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Interview Summary

Interviewee:

Ratibu Jacocks

Interviewer:

Flora Williams

Interview Date:

July 17, 2014

Interview Location:

Rialto, CA

Interview Summary completed by:

Riona Tsai, 2022

Description:

In this interview, Ratibu Jacocks tells stories about his childhood living in Deep Creek, Virginia. He was born in Norfolk, Virginia in 1943, and from a young age, Jacocks had jobs to earn money such as delivery papers, cutting grass, or filling grocery orders for his neighbors. Jacocks moved around to different schools and played on the baseball team as a child. He also went to three different types of religions growing up: the Church of God in Christ Disciple, Baptists, and the Brethren. Jacocks describes the Deep Creek community, having to navigate the segregation in facilities and lack of modern technology.

Keywords:

- Deep Creek, Virginia
- Deep Creek Elementary School
- Baseball
- Education
- Newspapers
- Jobs
- Delivery Boy
- Marshall Hinton

- Politics
- Appliances
- Technology
- Dodgers
- Church
- Baptists
- Church of God in Christ disciple
- The Brethren
- Community
- Segregation

Spatial Coverage:

General Location/Address	Name of Site (if relevant)
Norfolk, Virginia	Berkeley
Deep Creek, Virginia	Ratibu Jacock's childhood neighborhood
Elizabeth City, North Carolina	N/A
Rialto, California	Ratibu Jacock's home
Portsmouth, Virginia	N/A
Pleasantville, Virginia	N/A
Lake Drummer, Virginia	N/A
Route 17, Virginia	Deep Creek Downtown

Temporal Coverage:

- 1943-2014

Key Events:

- Delivery boy
- Dodgers winning the 1955 World Series
- Winning state championship baseball team in 12th grade

Key Organizations:

- Baptists
- Church of God in Christ disciple
- The Brethren

Interview Index:

Media Format	Time (hh:mm:ss)	Topic Discussed
Digital Video	00:01:00	Family and living in Deep Creek, Virginia
Digital Video	00:02:34	Education; moving around to different schools
Digital Video	00:03:48	Baseball team
Digital Video	00:04:36	Jobs as a child such as delivery newspapers or groceries
Digital Video	00:08:14	Major events while growing up
Digital Video	00:10:32	Community Leaders growing up
Digital Video	00:11:33	(Start of second part of interview) Introductions
Digital Video	00:12:35	Appliances and lack of modern technology in Deep Creek when growing up; washing clothes
Digital Video	00:17:11	How young people in Deep Creek kept themselves entertained
Digital Video	00:18:49	Church; different types of religion Ratibu went through as a child
Digital Video	00:23:04	Baseball team started by Henderson Jackson

Digital Video	00:24:10	Deep Creek neighborhood landscape and area; Deep Creek downtown
Digital Video	00:29:19	Segregation in Deep Creek

Comments:

Interview largely focused on Jacocks' childhood living in Deep Creek, Virginia. There are two parts to the interview, so it is unclear if the first part is done on the same day as the date is not stated in the beginning.

Related Materials:

Oral History Interview with Jacocks in 2015.

Full interview transcript can be found below.

Interview Transcript

Start of Interview:

[00:00:00]

Ratibu Jacocks [00:00:00] So, why do you think it cut off?

Flora Williams [00:00:03] Okay. Good afternoon, Mr. Jacocks. I want to ask you a few questions on your interview. Would you please state your name and spell it for me, please?

Ratibu Jacocks [00:00:29] Yes, my given name by my parents is William Henry Jacocks. W-I-L-L-I-A-M, Henry, H-E-N-R-Y, Jacocks, J-A-C-O-C-K-S, and my African name is Ratibu Shadidi, R-A-T-I-B-U, Shadidi, S-H-A-D-I-D-I.

Flora Williams [00:01:00] Mr. Jacocks, where were you born?

Ratibu Jacocks [00:01:03] I was born in Norfolk, Virginia in 1943.

