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Ronald Graves interviewed by Michael Kline at the Barber Shop in Glencoe  
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This astute, articulate and athletic man in his late forties is employed at the Pleasant Grove Recreation Center. Ron Graves was born in Pleasant Grove but moved with his family to Green Level for a few years until their house caught fire and burned to the ground. They then moved back to Pleasant Grove and settled on some land belonging to his mother's father, Charles Woods, who farmed tobacco with two of his sons, Graves' uncles. He brought with him to the interview two books on his family history put together by one of his nephews. His mother's mother passed away when she was thirteen, so she had to quit school and raise her younger brothers and sisters while her dad worked in the fields. They all looked up to her, because she cooked for them and got them off to school in the morning.

The oldest four kids didn't go very far in school because they had to work on the farm. They were smart people though. Their father always said that you could get a long ways off common sense, too. Graves' father never went much further than the third grade in school, but he was a master carpenter who could figure faster in his head than most people could with a pencil and paper. He could read blueprints and worked for several contractors before starting his own business. The old family farm, about 90 acres, is located about a mile down Byrd Road and the house is still standing, occupied by Graves' youngest aunt.

The other aunts and uncles live close by; one of the uncles, James Woods, still farms tobacco on most of that land and produces vegetables for sale. Another uncle helps harvest watermelons to sell in Mebane. And there's good fishing in the pond. It was a great place to grow up because of so much open land all around. Graves used to walk for miles with his cousin through the woods. It was mostly dirt roads back then. His grandfather actually purchased the farm after leaving for several years to work in a steel mill. He then came back with savings to invest in some land and settled on what became the family farm. He made it possible for all the family to have land on which to settle and farm. Graves' grandfather, Sam Graves, on his father's side did the same thing. Many of the younger generation have homes on that land. It was originally cleared by hand with cross-cut saws and mattocks, but now part of it is grown up because people no longer tend it in the same way.

They cleared it with mules. Sam Graves thought a lot of his mules and cautioned his boys to give them a break and give them some water. All the boys worked in the field while the girls help their mother cook three miles a day. Graves himself worked in the tobacco fields through the summer with many other family members. They'd be in the fields by day light and worked till their grandfather said it was getting close to dinner time. Water melon patches and tomato vines grew close to the fields and provided moist nourishment to the hot workers. Grandfather loved water melons and would sometimes slip off to the patch to have one on his own. Graves opted to work construction jobs with his father,

Melvin, when he got a little older. His father was a good teacher and explained what needed to be done and how to do it. He would talk about old days and old ways of raising food and crops, including molasses which they ground up in a horse-powered cane mill. They opened a quart of molasses every morning for breakfast and by the time it got around to the last child it was empty. Thirteen kids and two parents could eat a lot of molasses. The farm produced everything they ate. Describes killing hogs on the coldest day of the year. Names and describes siblings.

Discipline was severe. A whipping given anywhere else would be matched by more whippings at home. Older family members taught younger ones how to carry themselves so as not to give the family a bad name. Miles Chapel Baptist was his mother's church. But most of the family was buried at Snow Hill Primitive Baptist Church. Describes old time singing. Recalls school days at Pleasant Grove after integration. Graves finished high school at Eastern in 1978 before studying architectural engineering at A&T. But after one year he came home and went to work at the Glen Raven textile mills working in the dye house for \$2.35 an hour. Later worked at a Mebane plant building electric motors for \$4.81. Later worked for UNC Chapel Hill until he sustained a back injury. After recovering, came to work for the Recreation Department. Concludes interview talking about sports and how he has encouraged his own son in basketball.