

Community Knowledge in North Carolina
Oral History Index & Transcript

Oral History Number: 2020_OH001

Oral History Abstract: Sterlin M. Holt Sr. opened the DeLuxe Barbershop in 1946. This business was listed in *The Negro Motorist Green Book* from 1950-1952. Holt's successor, Derrick Green, shares his memories of Mr. Holt, lessons he learned from his mentor, and stories passed down about the history of the shop, the Holt family, and Mr. Holt's influence within the community.

Key Terms: Sterlin Holt, Sr; Sterlin Holt, Jr; Josie Holt; Ricky Alston; Virginia Alston; Derrick Green; DeLuxe barbershop; barbershops (general); barbers (profession); Durham; Hayti (community); Pearson town (community); urban renewal; community history; intergenerational storytelling in communities

Interview Date: November 18, 2020

Interview Location: DeLuxe Barbershop, 1220 Fayetteville Street, Durham, NC

Interviewee: Derrick Green

Interviewer: Lisa R. Withers

Audio File Length: 1: 23: 44

Transcriber: Lisa R. Withers

Note(s): The audio file is the primary source. This written document (index and transcript) is intended to serve as a guide in identifying concepts, themes, people, and places of interest within the audio file.

This document is divided into two parts: part one is an index to provide an overview of the topics discussed. Part two is a transcription of the oral history.

Effort was made to maintain the integrity of the conversation during transcription. However, the transcript does not include every inflection, mannerism, speech pattern, etc. The audio was transcribed with clarity of content in mind and brackets are used for this purpose.

The audio file contains background noise from the neighboring beauty salon and street.

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Part 2: Transcription with Timestamps (section headings in bold)

0:00 Introduction

Lisa R. Withers (LRW): My name is Lisa Withers. It is November 18, 2020. I am at the DeLuxe Barbershop in Durham, North Carolina, with Mr. Derrick Green, the current owner of the establishment. We are here today to talk about the history of the barbershop as well as its founder, Mr. Sterlin Holt. Before we get started, Mr. Green, may I have permission to record this interview with you?

Derrick Green (DG): Yes ma'am, you do.

LRW: Thank you so much and thank you for joining with me today. I would like to start the interview by asking a little bit about yourself. Are you from Durham?

0:39 Derrick Green's Background

DG: I am. I'm from Durham, actually from every neighborhood in Durham, born and raised. I graduated from Durham High School in 1988. I went to college at the Art Institute of Atlanta in 1988 and graduated in 1990 in Atlanta. Then I attended the American College for Applied Arts in Atlanta and graduated in 1992. And then I started cutting hair because I couldn't afford a haircut while I was in college. So, then I went to barber school.

LRW: Was barber school also in Atlanta?

DG: No, I went to barber school in Maryland, actually. I ended up coming back home to North Carolina and I started working with Sterlin Holt.

1:27 Meeting Sterling Holt, Sr. & Starting Work at the DeLuxe Barber Shop

LRW: Okay. So, what was that moment that led you to being introduced to Mr. Holt?

DG: Well, actually, he has one son. He's a junior, Sterlin Holt, Jr. I was in barber school because I had gotten my barber licenses in Maryland, and Maryland not being a reciprocity state, when I came home, I had to go to barber school again. So, while I was in school, I was at a convenience store as a part-time job and I happen to walk in the store, and I had my barber school smock on, and it had the name of the barber school and everything and a young man walked up to me and he asked me was I from Durham.

I said, "Yes, sir. How did you know that?"

He said, "Because you look familiar to me."

And I said, "Wow."

He said, "Well, my father is getting older. He has a barber shop in Durham, and I would like to know if you would please come work with him when you finish school so someone can be there with him."

At the time, Mr. Sterlin Holt, Sr. was 88 years old. So, when I came by to meet Mr. Holt, Sr., he recognized me...although I had never met him. Turns out he was a godfather to my father. His wife and my father's mother, which is my grandmother, had a daycare in the basement of this particular building. So, he was godfather to my father and his son eventually...or essentially

became a godfather to me. But for him to recognize...I guess because I look so much like my father, he thought he knew me.

So, when he invited me to come visit with his father and maybe, possibly, be here with him, I had already started working at a barbershop. I was on my way out of barber school already. And so, while I was working at the barbershop previous to this one, I decided...I said, "Well, let me go meet Mr. Holt because he doesn't know that I'm coming. I had already committed to coming to work with him." So, I came to meet him one day and I told him...he asked me...Mr. Holt, Sr...he was sitting here at the time...like I said he was 88 [years old] and he would come late in the evening. The shop would be closed all day and he would come to work at six o'clock in the evening and he would work until nine o'clock at night. And I'm thinking well that is kind of late for him to be there by himself.

So, I came to meet him, and he asked me what my dreams were, and my plans and I told him about my journey coming from Maryland and then he instantly went into my family's connection with him with my grandmother downstairs with his wife, Mrs. Josie...her name was Josie Holt, J-O-S-I-E. Okay, so, my grandmother's name was Virginia Alston. My father's name was Ricky Alston. And so, he remembered my dad and he remembered my grandmother. I said I eventually wanted to open my own shop and possibly have multiple shops. He said, "Son, well, let me tell you. Come here with me. Save your money," cause, I had saved up the money I could. He said, "save your money, come here with me, and I'll take care of you." That was the first day I met him. Mind you, this was April of 2007. So, I was already working at a barbershop.

In the meantime, I had graduated barber school, gotten my licenses in North Carolina, and so I was able to work here. After about a year, I was still working at the barbershop where I was working, and I thought about it. I said, "well, he's about 89 now. He's getting older." So, I came back, and I said, "Mr. Holt, what do you think about me coming..." this was April of 2007, I said, "by Thanksgiving" of that same year. He said, "Whatever you want to do is fine. Just come by." And he gave me a key to the barbershop. He said, "Whenever you are ready...just come when you are ready." So, what I did was at the barbershop where I was previously working, I started telling people...all of my clientele, I started telling letting them know there was going to be a transition and if you ever come here and I'm not here, this is where I will be. I had my cards already made up and I had everything already laid out. I had a website. I had everything. So, I said this is where I'll be if you come and I'm not here. This is where I'll be.

So, Halloween came around and I said I'm going to go ahead and go. I came up here. It was on a Monday afternoon, maybe about one o'clock. Where I was working, it was something small that happened, and I didn't agree with it. I said, "Okay. Time to go." I packed up everything. I came up here and within thirty minutes I had twenty-five people in here. Mind you, the shop would be closed all day until about six o'clock when he decided to come to work. So, that particular day...he didn't know I was coming. I didn't call him to let him know I was coming that day. Okay. So, when he came at six o'clock and he seen about thirty people in here, it shook him. Cause he's old school, right, and he wasn't used to that. He came in the building...and he always parked his car right in front of the window right here. So, I'd seen him, and I had all

these chairs full...I got twenty-six chairs in here and all of them full and I had three people standing outside in like four hours from where I was. And I knew it was going to shake him. I knew it.