Flora Williams [00:01:09] Okay. Who are your parents?

Ratibu Jacocks [00:01:12] And I was born...I am the fourth child to Annie Mae Hedgebeth Jacocks and James A. Jacocks, and they met in North Carolina and moved to Virginia where they got married and they lived in a place that called Berkeley...Berkeley in Norfolk, Virginia.

Flora Williams [00:01:39] Could you tell me what was your life like?

Ratibu Jacocks [00:01:42] As...right after I was born, we moved to a place called Deep Creek, Virginia, and that's the suburbs of Norfolk and Norfolk County. And we lived in a four room house in Deep Creek, Virginia, and the life was really good at the beginning. That's the only place I remember living in Deep Creek. I don't have any memory of living in Norfolk, but I do remember growing up in Deep Creek and life was really good. There are a lot of people talk to each other. A lot of people...everyone knew each other, and everyone knew the family, so we were all involved in the community.

Flora Williams [00:02:34] Okay. Could you tell me something about your school? What activities did you involve yourself in?

Ratibu Jacocks [00:02:39] Well, I started school at Deep Creek Elementary School. It was a two room school that taught five grades and two rooms, and I was in the same grade with my sister. And I remember she was one year older than I...I was. And so what happened was she was very intelligent, very smart. I tried to keep up with her, and when I got in the first grade, the teacher expected me to know as much as my sister Katherine, although I didn't, but I was motivated by her knowledge in their early grades. And then from Deep Creek Elementary School, we went to a school called Southwestern Elementary School, and we stayed there a couple of years. And then at sixth grade, we went to Bells Mill Elementary School, and then in the seventh grade, we went to Crestwood High School.

Flora Williams [00:03:44] Okay. And I also see here that you play baseball.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:03:48] Yeah, well, growing up, the elders of the older men in the community wanted us to stay busy. That was one of the things Henderson...Henderson Jackson said, and when I asked him, "Why did you start the baseball team?" We were nine years old, eight, and some was ten, and we started the team. He said he wanted us to stay busy and not get into trouble, so we organized a baseball team when I was nine years old.

Flora Williams [00:04:20] Did you get into a lot of trouble when you were small?

Ratibu Jacocks [00:04:23] Well...I imagine so. I was the white sheep in my family, and I was always a little different than the other people, and I was very involved with the community because I delivered papers. Also, when I was around nine years old, my brother and I...newspapers. So, we had about two hundred customers, and we went all over the area delivering the people with the papers. So, we were very much involved in knowing the community as well. But also, Flo, we also earned money. Well, money even before then, when I was five years old, I earned money by going to the stores for people in the neighborhood. My daddy fixed up a wagon that my brother had, and that was a used wagon, but he fixed it up for me and told me to use the wagon to go around the neighborhood. And as people that they need something from the store, and if they did, they would write it down on a sock or a handkerchief. I would take it to the store. Then the store would fill the order, I bring it back to the people, and the people would give me some of the money. I earned money before I was five years old.

Flora Williams [00:05:46] That was smart, huh? What was your...well, I guess that was your first job as a child, huh?

Ratibu Jacocks [00:05:53] That was the first job I can really remember is going to store for the neighbors, but right out that I used to go to farming with my older sisters and brothers, and I also remember cutting grass, lawns of people in the neighborhood, and, of course, papers, delivering papers. So, I had two or three jobs all the time. At the same time, I always played. I was involved in a lot of playing and was skating, that was one thing we did a lot in the winter. We played baseball over in the summer. We played football, we played swimming, we did everything. I was very involved in everything growing up...

Flora Williams [00:06:39] Okay.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:06:39] ...besides school.

Flora Williams [00:06:43] Well, how old were you when you got your first good paying job?

