

P.O. Box 8,  
Reidville, SC 29375

If you buy you one of those GPS maps, you know, to get you to Reidville, you ain't going to get to Reidville. It don't list it, 'cause we right at the crossroads of a Moore Zip code, a Woodruff Zip code, a Greer Zip code and a Duncan Zip code. We got a Reidville Zip code at the post office, but that's the only Zip code as far as Reidville goes. So basically, if you live in a house in Reidville, if you use a legal address, which I don't, you either got a Woodruff address, or a Duncan address, or a Greer, or Moore and I refuse to use one of them. A Zip code would really help the town, as far as being recognized a whole lot more. I mean, if you even go to the phone book, the listing on the front covers of the phone book lists all the areas, but it don't list Reidville because they don't know it exists, 'cause it don't have no Zip code.

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We have a blinking light and a P.O. Box and that's about all we have. There's not even a stop light in Reidville. I mean, it's still just a blinking light, so it's still rural. I still consider it to be pretty rural.



I ain't got too much of a story, but I don't know if there's anyone here that loves Reidville more than I do. I seen a lot of changes and I know the older folk have seen more changes, but I seen a lot of changes within the last ten to fifteen years, lot of changes. That's one reason we reincorporated, to try to remain Reidville, you know. That's a tough job to do, 'cause you got the growth going on and how do you maintain the small town, but yet you got the growth going on, a lot of places face that. But overall, the landscape don't get changed, you know. This area to me is beautiful, it's a nice place to live, to raise a family.

Population was 440, up until they built the new homes over here, which they probably about 30 new homes, and you figure a minimum of two to a home, that'd be 60, so it'd be around 560 now. And when we incorporated, it was 248 in 1997. But one of the main objections is to keep the tax base low and that's going to be a battle. And you say, "Why's that going to be a battle?" 'Cause you have more and more people moving in from different areas of the country and you get more diverse, you know, we know they eventually gonna want services.

That's what people seem to want to do. They want government to do everything for them. They want to put their trash out in the front, you know, on the side, and have somebody pick it up and that's a pretty big expense if the town pays for that.

So far, there's no one that's run against me; so far I received every vote cast. I had nobody wrote in Mickey Mouse or Donald Duck, so I feel pretty good about that. It's mostly community service is what it is. And even after mayor it was still volunteer work. My salary is \$599 a year.

Overall, you know, I'm a person that don't like a lot of change in my life. Worked in the same place 25 years, so I've only had two jobs since high school. Lived in the same place all my life, the house I live in, you know, is right across the street from where I grew up. I been married 32 years, if I live that long, I'd like to be married another 32 years to the same person. It's been a good life.

Introduction

Throughout its long history, Reidville, South Carolina has been a town of cotton and peaches and raising children.

It was a place where everybody knew everybody and no one knew they were poor because “we all smelled the same.”

In many ways – some good, some bad, some inconvenient – Reidville has defied the urbanization that has swallowed other small towns. Reidville doesn’t have a post office or a stoplight or, until recently, a paid fire department. Churches are still segregated by race.

But change, as they say, is a-comin’.

And in Reidville, change looks like subdivisions, built on clear-cut farmland and fenced by stacks of lush green sod waiting to be laid.

Change looks like the BMW plant where Reidville’s residents are learning to make a new kind of living.

Change looks like dwindling attendance at the town’s main festival, zoning laws and new taxes.

And as the inevitable change occurs, Reidville’s own are struggling to hang on to what history they can, for better or for worse.

This is the story of Reidville told by its people, with photos and a little editing help by photographer Paige Green.

– Lindsay Riddell



Leo would fly over with the crop duster and people would run out to see him crop dust. And then you would get covered with all that. If Leo happened to see you out in the field, as he would be flying over, he would skim across the top of that cotton.

Just the smell of that was disgusting, but how we wish we had that smell again. The time of year when they'd defoliate the cotton and that stuff they'd spray the cotton with to make the leaves fall off, that was the stinkin-est stuff and it'd linger in the air for days once they sprayed it.