He came in and I was in the very end chair...there are four chairs in here. I was at the last chair at the end of the row. This was his chair, the first chair. So, when he came in...he came, and he did like Mr. Rogers. He would come in and he always, always, always wore a shirt and tie to work every day. His whole career he always wore a shirt and tie. And that is what we were taught in barber school. We always do that until you get to a point where you think...you know. But he always wore a shirt and tie, plants, slacks, whatever. He came in, took his jacket off, hung it up. He would adjust the heat. It would be June. Ninety-eight degrees outside and he got the heat on high. It's forty people in here. This is the very first day I'm here, right. So...okay. He didn't say anything. He pulled out all of his equipment, did everything. He said, "Derrick," and he motioned at me to come talk to him because he didn't know I was coming that day. He said, "Well, I want you to regulate everybody and keep your eyes on everybody." And he sat in his chair and went to sleep. That's what he did. This was the very first day. I said, "Okay. Boom." So, me being who I am, I said, "Well, this man is not used to all of this traffic. Let me get these people out of here." So, I'm grinding, I'm grinding, I'm grinding, I'm grinding away. Boom. Two-hours I got them out of here.

Now, it's just he and I. So now he wants to talk. He said, "Derrick." He talked real slow because he's relaxed. He's a ninety-year-old man almost. He said, "Derrick," he said, "I want you to be comfortable and I want you do to what you got to do." He said, "Just regulate your company, monitor your company, and every dollar is not a good dollar." And he went back to sleep and he left it at that. Okay, this was on a Monday. This was October 29, 2008. Okay, so. I came back to work on Tuesday. Same thing. I mean because I've always had a lot of people and I knew this was going to be different for him and I know he's old and I know he's already set in his ways.

Now, I didn't know him like my father did. So, the first thing I did the second day I came back was I called my dad. He didn't know I was up here with him, right. So, I said, "Dad, look, I need you to come up here cause I'm working at Mr. Holt's shop." I knew my dad knew him. My dad did, he came and so he kind of bridged the gap a little bit. When they got to talking, I'm listening to the stories that they're telling. He's reminiscing with my dad about my dad's mom working downstairs with his wife and they're going in and I'm sitting down at the end of the row listening. And I made sure I had no clientele cause I want to hear this. This is oatmeal right here. This is going to sustain me, right. So, they got to talking and everything. So, I became more and more comfortable.

11:32 Sterling Holt, Sr. Family Information

DG: Around this time, I met his son, Sterlin Holt, Jr. Their name was Sterlin Michael Holt and Sterlin Michael Holt, Jr. So, Sterlin Junior is an only child. He [Sterlin Holt, Sr.] only has one child. And like I said, his wife was Josie Holt and she worked with my grandmother downstairs for

years. I think they owned the...from what I understand, they had the daycare downstairs for almost 40 years. Right.

12:07 Origins of the DeLuxe Barber Shop, Hayti Community, & Urban Renewal

DG: And so, he established the barbershop in 1946. You are not familiar with Durham but if you keep straight up the sidewalk, up the street, Fayetteville Street, there is a snow cone place right across from the highway. Okay, so, now I'm going into what he has told me over the years.

There was no highway there. This is what they call urban renewal back in the...I'm not sure of the year...but I want to say either in the mid-60's to the early 70's or whatever. But there was no Highway 147 right there leading into Highway 40. But the barbershop was originally up here. It was called Hayti. Okay, the Hayti area was...of course all I'm telling you is before my time. I was born in 1970 but before they had what they called Black Wall Street. I'm sure you've heard of Black Wall Street.

So, all of this highway area was not there. So, when they came through and did urban renewal, they brought the highway through. So, he bought lots right here and built this building and he built it by hand, himself. He hired a carpenter and the carpenter, from what I remember, I think he said the carpenter was his cousin. So, he kind of got a deal on the help and the wood and all this kind of stuff.

But there were two houses, right here, and so he bought the two houses, tore them down, and to give you a vision of how much of a visionary he was in the 40s, he said one day they are going to come through...at the time he said Fayetteville Street was a dirt road. This was all a dirt road. Right, from here to...actually, Durham was split into two counties where...from here...from let's say from downtown Durham to Hillside High School was Durham. Well, no, actually, not even to Hillside. I would say probably 100 yards from North Carolina Central...that was the end of the Durham County line and from there it was called Pearson town, and from there to like maybe Southpoint was like a whole other end of Durham that was not even a part of Durham.

Now, these are the stories from Sterlin Holt. Okay, so, he was such a visionary that he built the building so far...that is why we are so far off the street right now. He said one day they'll come through and double these streets up and you're going to have two lanes even though it was a dirt road. They were horse and carriage almost, fresh off of that thing. And so, he had the vision to tear down these two houses. He built this building. I guess urban renewal probably paid him or something to be able to relocate or whatever. I'm not sure. I wasn't here. From his words now. So, he built the building far enough back from the street so if they ever have to widen the street, we would still have enough room to be in this building.

15:45 Sterling Holt, Sr. Background, Holt Genealogy, & the Barbering Profession

DG: Okay, and so, he started...I'm going to go back to his beginnings in barbering. Okay. He was born August 23, 1919. He attended...he was born in Mebane, North Carolina, which is where I reside today, ironically. He comes from the lineage of barbering because his father was a barber. Now his father's name was Thomas Holt, and he was the only Black barber in Orange County at the time in the 1800s and he only serviced, in the barbering profession we call them straight-haired people...white folk. He was the only Black barber who serviced white people. But he was so revered that he was allowed to cut the Governor of North Carolina at the time in the 1800s, he had all the senators, he had all the county commissioners...this is Thomas Holt, right.

Okay. Right now, if you go to Mebane, there is a street called Holt Street. Holt, Jr...Sterlin Holt, Jr. lives in the house that his grandfather built, right now, on the street named for them. And guess what? He owns every house on the street. That's because his grandfather, Thomas Holt, bought every lot on the street to raise his son, Sterlin Holt, Sr...he had a daughter, Sterlin Holt, Sr. has a sister who still living today in Charlotte. She just turned 98. I don't know her name but Sterlin Holt...and it was just those two...so she and her nephew, which is Sterlin Holt Jr., are the only two surviving Holts, right now.

Okay, so, he was born in Mebane. He attended North Carolina College at the time and the dean of the school was James E. Shephard. That was the dean of the school at the time. So, from there he attended...I'm not sure what he majored in...I think he was a business administration major and then he attended Harris Barber College which is in Raleigh. Okay, he practiced under Mr. Harris himself for whom the school is named, and he became Mr. Harris' first barber school instructor. And from there, he became an instructor at...I believe it was called the Durham Barber College...I want to say DeShazor's. You've heard of DeShazor's? Okay, he was the first instructor at both of those...Durham Barber College was like in the 60s - 70s I imagine. And he was still running this barbershop. But at the time he hadn't moved yet...well, actually he had moved here already, and so he became an instructor.

He attended North Carolina College, he was a member of PHA, Prince Hall Masons, and he worked through the 70s and the 80s and these are all the stories that I'm telling you that I heard from him. And so, even then...my father, his first haircut was by Sterlin Holt. That's when the lineage started coming up and by that time my grandmother was already working downstairs because she would bring my father with her to work, he would come up here, get his hair cut, then he would go back downstairs with the children. So that's when all of that became...and then when my father grew up, he cut his hair all his life. When he found out that I was my father's son, that's when he opened his arms to me and then everything came full circle. When I came from Maryland, I went to Harris Barber College and I finished my stuff, even though I already had a barber's license, but I had to get a North Carolina license and so...and then when I came here, he was like, "You're Ricky's son?" He said, "Don't you spend your money. Come here...don't buy no...come here." So, boom.

20:51 Anecdotes about & Lessons Learned from Sterling Holt, Sr.

DG: So, and he was feisty. He wasn't no punk. Oh no, oh no. Everybody...when I came here...like I said, the shop would be closed all day. But when I came...and there is a barbershop right next door. So, the very first day that I came here, they were so used to the shop being closed all day, they were eating really good. So, the very first day I came, I told you...thirty minutes I had forty people in here. So, every barber next door came over to see what was going on and the owner of the shop next door he said, "Well man, who are you?"