Ratibu Jacocks [00:06:49] All of those jobs were good paying to me. Good paying is probably relative to what bills you have, what you know what to do with it. I thought all of them were very good. But one job I particularly remember, I used to cut grass for a mobile home place, or shall we say, a hotel, and it was a large job, and he had an automatic lawn mower. He paid me seventy five cents an hour. That was a lot of money. It took me about three or four hours to do that once a week, and to me, that was a lot of money at one time. And I remember that.

Flora Williams [00:07:32] So what did you do with the seventy five cents an hour?

Ratibu Jacocks [00:07:35] Well, all...

Flora Williams [00:07:35] Did you spend it wisely?

Ratibu Jacocks [00:07:38] From the beginning, whenever I made money, I gave it all to my mother. I didn't keep all the money. I kept some of it for myself, but most of our money went to my mother, and she used the money either for the family needs, or she saved it. I do know this though. When I graduated from high school, I had over five-...my mother had over five thousand dollars saved of my money that she had saved for me, so I've always saved money in 1960.

Flora Williams [00:08:14] Okay. Were there any major events while growing up that you remember offhand?

Ratibu Jacocks [00:08:21] There was quite a few. I remember a man by the name of Marshall Hinton, and he was very involved in civic activities. And one of the things that Marshall Hinton did, he got our street paved. He also made sure that the ditches were cleaned out. He also had all the streets in that three block area name changed, and he had all...he'd named all of those. One of the things Marshall Hinton used to ask me to do is pass out fliers as I deliver papers, so I was involved in politics really early without really knowing that I am doing this. But because I was going door to door with the newspaper, he asked me would I slide the fliers into the papers so everybody could read what was going on. He also got lights for us at the school to play baseball. We actually had a summer league, opponent league, and we played various teams throughout the area. The first year, we didn't win any games. We didn't know how to play. The second year we had a coach by the name of Choo-choo, and he had gone to college, a black college, and he came back, and he taught us fundamentals. How many steps it was or how fast should you go to first base, how many feet was the home part...home plate to the pitchers. He taught us all the basic knowledge of baseball, and once we learned that, we were able to then win the championship when I was probably twelve or thirteen. And we went on when, we got in high school, most of the team members, team players, was people from that baseball team, and we went on. By the time I got in the twelfth grade and we won the state championship baseball team.

Flora Williams [00:10:32] What was some of the community leaders that you can remember as far as political, social, and religious that you can remember?

Ratibu Jacocks [00:10:40] Are you talking about when I was growing up...

Flora Williams [00:10:42] Yes.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:10:42] ...or are you talking about later on?

Flora Williams [00:10:45] Well, later on or when you were growing up.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:10:48] I worked for a politician after I got out here, and I worked for a state senator here in California. But before I do that, I think there were always political leaders that I saw as I was growing up from carrying the newspaper. I could see their articles, and I would read what was going on in the community as I delivered the papers. So, I was really involved in politics even before I knew it. Well, we stop there, and we'll come back, and we'll develop as I go up.

Flora Williams [00:11:28] Okay. Thank you for the interview. [recording stops]

Flora Williams [00:11:33] [recording starts] Now. Ready? Good afternoon. We are here at the home of Mr. Ratibu Jacocks. Today is July 17th, 2014. My name is Flora Williams, and I'm interviewing Ratibu Jacocks. His name is spelled Ratibu, R-A-T-I-B-U, last name is Jacocks, J-A-C-O-C-K-S. We are interviewing him here at his home in Rialto. Thank you, Mr. Ratibu, for taking out the time to conduct this interview with us. The first...we are done the second phrase of your interview, and there was three questions that I would like to ask you. We have so many different technologies in today's world. Was there, TV, phones, or other major appliances when you was growing up?

Ratibu Jacocks [00:12:35] Okay. You remember I was born in 1943, and I lived in a place called Deep Creek, Virginia. And then Deep Creek, they did not have electric lights, they did not have telephones, they did not have television, they did not have refrigerators, they did not have running water. It did not have the provisions that we had later on in 1964. But when I grew up, no, we did not have any of those things that we would call modern technology. We made light from a lantern and burn oil, and that's how we were able to see and read when it was dark. We cooked from a stove that we put wood and coal in to cook the food, and we would have to boil the water outside of the house, bring it inside of the house, and use a hand machine in order to wash clothes. So, we did not have what you were having.

