eight or nine boys, maybe not that many friends. All and daddy were dead either off or something. The summer after my daddy died, we went on an adventure train, train trip to Wilson, North Carolina. And I was telling Don yesterday we came through Florence, South Carolina wasn't there about soldiers either going to war, coming back, and of course the train service, they had to wait for this train to come through and all. We are in Florence, South Carolina, which is I think considered kind of watermelon capital, back then, flat cars loaded with watermelon. We pulled out, headed up north and there was watermelon juice down the aisle and I had watermelon juice all over me. Oh

Speaker 3 ([01:02:39](#)):

Wow.

Speaker 2 ([01:02:40](#)):

Like I said about turning five in October, MV's came through there and scared me to death. But they're going to get me for stealing watermelon.

Speaker 1 ([01:02:50](#)):

Right. I can see how that would be scary. Do you, you remember being in high school if you had yearbooks?

Speaker 2 ([01:03:00](#)):

Yeah, I've got a few them around here. In fact, Dawn was telling me about something about her daddy's yearbook. I said, yeah, I know you got one because I gave it to you. My brother's wife brought me, I think her daddy graduated high school in 50 or 49, 1. And my brother, he ended up, he went to Decatur his last two years in high school. And he had the annuals from when Thomas was a senior. And another good friend of mine, Buddy Webb's sister, was ahead of Thomas up behind him. And that's another famous person from Lithonia, Buddy Webb. He played saxophone with Jerry Lee Lewis and he got drafted and after he got out of the army, he said it wasn't worth having to start all over the top. I've been told that Jerry Lee Lewis buddy Will was the only person in his band he'd let play a solo part. Oh yeah. It was that good. And he grew up the ex-bank building beside Henry's funeral home and used to be a two big two-story house there. And this Buddy Webb lived there when he was years younger than me.

Speaker 3 ([01:04:27](#)):

We

Speaker 2 ([01:04:27](#)):

Played together growing up. Unfortunately, he died. I'm telling you. You get older, all your friends saw. I told him I got to get my knees operated. So the next time I go to the hospital I can chase the young nurses instead of the olds. But there ain't no old nurses anymore. They don't seen them. Wow. They're overworked.

Speaker 1 ([01:04:57](#)):

It's tough work.

Speaker 2 ([01:04:59](#)):

It sure is. And my daughter, it has worked emergency rooms the whole time She's been a nurse.

Speaker 3 ([01:05:08](#)):

Oh boy.

Speaker 2 ([01:05:10](#)):

Someday she'll write a book.

Speaker 1 ([01:05:14](#)):

I bet there's some stories. She's

Speaker 2 ([01:05:16](#)):

Married to a guy that was a sniper in the army. So they match up pretty good.

Speaker 1 ([01:05:23](#)):

We've seen a lot of things. Does your son live locally?

Speaker 2 ([01:05:27](#)):

He lives with his mama in LaVar, Florida.

Speaker 1 ([01:05:29](#)):

Okay.

Speaker 2 ([01:05:31](#)):

Like I say, legally blind, he can do things like that.

Speaker 3 ([01:05:36](#)):

But

Speaker 2 ([01:05:37](#)):

In his job, he was an adjuster in automobile business, worked for the car dealership. He'd see distance. So he had to quit work that reason. And right now he is in the process of letting the puppy train, train him.

Speaker 1 ([01:05:57](#)):

That is how it works, isn't it?

Speaker 2 ([01:05:59](#)):

It's

Speaker 1 ([01:06:00](#)):

The animals train us.

Speaker 2 ([01:06:01](#)):

That's

Speaker 1 ([01:06:01](#)):

Right.

Speaker 2 ([01:06:03](#)):

Yeah. Always. I had a dog of my own where we lived in Lithonia. The kids, we were on Klondike Road and just bad news for dogs. They'd get run over out there. We did inherit a big of German Shepherd from my cousin's, Duncan's brother, mother-in-law after husband died. And his name was Satan. And my cousin's wife, it was daddy's dog, he was a preacher. She said, why did you name that dog, Satan? He said, Satan said the word Satan's in the Bible more than any other word.

Speaker 1 ([01:06:53](#)):

There you go.

Speaker 2 ([01:06:53](#)):

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And unfortunately, they had never given him heartworm medicine. We got to enjoy having him. About a year we got sick was Sable color, weighed about 90 pounds. And then my son had a German Shepherd and he unfortunately liked to buy people and had to let him go. So he's got some kind of dog out. I, I'm bad about keeping up with the part. Like I told you earlier, I can give you events

Speaker 1 ([01:07:33](#)):

Dates,

Speaker 2 ([01:07:33](#)):

But don't ask me that. Tell you.

Speaker 1 ([01:07:35](#)):

Well yeah, this has been really good. Mr. Cameron, thank you so much. You have.

Transcribed by REV AI

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