I said, "Well, I'm Derrick Green."

He said, "I own the shop next door. I want my barbers to see how motivated you can be because you haven't been here an hour and you have this whole shop full." He said, "Man, how did you this right here?"

I said, "Good work, public service, communication. It ain't always about the money. You got to give people a good haircut and they'll come see you every time. So, when I left where I was at, they followed me to where I was going." That's what I told him, and I said, "I got to go back to work. I'll talk to you later. I got to go. I got too many people in here." And he was walking and talking to them out the door.

Anyway, so Mr. Holt told me, he said, "Look all money is not good money. Monitor your crowd. Watch everybody and don't trust everybody." He said, "But always be a public servant. If somebody need a haircut and they don't have no money, give them a haircut because they will never forget it. Even if they never bring you any money and you never see them again, you give them a haircut to take with them and that may have left them to do something else other than whatever they did when they came in here," and I've never forgotten that. To this day I do just that, especially people who I've already cut their hair, they've paid me...if you can pay me when you got it, you should be able to come see me when you don't have it because at one point or another, we'll be able to fix that.

And that's one of the lessons that he always taught me...and he had a real...I'm going to say a good habit, I'm not going to say a bad habit, but he always had a habit of talking, because he had so much in his mind, he would talk to me even though at the time I came here I was 38 years old. He would talk to me like I was his age. "You remember when FDR was the president? Man, that was the best president we ever had." I'm like, "Mr. Holt, wait a minute, whoa, no. FDR? Wait a minute. I remember Jimmy Carter and Ronald Regan, but I don't remember no FDR."

But see that was just...he was such a scholar in his thinking and he always, always, always stayed focused on his surroundings, what he was thinking about, and he always took his time before he talked. He would never say anything unless he thought about it first. He would say, "Derrick," and then it would take him eight seconds to say the very next thing out of his mouth. So, he would always take his time. He wouldn't say anything until he thought about it first. He would call my name and I would sit there and I'm like...and then he would say what he wanted to say and I'm like you could have just said that. "Derrick," and then he would say, "turn the

heat down a little bit.” And so that is one of the things that taught me patience. I think that was a...I’m not going to say an ulterior motive, but I think that was his way of teaching me to...because I’m young. I’m vibrant, I’m trying to get every dollar, that was his way of showing me how to slow down just a little bit because you will miss something if you are moving too fast. If you slow down a little bit, you’ll catch everything.

And so, I started paying attention and then...he would call me anytime he would not feel like coming to the shop or anything he would call me and let me know, “Derrick, I’m not going to make it up there this evening. Can you leave the heat on for me for tomorrow?” knowing he ain’t coming early in the morning. I’m going to be here, and I don’t need the heat on, but he always kept the mindset that he had an eight-hour schedule every day even though he wasn’t working but two hours and then he wasn’t even working that.

You know but it was just...I would sit there at the end of the row and I would just watch him...when I’m not working or nothing, I would just watch him...he had maybe about five clients and he would actually be cutting hair but he’s not even cutting hair. The clippers would be in the air and he swear out he’s moving...he’s cutting some hair off these people’s head and out of respect for him the people would come back the next day, “Derrick, can you cut my hair.” And I never told him that...but that was the respect that he had from the public. And they knew he was getting older. But I’m going to tell you, his body declined...from the six years that I worked with him before he decided to retire, his body declined but his mind never lost a beat. Do you understand me? That was the sharpest, non-mobile man I’ve ever seen in my life. It would take him forty-five minutes to get to the bathroom and back [shuffle feet mimicking walking in short steps]. He would walk in three-centimeter steps all the way to the bathroom and then by the time he go in there and come back out...and the funny thing is, I appreciated that, because I admired that really. Boy, I sure hope I get to be like that right there. I don’t want to be no young man and can’t do that. I want to be an old man just like...he was being old. That’s what you want to be. Old. And he was getting to the bathroom...doing what his mind him was telling him to do but his body just wasn’t letting him do it, and to him he was probably thinking, “I’m wide open. Let me slow down.” But he wasn’t moving going nowhere.

27:44 Barbershop Interior

DG: He couldn’t reach the...that’s why I kept everything in this barbershop that was original. Except for the chairs over there, the waiting chairs. These barber chairs are from the 40s [1940s]. These are the original chairs [pats the chairs]. I never got rid of them and I never will if I can help it. Never got rid of them. The only thing I did here was paint the walls and I hung all my stuff up. But that’s why I keep my wall of history too though, because he always had a wall of history. But it was his history, and if I had enough time, I would have had some of that for you. But this is all my history and that’s why I put him right there [pointed to Mr. Holt’s obituary framed on the wall] so he can watch over me right here. You understand now?

28:26 Anecdotes about Sterling Holt, Sr.

DG: So, his mind never declined but his body declined, and I would still...and he would sit in his chair and he would just...anytime we would sit here by ourselves and just sit here. A lot of times we did that even after I shut the shop down or whatever and I would sit here just to see...and he would be sleep but I would sit here with him just to see if he would wake up and just start talking. And he did. He would start talking...he was like, "Derrick? You still here?" He said, "Well, you're doing good with your children." At the time, my kids were coming out of middle school and all of this. Like you've seen, my oldest daughter is an attorney now, my younger daughter she designs rides for Disneyland out in California, and now my son is a computer scientist and he seen me grow all of that sitting there in this chair, half-sleep and I'm down at the end of the row and he said, "Derrick, you're doing good with your children, and I want you to always be able to take care of your kids." He said, "Keep doing that. You're doing a great job," and then he would go on to something from the 50s [1950s] and I can't relate. I can't do nothing but sit and listen.

You know, he said, "yeah, that boy got missing over there. He shouldn't went to that diner. I don't know why he thought those people were going to trust him." I'm sitting over here thinking, "Who is this dude talking about?" He talking about Jimmy Hoffa. He talking about like he know him. He said, "Well no, I ain't going to say I know him but I know some of the stuff he did." And he just going and I'm like...and it's flabbergasting because it's like he is bringing history through the front door and now I'm sitting like I'm watching a movie. What in the world? I said I need to go get me a beer. I need to sit here and watch this right here because this is getting ready to be good. That's the kind of anticipation I had every time he started talking, you know. And he talked about it so candidly yet nonchalantly, you know, like he was there. I mean and he's just talking about it and he's spilling...I'm like man you know where Jimmy at, don't' you? That's what I wanted to ask him. You know where Jimmy is...Is he at home playing at Yankee Stadium? Where is this dude? Because that's the way he talked about it, so decisively, you know what I mean. He talked I know what I'm saying if you don't listen, you're going to miss it. That's why I was so intent on whatever...anytime he said anything I hung onto every word because I know he ain't lying. That man is too old to be lying now. At this time, he's 92 years old.

And so...to move fast forward...and he was driving, this whole time, right. He was driving, yeah, he was driving his car. Like I said, he would park his car right in front of the building, right here at the window right where this gate is...he would pull the bumper up to the gate. Yeah, he would pull the bumper up and that's when it got scary because I'm thinking he's coming into the building. And so, when he turned 95, the DMV would not renew his license. That's when he decided to retire at 95 years old. No, I'm sorry, at 93. I don't want to tell an untruth. He was 93. At the time I had been here 5 years, that's where I got it twisted but he was 93 and it was raining, and snow and he didn't...six o'clock I know he's coming, and he did. And then at 93 he tried to go get his license renewed and myself and his son had to call the DMV and tell them no, don't give this man no more licenses, please don't, please. We basically had to...and then, not only that, his son had to hide his keys because he was still trying to drive. But that was his routine for 80 years.