Flora Williams [00:13:50] Okay, since you said that there wasn't running water, how did you get your water for cooking and taking a bath?

Ratibu Jacocks [00:13:57] Okay, well, that's a good question. We had a pump. My father would drive pipe into the ground, about a hundred feet, and we would pump the water out of the ground, and that's how we got water. We pumped the water into the basins or the pans or whatever we needed it and...from the outside, then bring it inside into the house.

Flora Williams [00:14:27] So, did you have...I know you didn't have electric, but did you have the hand crank washing machines to wash your clothes?

Ratibu Jacocks [00:14:35] Yeah, that was...we had two types. One was washing board where my mother would scrub the floor...the clothes on the board. And then we also had...I'm trying to remember now. That was the only way we had it. We would have to...we had to scrub the cloth into the water and clean it that way. Then she would put it in another pan of water to rinse it, then she would put it into another pan of water to blue...put blue in it so it could be bright and crispy. She wanted her clothes clean, and if

they're white, they're white. If they're blues, they're blues. She did not like clothes any other way than the best color possible.

Flora Williams [00:15:30] So, in other words, you had three big, black pots.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:15:33] Right.

Flora Williams [00:15:34] And they were sitting on wood, and then did you use Oxygen soap?

Ratibu Jacocks [00:15:41] Yeah, I don't remember that, but I remember a washing machine, but it was not connected to electricity. But this washing machine could rinse out the water, dry out a lot of the water that went back into the washing machine, and we would take those clothes and put it in the first pan and then the second pan. After she...

Flora Williams [00:16:06] And then the blowing.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:16:06] Huh?

Flora Williams [00:16:07] And then and the blowing.

Flora Williams [00:16:09] Yeah, and then the blowing. And that the all of that, then she would put them in a pan and take it outside and hang them on a line outside where they would dry all day. So, when you came by my house on Mondays, you saw clothes all in our backyard. When you came to my house on Tuesday...excuse me...you saw her ironing the clothes. And you came Wednesday, she was cooking and getting ready for the week. And then Thursday, she washed again because she didn't like dirty clothes, dry the sheets, iron again, and Saturday, she got ready for Sunday. That's my mom.

Flora Williams [00:16:53] That's your mom.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:16:54] That was how my mom operated.

Flora Williams [00:16:56] Okay. Another question that I wanted to ask you: how did young people entertain themselves in the part of Deep Creek, Virginia?

Ratibu Jacocks [00:17:09] Repeat that again. I couldn't hear you well.

Flora Williams [00:17:11] Oh. How did the young people entertain themselves since there weren't any TVs or no modern stuff? What did you guys do for pleasure?

Ratibu Jacocks [00:17:21] Well, we made up on a games. We made our own lifestyle. One of the things I remember early, early age, I developed a hayride for all the kids in the neighborhood, and I would ask all the kids if they would want to ride. I would get the man with the truck, he would put hay on it, and I would organize all the kids, and I didn't charge them for that. I remember I should have charged them a dime or a penny...

Flora Williams [00:17:54] Two hundred and fifty dollars huh?

Ratibu Jacocks [00:17:55] A dime or a penny or something. [laughing] But I did not charge the kids to ride on the hay ride. Plus, we...after the Dodgers won the World Series in 1955, we put on a big parade in Deep Creek with all the kids with tubs, pans, ironing boards, and not only that, washing boards. Anything that kept noise, paper, balloons. We kept noise, and we had a big parade. So, the neighbors around the block came out to watch us parade around there. We entertained them, but we were entertaining ourselves as well.