32:37 Sterling Holt Sr.'s Retirement & Transition of Barbershop Ownership

DG: And so, once they stopped him from driving, he called me because we had a landline at the time. He called me and he said, "Derrick."

And I said, "yes sir, Mr. Holt. How can I help you? What's going on. It's 8 o'clock in the morning."

He said, "Is there any way you can come by my house? I need to see you. It's important."

I said, "I'm on my way," because I'm thinking something is wrong because he would do that from time to time when he couldn't get up or go to the bathroom. I would run to his house right now. I'm coming. Boom.

So, he called me, and he said, "Derrick, I need to see you. It's important."

I said, "Okay, I'm on the way right now," and he lived not far from NCCU down here and so I went. I had a client in here and I said, "Dog, I will be right back. It's an emergency." I left out and I left him. I trusted him so I left him in here and I went to his house.

I got to his house and he said, "Derrick," and there wasn't anything wrong. He just wanted me to come down to tell me, "Derrick, I think this is the day." He said, "It's over. I'm not coming back."

I said, "What do you mean?"

He said, "I'm not going to be able to come back. This is the end of the road. I'm going to need you to keep going."

I said, "Well, I'm going to absolutely do that."

He said, "Well, I'm going to have somebody call you."

Long story short, he had his lawyer call me. That's when he said, "Well, you're going to take over this barber shop." I said I would be more than happy to be there and like I told you I want to be 90 years old like him. I want to touch him every time...I would never let him leave and not touch his hand. I want some of that to rub off on me. So, he said, "they're not going to let me drive and I'm going to need you to stay in there and take care of your family and I don't want you to have to worry about nothing." He said, "Don't you worry about a thing." And his wife was there, Mrs. Josie, and she said, "Derrick, you've done good and you've always taken care of my husband and I'm going to make sure he takes care of you." I said, "Yes ma'am."

So, I came back to work and sure enough his lawyer called me. We did the paperwork and all of that stuff and so now I'm here and I'm going to carry his legacy on because I'm going to tell you something. This is one of, if not the oldest, barbershops in North Carolina. One of, if not the oldest. Right, so, that day I felt a sense of commitment, loyalty, you know what I mean? Because I can't let this man down...this was this man's whole life. This man...he never had another job. That's the only thing he ever done was cut hair because that's the only thing his father ever done. He came from that lineage and he had one sister and they both graduated high school early. So, he wasn't inept upstairs. He could have done anything. He chose barbering and then for me to come and then our paths to cross like they did, who better to keep it going than myself. His son never got into the profession. My son doesn't want anything to do with cutting no hair, and it is ironic because both of my girls got professions and they want to cut hair. They want to cut hair. My daughter is an attorney, and she wants to cut some hair. My daughter designing rides for Disney and she wants to cut some hair. My son is like I ain't messing with that. He doesn't want to do nothing except computers. Mr. Holt, he taught me so much just be being who he is...because I can imagine that over the years that he's been a barber, he's had plenty of people he could mentor over the years way before he knew who I was. But I don't think it fell on their ears the way it fell on my ears. I can dig that kind of stuff.

37:07 Stories & Perspectives Told by Sterling Holt, Sr.

DG: This man got some stories that no book will ever give you. Because he's giving it to you with no remix on it. He's telling you what he knows for a fact. This man told me Jimmy Hoffa shouldn't have went to that restaurant. And he doesn't even know...that man would tell...He told me how good of a president FDR was and a lot of people don't even know FDR served sixteen years in the White House.¹ Right after that, there was no more terms over two terms. You could not serve no more than two because FDR was so hard to come behind that they limited everybody. This is the story that this man told me. He told me about Hoover, he told me about all of these dudes like they grew up together. And let me tell you when...I'm going to use his words...Obama...when Obama got in the chair, he said, "yeah that boy Obama...he's going to...I bet he ain't going to be no FDR." That's all he would say. He said that the whole first four years Obama was in the chair, right. Cause he lived through those first four. He said, "Obama, he got a job ahead of him. More power to him." He said, "they gonna tear his ass up," and he didn't really curse but he said it that time. "Obama, they gonna tear his ass up."

LRW: And that's how he pronounced Obama?

DG: He said Obama. Yeah. That's what he said. Obama. And look, I would laugh just like we're doing now, right, because I understood...but he was close. He got the O right. He had the O. He said "Obama" ...he said, "they gonna tear his ass up."

I said, "Well he might have a shot."

¹ Franklin Delano Roosevelt served as President of the United States from 1933-1945.

He said, "Well yeah, he might have a shot, but they gonna tear his ass up." And he said it and he said, "Man, I was just so glad to see somebody of color in the White House." He said, "But he still ain't no FDR." I don't know what it is about FDR. He said he was the greatest president he ever seen.

How am I going to argue with that? I wasn't around. When I was born, Jimmy Carter was the president, when I was born, and then I saw Regan and Bush then Clinton then Bush and then Obama. Those are the only presidents I know and then this other one, 45. It's just the stories that he told they were so...like I said, candid, but they were so nonchalant to where he was like saying his ABC's. He was saying it because he knew what he was talking about. There was no way I could dispute what he was saying because I wasn't there.

40:18 Lessons Learned from Sterling Holt, Sr.

DG: And he talked about...I mean there was just so much stuff he shared, and I don't know if it was to mentor me or to uplift me, to keep me from...but he could tell I wasn't just no ordinary street dude or nothing like that. I got a college education. I got two college degrees. I got barber licenses in multiple states. So, he knew who he was talking to and I ain't no dummy...cause, I don't even like to talk to people who I don't feel like is going to get it and that's part of what he told me. Don't waste your breath on deaf ears because if they are not going to use it you could have used that breath on somebody else. And I took that, and I learned it and I'm the type that I would at least give someone the benefit of the doubt because I tell somebody in a minute you can chew the meat and spit the bones out. If I'm saying something to you that is going over your head, let it go over your head. Just grab what fits you and let the rest go cause then somebody else will catch it in the wind, especially if there are other people around. Somebody in here will catch what I'm saying even if you don't. That's how I took what he taught me about speaking out of turn or whatever. Say it anyway. Somebody will get it. And I got it from what he was saying to me.

41:39 Recollections of Spending Time with Sterling Holt, Sr.

DG: And so, from that point on when he told me to make sure I took care of my family he was never going to come to work no more, that was it. I went to his house every day. I went and took him lunch every day. I would go to Chicken Hut down here. I would go get him a plate. I knew what he would like to eat. I would go get him a plate. I would buy him a beer. I would get him a 24-ounce beer, something to keep him...you know what I mean?

42:07 Marriage & Death of Mr. & Mrs. Sterling Holt, Sr.

DG: And then his wife had passed away before he did. Mrs. Josie. She passed away a year before he did, so I knew he was lonely. So, I would go sit...I would never...I would call my wife, because I do not do anything without calling my wife. I called my wife, "Baby, I'm closing the shop. I'm going to go down and sit with Mr. Holt." This was every day.

He lived a year after she did, you know how that goes. They had been married 78 years. They got married when they were 24. They got married at 24 years old and they were married for 78 years. They were married for 78 years. She died in May of 2015. He died October 2016. He died October 19, 2016. Yep, that was the day he passed. His son called me and said that he was gone. And he died naturally. He died with every tooth he was born with. He died with all of his senses. He was just old. He wasn't sick. He wasn't hurting. He went to sleep and woke up dead. Who in the hell don't want to die like that? I know Derrick Green do. You hear me, Miss Lisa? Who don't want to die like that?

LRW: [Laughing] I'm sorry. I just never heard of that phrase before...woke up dead.

DG: Oh, well, that's me. I'm sorry.

LRW: Oh no. That's fine. Hey...I appreciate it.

DG: Who don't want to die like that? You go to sleep and wake up wondering why can't nobody see you? Cause you gone. Felt nothing. Could still chew your food. You got all of your senses. I can't think of a better way to go. You got some people die up a tree, off bridges, bullet wounds, gun shots, all this. This man went to sleep and woke up dead. At 97.

LRW: He was 97.

DG: He was 97 years old. It doesn't get no better than that.

LRW: Wow.

DG: It doesn't get no better than that.

LRW: He almost lived a whole century.

DG: He almost lived...his father lived to be 98. His mother lived to be 96. His son is 78 right now. And now his father, Thomas Holt, lived to be 102. His mother lived to be 103. That's their lineage. That's why I touched him every day to see if I could get some of that stuff to rub off on me. You understand, Miss Lisa? Yeah.

LRW: That's some longevity genes right there.

DG: Yeah. Yeah.

45:21 Recollections of Sterling Holt, Sr. & a Barber's Relationship with Clientele

LRW: I was wondering if I may ask a question.

DG: Sure, absolutely.

LRW: I know you described Mr. Holt as being feisty. I was wondering what else comes to mind when you think about how you would describe who he was as a person?

DG: Who he was as a person?

LRW: I know you've been talking about it, but I was wondering if you could also distill that?

DG: No nonsense. That means if it doesn't fit his circle, he doesn't want it there. And it's ironic because I've been like that my whole life, even before I came in his presence, but he confirmed that for me as well. Don't let people in your circle that don't fit because you will know in your spirit. If your spirit is clean you will know who fits your circle and he just didn't...and see when I say feisty, that's coming from people on the outside. They called him mean, but he wasn't mean. He was feisty. That means if you thinking he's mean that means probably you don't need to be in his circle then and he made sure you knew that. "Uh huh young man. I ain't cutting your hair. Go next door or go across..." He would do that, and I do that to this day because...that's what he meant by every dollar is not a good dollar because if your spirit ain't right, I don't want you to be in my chair and then I go home and now I'm making my wife mad for no reason at all and she ain't even seen me all day. But all of a sudden, now she's made and we're arguing that's because of some spirit I done had in my chair. He taught me that. That's what I mean by him being feisty because he just didn't take no mess. If it didn't fit, you can't acquit. Just don't allow it. Right? Okay, so that's what I meant by that and it was just coming from other people.

"Man, I remember Mr. Holt. Oh man he was mean when I was little, man."

These people 60 [years old]. But for them to remember that when they were a kid that this dude didn't play...he hit them. He hit them hard, right there, in the chest.

"That dude was mean, man. When I was...I remember I used to walk by the DeLuxe Barbershop man when I was ten."

"How old are you man?"

"59 [years old]."

"Man, you..."

"Well, it worked didn't it?"

"Every time I went in there, I sat down and shut up because I didn't want to have to hear his mouth."

That's what he's supposed to do. That's a community servant for you. Because a lot of times we get people drop children off, drop kids off, and they'll leave and don't know how bad their kids are but when they come back yes ma'am, no sir because we ain't just cut your hair. I had a kid fight me in here one day, and the daddy was sitting right there in front of me and thought it was funny. I bent him back, pulled his pants down, and I tapped him three or four times on his bare cheeks. That little boy is 17 now. Love me to death. Won't open his mouth and he bring all of his friends with him because I showed him then...he was five at the time...sometime...it's child abuse now. We can't do that no more. You will go to jail. But that was years ago.

But see that's the kind of stuff that we do in our profession. But he did it from the 40s [1940s] and the 30s [1930s] and all the way up. Like I say, ain't no telling who he has impacted. I got a lot of people who reminisce about the daycare downstairs that was there with my grandmother and his wife. It was a lot of my classmates and stuff who went to school down there and they remember coming up...like I say, they would go down there and come up here and get their hair cut and go back until their parents picked them up and they all say, "Boy, Mr. Holt didn't play no games. You come up here and he would feed you, he would give you a lunch or something, cut your hair, tapped you on the ass, and send you on back downstairs until your mama come." A lot of people...a lot of kids probably needed that. Lot of kids don't have father figures. You know I get so many women that bring their kids to the barbershop now. Where the daddy's at? And I'm probably sure he seen...oh, I know he has...thousands more than I have. Well, the fathers weren't around and the women they had to bring these little boys to the barbershop. That's a father's job. Not being bias or nothing like that. When was the last time you seen a dad take a little girl to the salon? That's rare ain't it? Right. Same thing. It's a doppelganger. It's a double jeopardy, a double standard. You know. But that's, you know, that's who he was.

LRW: So, I know you mentioned a few times that he was a community servant. He seems like he definitely looked after people. He helped form and shape young people.

DG: Right.

LRW: If you were to go throughout Durham today, of people who call themselves Durhamites, native Durhamites, what are some other ways in how they might reminisce about who he was or what role he played in the community?

DG: Well, the thing is the population of Durham now, a lot of the people that he used to service probably are not even here, because he has been around since the 30s [1930s], 40s [1940s], 50s [1950s]. A lot of those guys are probably way gone. A lot of these kids...because I'm only 50 years old now and I was born in 1970. So, by 1970...when I came here in 2008, he was already 88 years old then I had people to come in here in 1980 and he was 70 in 1980. So, a lot of those people are already, you know, wiped off [died].

LRW: Understood.

DG: So, the thing is he impacted a lot of people to where a lot of clients...even some of the clients I have are probably either the great-grandchildren or grandchildren of somebody that used to come to him. Because I may have a 60-year-old man now that come here and say his granddaddy used to bring him to Mr. Holt. He's a third generation Mr. Holt client and now he's bringing his grandchildren to me. You see the cycle? It's like a snowball effect and its generational. You know we been through five generations since 1980 and he was already 70 years old at the time. So, that's what it is...like that right there, you know...when you talk about who he impacted and all, because his impact is generational. It's not just that one person...and that's what I want my legacy to be too because I have clients that I've been cutting...like I say that same little boy that I spanked on his butt, he's 17 now, and see he'll have children in a little bit and then he'll be bringing them...and I do have clients who do that. I used to cut when they were kids and now, they got five or six little boys now because I've been cutting hair for 12 years, but I've been back in North Carolina for 17 years now, but I've been cutting since 1989 so it comes back around and it's generational. For one, it tells you how old you are because you've been doing it for so long. I'm 32 years in now and then it tells you the longevity and then it tells you the loyalty from your clientele because I got clients that will not go anywhere until they come see me. And that's 17- or 18-year clients.

And, like I say, they got children and so I'm sure he's had thousands of them over the years because...this is the one job I tell people that we get fired more than anybody on earth because you can cut a head of hair and you will never see that client again. He might just walk through the door, get a haircut, then boom, he's moved to the moon. You'll never see him again. I just got fired. Right? But then you got some people who will make you a part of their bills every month...water bill, light bill, haircut, milk, eggs, bread. You see? But it's all customer service, it's all communication, and it's all about making...