Flora Williams [00:18:35] Yeah. And another thing I wanted to ask you about church since there wasn't any pianos or none of that stuff that they have now. How did the church make that music?

Ratibu Jacocks [00:18:49] Well, they did have a piano. We had pianos in our church, they had horns, and, as you know, there was a lot of music going on. So, yes, there were piano. But our church was in two ways. I had three different types of church. That's a real good question. My mother was a Church of God in Christ disciple, my father was a Baptist, and then later on, they both joined a nondenominational sect called The Brethren. So, I went through three different types of organized religion as a child.

Flora Williams [00:19:33] Okay, but what was the difference between the Church of God and...?

Ratibu Jacocks [00:19:37] Disciples Church in God, they believe that the only people that was going to Heaven were Jesus's disciples. That's what it was. In the New Testament, they were all disciples, so they were disciples. The Baptists believed that before any religion, John the Baptist baptized people, so that's what they believed. They were following. John the Baptist. The Brethren at the last sect believed that Christians were called brethren, so they call themselves brethren. They all claim that they were right, and they all would stand on their last go. They have go. They have an foundation.

They said that we are right, and if you're doing anything else besides that, you either on your way to hell or in Hell already, so it was a real definite pure type of religion, and they did talk about hell a lot. Everybody talked about Hell in terms of the hot..how hot it was. You did anything wrong, and you would probably go to Hell. You tell a lie, you go to hell.

Flora Williams [00:21:00] So, they really didn't teach you that much of the Bible per se because that thing was just Hell.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:21:08] No. They taught the Bible, but the Bible speaks a lot about Hell. Right from the beginning, from the time Adam and Eve sin to Revelation is all Hell. That's a lot of Hell. But my mom read the Bible three times a day to us. We read the Bible when we got up, so we knew the Bible. We had to...before we took a nap, we had to learn a Bible verse, and before we went to sleep at night, we had Bible study again. So, we had the Bible always in our house. Not only that, other kids came to our house to study the Bible under my mom. So, I was very well versed in the Bible itself. But see sin, as they taught it, is a big thing. And it says that you're going to Heaven or you're going to Hell. You're sinning, you're going to hell. You do right, you go to heaven. So, that was the basic tenet of the doctrine which I grew up under.

Flora Williams [00:22:14] What made your mom or dad change to become...to go to the same church? You saying, you know, they were...

Ratibu Jacocks [00:22:22] She went to two different ones.

Flora Williams [00:22:24] Yeah, but then they...

Ratibu Jacocks [00:22:25] My father only the Baptist. My father was a Baptist, my mom was never a Baptist. She was a disciple, Church of God in Christ disciple, and she ended up being one of the followers of the Brethren. But she changed her mind when she got different information, and a lot of people do, and at the end, she felt that she was right at the end.

Flora Williams [00:22:53] That was it, huh? Okay...

Ratibu Jacocks [00:22:56] Did I answer those questions? What question were you start with? Did you want to know what did we do as growing up?

Flora Williams [00:23:03] Yeah.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:23:04] Yeah, we also had a baseball team. We had a baseball team when I was nine, and Henderson Jackson started that. And I asked him, I said, "Mr. Jackson, why did you start the baseball team for us?" And he said he started the team because he wanted us to stay busy and not get in trouble. So, we played organized baseball from the time that I was nine years old. We also worked. I worked before I was five. I had a business that went door to door collecting notes from people with my wagon, and I would take it to the store and come back with their groceries. They would open up the site for the change and give me some of the money, so I was making money early on. I also cut grass for people and did their lawns, and I also had a paper route which also brought me the biggest share of my resources.

Flora Williams [00:24:10] Okay. One last question. What did the area look like where you come from? Did you have sidewalks or muddy roads? Horse and buggies or what during that time?