54:00 Role of the Barbershop within the Community

DG: I try to make this barbershop, as old as it is, I try to make it feel like a living room. Comfortable. Come and kick your feet up. I got clients who come in and go to sleep. They don't want no haircut. They just want to be in the barbershop. It's our country club. This is the Black man's country club. The barbershop. You can come in, sit down...I got some who do construction. They don't even feel like driving all the way in. They're so tired. They stop by the store, grab them a beer, "D...I need to sit down, man. I need to drink this beer right quick. Can I sit down?" Sit in the back. Keep your bag on it. Go on and kill it and go on and kick your feet up man.

It's the country club. This is our country club. The barbershop...there is nothing on this Earth like a Black man's barbershop. I don't know about the other people. I'm sure every barbershop is the same principle whatever or whatnot. But when you got a barbershop when you can come in...you can get you a dentist, you can get you a psychiatrist, you can get you a haircut, and you can get you something to eat...somebody might be coming through here with a pack of batteries that you might need. Everything is in the barbershop. This is a flea market, country

club, hospital, because I might have a nurse in here, I might have a sheriff in here, I might have regular police, you never know what you run into in a barbershop. This is our country club.

This is our country club and Mr. Holt ran the country club like a champ. You're going to do this like here. We're not going to have any profanity. If there are women and children, you're going to hold your mouth right. You're going to conduct yourself...now when they leave, we'll act an ass. But women and children, you're going to respect them until they're gone. That's the barbershop and we can talk about anything in here. We don't bring Jesus in here. We don't do religion...because we like to keep everything...everybody doesn't believe in Jesus. Everybody doesn't believe in Allah. So, we'll keep it amicable...we'll keep it mutual and we just won't talk about nobody. We're going to talk about the game and we going to talk about her, whoever your her is, cause they're going to do that. Dang that girl, man that girl, she done took all my...done burned all my...that's the barbershop. And then we'll talk about...but we have to be careful because her is over there talking about us. I got a salon right next door and they're doing the same thing. Her talking about us. But that's how it goes. That's matrimony. That's life at its purest form.

Everybody...you can get your service, you can get your pampering, you can get your mind straight, you can get your rocks off in terms of getting everything off your heart...and everything, and everybody go home and be happy. I have people...some of my clients for instance...I'm going to give you two scenarios. I had a client come in, get his hair cut, boom, I tightened him up. He called me an hour later. He said, "Man you done made my girl leave me." I said, "What did I do?" He said, "Man, the cut was so tight. We went to Wal-Mart and all these women kept looking at me. She left me. I had to catch the bus home." I said, "Man, you blame that..." He said, "Man," ...and look, he ain't never come back. I got fired because she really left him about that. At the same time...this the dichotomy...dude said, "Man, my wife came...I had my daughter for the weekend. We divorced last week; I mean last year. We got divorced but I had my daughter, I had custody of her last weekend. Boy you done cut my hair man. I just married her again this morning. We got remarried behind that haircut." You see what I'm saying? That's the kind of stuff that goes on, Miss Withers. That's the barbershop.

58:15 History of DeLuxe Barbershop & Famous Patrons

DG: This is our country club, and I'm just thankful and I'm proud that Mr. Holt gave me a chance to keep his legacy going, because I try to make sure that everybody knows, "Do ya'll know the history of this shop?" I try to make people understand. I got a sign. You can get a picture of this sign right there too. That one up there. You see it up there above the door? I keep it going. And the only thing that he ever asked me to do was not change the name. When he called me and told me his lawyer wanted to meet me and I signed the papers to take over this...he said the only thing I ask is that you don't change the name. I said, "Mr. Holt, I would have never done that anyway. I would have never changed the name of the...I know the history of this shop. I would have never done that. Never, never, never, never, never. If I open another one, I'm going to name it the same thing: DeLuxe Barbershop 2."

LRW: Did he ever share why he named it that?

DG: At the time he did say everything was...see, going back to Black Wall Street and all those days and the Black Renaissance era and everything, there were a lot of celebrities that used to come through Durham, Martin Luther King, Jr., James Brown, so forth and so on, etc. So, he figured if I can give them a deluxe service I should be called DeLuxe Barbershop because that's what James Brown used to get...he...James Brown sat in this chair [pats the barber chair] right here, Lisa. This chair right here.

LRW: The James Brown?

DG: Yeah. Martin Luther King sat in this chair right here. You ever heard of John Hope Franklin? Sat in this chair right here [pats barber chair]. Why do you think as soon as he gave me...I came right here [the first chair in the barbershop]. That's why I've never gotten rid of any of these chairs. Who knows who sat in the other ones? I'm telling you...these are the stories he told me. He and John Hope Franklin were like that [fingers crossed to indicate very close]. John Hope was from Chicago. He would come to Durham at least three or four times a year, according to Mr. Holt, and he wouldn't go anywhere else except here. James Brown...they would perform downtown because this was Black Wall Street. Everything downtown Durham, Hayti area was all-Black, the theatres, the hotels, and everything was all-Black. Martin Luther King would march...Muhammad Ali sat in this chair right here. Take a picture of the chair. I'm telling you. This is all according to him now. I wasn't here. I'm telling you what the man told me, and I believe him. Who is going to claim to be that that is not that? He said, "Derrick, there's a lot of people who have been through here son." Not to mention the spirits that I hear. Oh, oh. That's a whole other interview. Oh wee. I'm surprised we haven't heard anything yet. I done said his name a million times because my water is subject to turn on.

LRW: [Laughter] Yes, Mr. Green.

DG: I'm telling you now.

LRW: Okay, okay.

DG: You ain't got to believe me. I don't want to spook you. So, yes, that's to answer your question.

LRW: So, he had a lot of people, when they came to Durham, they saw him.

DG: From what I understood, from...like I said a lot of old people that was coming, from what I understand, which was way before my time in the 60s [1960s], early 70s [1970s], if you were Black and you had a little paper and you were doing well, you were well to-do, this was the barbershop you came to because by him...like I said, he always wore a shirt and tie. That was one of the main reasons why because it was prestigious. So, everyone who came here was either important, they held a high position somewhere, or they were an entertainer. Ironically,

if you look behind you, you see a lot of sports. I started doing the football teams at Central. Some of the women on the softball, basketball.

[Audio stopped due to interruption. Audio restarted]

1:02:23 Clarification of Mr. Holt's Business Hours in Later Years

LRW: So, there are a few questions. I think there are two that have been swirling in my mind.

DG: Go ahead.

LRW: You mentioned Mr. Holt would come at six in the evening. What did he do the rest of the day?

DG: He was being home being old.

LRW: Do you know if that was his schedule the whole time he had the shop, he only worked evening hours?

DG: Yep.

LRW: So, I'm just curious how did he fill the rest of the day if he only worked from six to nine in the evening?

DG: Well, he didn't have to work.

LRW: Oh.

DG: He had been cutting hair for seventy years already. He didn't have to work at all. He was coming just to get out of the house. Just to feel like he was still doing it. You know what I'm saying?

LRW: So, were his hours different in the decades prior?

DG: Of course, yes.

LRW: Okay, so he worked all during the day, before but by the time...

DG: How do you think he got to be 90 and didn't have to work no more?

LRW: There you go. Okay, yes.

DG: You got to grind in your 20s, your 30s, your 40s, your 50s, just like I'm still grinding. You got me here on my day off.

LRW: I'm sorry.

DG: For free, because I care about you.

LRW: Oh, thank you, sir.

DG: But no...seriously though, he had...by that point, by the time I got here, at that point he was in his 80s going on 90. He didn't need to work no more, anyway.

1:03:46 Holt Property in Mebane, NC

DG: He wasn't worried about no money. Trust me. He owned half of Mebane. So, he didn't need no money.

LRW: He inherited all that land from his dad?

DG: Right. He bought every house on the street. Because his dad taught him if you buy a house, try to acquire the property next door that way you can control who lives next to you. So, he did that for a whole street. So now there are nine houses on that street, and it is called Holt Street. I live three blocks from there. Now his son lives in the house that his father was raised in and he owns all the houses now because he was an only child.

LRW: Okay.

DG: He only had one child, Sterlin Holt, Jr. That's it, and he never got married, never had any kids, so who better to be here than myself?

1:04:35 Green's Family Relationship with the Holts

DG: So, his father was like a grandfather to me and he was like a godfather to me, his son is because he was like a godfather to my dad, even though his son is older than my dad. My dad is only 73 and his son is 78. But he mentored my father because my father was in the daycare down there with my grandmother and his son was a little older, so he was already in public school and that type of thing. And so, yeah...ironically, when I ran into his son, Junior, in the store and he said, "You look familiar to me." I guess because I look like my dad, I guess...and this was in Mebane. He said, "Are you from Durham?"

I said, "Yes," and I had my barber school stuff on. I said, "Yes, I'm from Durham."

He said, "Well my father got a barbershop and he's getting older. I was wondering would you mind going in there and meeting with him and maybe work with him?" And he asked me my name. He said, "What's your name?"

I said, "My name is Derrick Green."

He said, "Well, who are your parents?"

I said, "Well, my father's name is Ricky Alston."

He said, "Ricky's your daddy?" Boom. He lit up. Christmas tree. He said, "Naw, Ricky is not [your daddy]." He said, "Man, me and Ricky grew up like brothers." He said, "I know that ..." I said, "Yeah, that's my dad." It all started...he gave me a key. "Whenever you are ready. Gone in there because my daddy ain't there," and such and such and such, and I waited a whole year.

I put the key in my pocket, and I didn't even think nothing about it. It just hit me one day and I said, "Let me see what's going on," because there was a spirit thing about it, to me. So, I called to say I was going by there and he said go on by there. My dad should be there by six o'clock. Go by there. And I came, bust in the door with the key, and he was sitting here sleep. Senior, Mr. Holt was sitting here sleep. I come through the door. He looked up. I said, "Mr. Holt?"

He said, "Yeah son." He said, "How you get in here?"

I said, "I got a key."

[Mr. Holt]: "Where you get the key from?"

I said, "Your son gave it to me."

He said, "Who are you?"

I said, "Well, I'm Ricky's son."

[Mr. Holt] Lit up. Christmas tree.

The rest was history. I never left. That same day. I never left. The next day I came and brought all my stuff, and I had the shop blown up. He couldn't believe it. He said, "Lord, have mercy."

1:07:09 Sterling Holt, Sr., the Barber's Association, & Lessons Learned from Mr. Holt

LRW: Well, do you know if he was involved in anything else in the community? I know you mentioned he was a Mason.

DG: Yeah. He did a lot for...his main focus was...and this was huge too actually. It wasn't necessarily...well, I guess indirectly it was the community, but he did a lot for barbers, period. Get a picture of his plaque up there too. It's a NMBA which is the National Masters Barber Association. He started that. I'm not sure what year. And the purpose of that was because for years and even still they tried to make us pay taxes on every haircut like buying a bag of chips

or something like that. Who wants to pay \$12.99 for a haircut? You know, it's a cash and carry thing and been for six thousand years. You trade...it's a barter system. I cut your hair, you pay me, see you next time. So, the legislature...so the NMBA, which is the National Barber's Association, fought legislature and they raised the bill to keep that from happening. So, that was his main contribution. So, as a barber, and all the barbers pretty much state-wide, we don't have to worry about that. Now, it's up to each individual barber to do their part and pay their own taxes. Get you an accountant, which I have. Get you somebody to do your taxes, do your 1099 or 1040 or whatever and pay your taxes. Otherwise, we'll be paying \$15.99, \$17.99...that's that SuperClips and...what's the other one, GreatClips and all of that. See, they do that kind of stuff. Watch and see the commercials. They didn't have nobody to fight for them because they don't look like us [Black barbers], he did that for us [Black barbers], not them. You know what I mean? We are recording.

LRW: So, essentially, he lobbied the legislature.

DG: Right, and he lobbied with the legislature and all of that and he fought it and we won a bunch of times. The last I heard of that...I don't even think it's a fight anymore because they never said anything else about it. He had nominated me to get on the treasury for the NMBA, but he passed away before we could finish that process.

LRW: Is the organization still around?

DG: It's still around. I'm not sure who's the...you know what? I really don't know because everybody that he was fighting with was as old as he was. You asked me a good question that time. Them people was old just like him at the time, you know what I mean? Let me see. That was 2012 when he got a plaque for that and that's been eight years ago. He's been gone four years. Like I said, those people were in their 80s and 90s that was fighting with him. So, I'm not even sure if the fight continues.

But, until we hear something, we're still good to go. We're still good to go, you know. So, and then by me being a barber school instructor myself, the state board will reach out to me if anything like that changes and they'll contact me directly because of my license set up and my email and all that stuff like that and they'll let me know well as of now, this is what you got to do and what you have to teach to your students because I can't tell them a lie and then they go out there thinking...you know, they already think they're going to be a millionaire in the first week they graduate barber school. They already think...you know what I mean? Because when you come in in a suit and tie and all this kind of stuff, they think they going to look like that. No. You got to grind. You got to go get it.

But he did teach me the business side of how to handle your stuff. How to do your account, how to do your taxes. He would tell you pay your taxes, that way when you're older, like me, you will have something in the pot. If you don't pay your taxes you probably won't get hounded a lot but if you happen to grow old, like me, and you ain't paid no taxes you look up and you are 72 but you only have 28 dollars in the bank you are going to be in bad shape, son. That's all he

had to tell me. He didn't have to tell me that two times. Put you something in the pot now. You can go to the mall and you can make 100 dollars today then go into the mall and spend 80 of it. What are you going to do? Put that money up, son. All money ain't good money but you the money that you earn, and you get, you do the right thing with it and you will get it back because when you pay your dues, your dues will pay you back. Those were his most famous words. If you pay our dues your dues will pay you back. If you happened to get old, have something in the pot. Because if you don't, you can't go back young. You can't work in no warehouse at no 68 years old because that will probably be the only job that's hiring. You're not going to go find any job that will let you sit down at 68 or 70 years old. You're going to have to go work at Burger King or somewhere and work like a 16-year-old and you can't do it. Your body ain't going to let you do it. And he didn't have to tell me that no whole lot of times.

LRW: Wow. So, it sounds like he really instilled a lot of lessons.

DG: Yes

1:13:00 Holt's Family Relations in Durham, NC

LRW: So, he was the founder of a state organization for Black barbers, working on behalf of them. He was a Mason, a member of the Prince Hall Masons.

DG: Right.

LRW: Any other organizations you are aware of?

DG: No, that was all I heard him talk about and he didn't talk about that all that much. I just knew that the founder of the Prince Hall Chapter in Durham...what's the name of it...A.S. Hunter...A. S. Hunter Lodge in Durham was his uncle. I do remember him telling me that.

LRW: So, the name of the lodge was named A. S. Hunter.

DG: Right.

LRW: And that was the same name of his uncle?