Ratibu Jacocks [00:24:28] Well, at the beginning, now Deep Creek is inside of Norfolk County. At the time it was called Norfolk County. It was unincorporated. It was...and the closest city was Portsmouth and Norfolk. They were the closest cities to us, and Norfolk County had in it various...I would call them enclaves, and one was called Deep Creek. And inside of Deep Creek, there was another smaller group that was called Pleasantville. The place Pleasantville was probably a mile and a half north one street, a mile and a half north on the outside street, and a mile and a half north on the center street. And across those streets with three other streets, there was probably a half a mile. That's the community. And outside of on the other side of the outside street was a river called Lake Drummer, and Lake Drummer was the river that separated the blacks from the whites. So, the stores is that the blacks went to was on the south side and the east side of the town, and the whites lived on the west side and the southwest side of the town, but the river separated us. And another major thoroughfare was Route 17. Route 17 came from Florida all the way up to New York, and Deep Creek was a major stopping point for people who left Norfolk and went to North Carolina. Elizabeth City, North Carolina, for example. They would stop in Deep Creek, and Deep Creek has stores. My father owned a confectionery store there. We had another store that sold all types of merchandise. And they also...like beer, pickle, pig feet, cookies, crackers, shoestrings. They all...that but Broward sold gasoline for cars, so a lot of cars would stop over there, gas up, go to the bathroom, and keep going off of Route 17. So, it was a busy place. We called Deep Creek downtown. It was like a downtown area. Let me say something else about my mother and the Bible. Not only when she was with the Brethren, when they would go downtown where these stores were right before you cross over the bridge, and they would have gospel meetings outside. Some people

would be cursing and drinking, you know, and having fun with jukeboxes. They will be out there preaching the gospel, singing Christian songs, trying to win the lost to Christ.

Flora Williams [00:27:28] Telling their souls, yeah.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:27:31] I had my eyes on them, and I also had my eyes on the people who were having a lot of fun. I liked that too. In fact, they were having more fun it seemed than these people who were praising the Lord.

Flora Williams [00:27:48] Okay. I guess we're going to...

Ratibu Jacocks [00:27:52] What was the last question you asked now?

Flora Williams [00:27:54] Oh, that was the last question...

Ratibu Jacocks [00:27:55] How was Deep Creek?

Flora Williams [00:27:56] Mmhmm.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:27:56] Okay, let me just go a little deeper into that. The streets were dirt roads, they had ditches, and were...and it's a lot of water in Virginia, as you know. So, there were a lot of wooden bridges. But the main bridge, though, was made out of steel, which crossed Route 17 and Lake Drummer Avenue, the main separation point for blacks and whites. When I deliver newspapers, I went to both neighborhoods. I delivered papers in both white areas and black areas. Both farm areas and downtown, quote, areas. So, I've met all types of people, and that's where I got a chance to meet people and interact with all types of people doing all types of things from moonshine and maybe a little prostitution maybe, I don't know, but all types of things were going on. So, you had these factions, you know, the real Christian people, and then Christian people who did things and hot in the head, and then you have people who were just outright sinners, didn't pretend at all.

Flora Williams [00:29:14] One more...last question I would like to ask you.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:29:19] Yeah.

Flora Williams [00:29:19] During the time I was growing up back in...

Ratibu Jacocks [00:29:22] Deep Creek

Flora Williams [00:29:23] ...Deep Creek. Say, like, if you wanted to buy an appliance, could you go into the store? Would you have to call the store and tell them that you needed a refrigerator or stoven? They would bring you what they feel that you could have. I mean, were you allowed to go into this...to those stores?

Ratibu Jacocks [00:29:44] We went inside the store and shopped for what we wanted, and I don't know why, but it was no segregation in buying. The segregation came in the facilities. Where did you eat? Where did you ride the bus? Those types of things. But when it came to spending money outright, you could go all over the store and pick whatever you had the money to do. So, we didn't have a separation there.

Flora Williams [00:30:17] Okay, so this close our interview, and I want to thank you, Ratibu Jacocks, so much for the interview. Thank you.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:30:25] Thank you.

End of Interview:
[00:30:28]