DG: Yep. Alphonso...something. I want to say Sterlin. But I'm not sure. But I know it was A. S. Hunter was the name of it. That's not my lodge where I'm a part of, you know. A. S. Hunter, he told me that was his uncle and I know that there is an elementary school is named after one of his aunts...Burton Elementary. I think it is Burton Magnet school or something now. I actually went there in elementary school for first, second, and third grade. But that's named after one of his aunts and I'm not sure of the first name. But the school was Burton, B-U-R-T-O-N. I do know that was...I think he said that was one of his aunts. It was named for her. His whole family was literary. They were scholars and all this kind of stuff from what he told me. I had a bunch of stuff on the wall from years ago but when he passed, I took it down, and I saved it. I got it

locked away at my house and...oh, it was North Carolina Mutual life insurance company that was his family. Yeah, that was his family...trying to think of the last name. I can't remember the last name...Kennedy...Kennedy was the last name. They were some kin to him in some lineage. It was a whole tree.

1:15:17 Discussion of Barbershop Memorabilia, Interior, & Ownership Transition

DG: I had a big calendar that was about half the size of that window right there and it had the whole lineage on there.

LRW: Okay.

DG: So, I rolled it up...a lot of that stuff he had on there, I took it down. Now some of it, you can get pictures...let me show you this so it can help you out. I kept some of the stuff...like these are some of his original licenses from the old days. These are some of his original licenses and then I have some more over here, and then I have plenty of them up here. I kept a lot of his stuff. But yeah...I got plenty of licenses and all of this kind of stuff and so I kept...this is my son right there. But, yes, I kept a lot of his stuff in here. Yeah. I got a picture of what the shop used to look like when it was up there years ago.

LRW: So, he started the shop when it was further up on Fayetteville and then he eventually moved to its current location at 1220 Fayetteville Street.

DG: Right. I'm not exactly sure what the address was then because there wasn't a highway there from what he told me. So, and then the rest of the pictures are pretty much my stuff. You know...he had a license from the very day I was born because everybody's barber license is due to be paid on my birthday, May 31st, every year. That's my birthday. So, he had a license on that day, May 31, 1970. Definitely got that one at the house framed.

But I just kept a few of his things up here and then I started building my own wall. A lot of these are my people and stuff like that. Now, so...and that's what he wanted me to do. You know, keep it going and just make it my own. Like I said, the only thing he asked me to do is not change the name. He said make it yours and once I did a little bit of remodeling and hung some stuff, I went and got him and brought him up here and I asked for his approval. I said, "Mr. Holt? How do you feel about what the shop look like?" Because all the walls were the old school paneling like back in the corner back there. I left that in honor to him. See that old brown wood? I left that and all this wood up there I left that in tribute to him.

But the rest of the walls, I painted them. I started hanging newer stuff up and different things like that. Like that artwork in the back. See, all of that is my daughter's artwork back there. The one at Disney in California. That's all of her artwork when she was 12 years old and on up. Yeah, yeah. Because that was my major. I was an art major. So, I knew one of my kids was going to have that, at least. Yeah, so, anyway...yeah, he was a great dude. I'm telling you.

I don't think his son meeting me in the store way down in Mebane somewhere and all of that...I don't think it was a mistake, and we talk about that a lot...he and I. We still talk about that. How that happened like that. And that was just God. And then when I came and Mr. Holt welcomed me with all his arms, and just opened up, just guided me and just showed me what to do and what not to trust and how to trust and how to live and you know what I mean. He said, "Derrick, you're always taking care of your kids and I want to always be able to. My lawyer is going to call you and you sign them papers and you take care of your children and you don't have to worry about nothing." And that took me back to what his wife told me. She said you've been there; you've been taking care of my husband and I'm going to make sure he takes care of you. She was dead a week later. Mrs. Josie Holt...yes, that's a true story. She said I'm going to make sure he takes care of you, and before he died, he told me. You don't have to worry about nothing. Just take care of your kids. Yup, so, now I'm here.

1:19:20 Recollections of Mrs. Josie Holt & Mrs. Virginia Alston

LRW: And I thank you for your time.

DG: You are very welcome.

LRW: If it is okay, with your last reference to Mrs. Holt, that's actually the last question I had because you mentioned several times her and the day care downstairs. Is there anything you may want to share about Mrs. Holt, who she was?

DG: I didn't know her really well really.

LRW: Okay.

DG: Because by the time I came, she wasn't as mobile as she would've been. She wasn't driving anymore. Her son would get her, and she would actually get her hair done next door. But that was once every three or four months or so. So, I never really got to know her, but she knew who I was through my grandmother. She knew I was my grandmother's grandson and every time I saw her...it was repetitive. "Boy, Mrs. Virginia...," Virginia Alston was my grandmother. She lived to be 93. See, I met my father when I was 23. I didn't know my dad. I mean, you know...he was in the Army and stuff, but anyway. I met her the year she died. She was 93 when she died. So, she was like 20 years older than Mrs. Holt. She was already old because I met her in 1993 and she was already 93.

LRW: And that was Mrs. Alston?

DG: Right, that was my grandmother.

LRW: Okay.

DG: But Mrs. Holt died in 2015/14 and she died at like 95. So, they were like 25, 30 years apart already in age. But she knew who I was...so I landed in a spot created by God.

1:21:00 Keeping Mr. Holt's Memory & Legacy Alive

DG: The best thing for me to do is keep it going, keep Sterlin Holt alive because...and then I get a couple of people who come through that are older and they remember the shop. And some of them moved out of town years ago and they are happy to see the shop still thriving and then they'll come in and see his picture, and I'm quick to say, "That's my grandfather." That's the quickest way for me to... "That's my grandfather, man. I'm still here and keeping it going," and they appreciate that. They appreciate it and I appreciate them appreciating it. And they don't want a cut. They just want to see the... "Man, this shop...boy it still looks the same. Them the same chairs!" And then that's the rhetoric and you got to appreciate it and I do. It's a privilege for me to keep him going in his space, in his chair with his memories.

1:22:00 Closing Comments & Thank You

DG: And I'm going to invite you one day and I'm going let you sit here and we're going to do some EVP sessions.² You might hear something on your joint because I'm into the paranormal now. You might hear some stuff because your microphones...you might hear some stuff. Because my water will turn on, my toilets will flush. Oh, I'm telling you now. Don't let it spook you but...I want an audio too.

LRW: Okay.

DG: But you have any more questions?

LRW: No, I'm just checking the time and I didn't realize how long we've been talking.

DG: I told you before we started when I get started I ain't going to stop.

LRW: [Laughter] But this has been wonderful. I thank you Mr. Green for your time.

DG: You know are very welcome Miss Withers.

LRW: And for sharing everything about the history of the shop of Mr. Holt. I have a newfound appreciation for it, and I thank you.

DG: Okay, I hope you did get a newfound appreciation. But see that's the impact he had on me. You see how he's still impacting? See, you fascinated about the man that ain't even here no more and that you've never even met. See? That's what I want to do. Somewhere in your journeys I hope you always remember me for that same reason and even still it would be

² EVP stands for electronic voice phenomena and refers to ghost hunting and parapsychology.

through him because he's the one who brought you here. You think that was by mistake?
Exactly. That's why I'm here because it wasn't by mistake.

LRW: Yes, sir.

DG: That's a bad man. If it wasn't him it would've been me. You understand me. He's a bad mother...shut your mouth. If it wasn't him it would've been me. [Laughter] So, good luck with your project, darling.

LRW: I'm going to...is it okay if I turn off the recording?

DG: Yes

LRW: Alright...I'm just going to turn off...