What amazed me on cotton fields, you could tell the ones that used people and the ones that used machines. It was clean as it could be but when they started using machines, it left a lot. Where the people picked it there was nothing left.

You had to you 'cause you would get fired.

Pillowslip, with a strap on it. Had to weigh that thing with a scale and a pole. 100 lbs of cotton is a lot of cotton.

I remember 10 cent a bushel for peaches.  
I think I made 35 cent an hour.  
The most I ever made working for Cox was \$1.10.  
I tried to get out of the peach shed if I could.  
I tried to get in there.  
I would have worked in there if it weren't for the peaches.  
That is where all the pretty girls were.  
I think it is good for everybody to work in something like that; it makes them appreciate a good job.  
If you are working for Jimmy Cox it would.

We had a well with some of the best drinking water you ever tasted. You pull it up, pour it into a tin tub, and let the sun heat it, solar heating man, late evening it was time to take a bath. Everybody got to use the same water.

Honey, the only running water we had was the South Tyger River. Momma would take a cake of soap and a washcloth. I didn't want to do that, I wanted to swing off the trees with the rope and she wanted to give us a bath.

All those kids that were downtown, the Duncan, the Lyman, the Wellford kids; they didn't have to do that. They had the running water. You could tell the difference when you went to school, what part you were from.  
You knew.  
All of us knew who we were.



We were all happy. We didn't know any better.

That's a song, right?

High cotton. We didn't know we were poor, when everybody smelled the same.

I think it was good, the life that we had as youngsters growing up. I think it was a good learning experience, it makes you humble.

It was amazing what people did back then, we go and buy everything now.

Everybody always longs for the past.

I wonder why we do that.

My kids will be longing one of these days, for the days when they had a car that ran on gasoline but I don't know what they'll be running on.

Ben Brockman, he's still living up there. I don't know if he had, what'd they call that, polio or whatever, but we used to go and fish in his pond up there. And we'd give him a dollar or two, just to go fishing down in the pond. He still remembers. I go by every now and then and stop and holler at him, 'cause he's riding that little golf cart out there. Yeah, it was good to have people in that community back then that, you know, wasn't too hard on you.

Reidville is really moving up.

It's a shame that you didn't get to see Reidville like it was, 'cause there's not a tree or a square foot of grass that I hadn't stepped on or hid behind. A lot of kids that grow up in the country, little-bitty towns like this, they can't wait to leave. All my friends and myself, we felt fortunate to be here because we felt like we were rich. We didn't have any money but we had creeks to play in and swimming holes. I played baseball behind the school and we raided everybody's fruit trees.

We'd camp out at night. We'd sleep in the woods, lot of times, we'd come up to Reidville and walk around and we'd lay in the road because it was warm. Halloween we'd go trick-or-treating out through here and stop at everybody's houses, mask or no mask, they knew who you were. It was just a blessing to be in a little town like this. Like I said, we thought were rich 'cause of what we got to do.

There were six stores and six churches in Reidville, in a little town like this, with probably 250 people. Yeah, religion was a big thing, still is.

It was a great place to grow up.



I'm all for the farmland preservation. I wouldn't care if there wasn't another subdivision built. We good with what we got. A question to the town, what are we doing to make sure these other folks is not coming in? Are we trying to expand the town limits?





Well, the most important thing is to live. And the second very important thing is to be a Christian. If you miss going to heaven, you done missed it all. I ain't going that way. I accepted Christ as my Lord and Savior. I want to live in heaven, in the mansion He built for me.

I been going to the same church since I was about, well, since I could walk. I sat on the same bench all them years; I still sit on the same bench, third one back from the front.

I think the secret is a good clean life. I never did smoke. I never did drink. I never did run after wild women. I told them that, over at rehab and they said, "What are you living for?"

It is the truth. A clean life, you'll live a long time. You guess how old I am. 91. And it looks I gonna make it to 100. And I don't ache nowhere. I told my family doctor the other day, I said, "Doc, I don't ache nowhere." And he said, "I don't believe that."

But, God takes care of fools and babies.



We grew up hard, but never hungry. We grew everything that we had. We'd have vegetable gardens in the summer and we'd can all of those vegetables. Dad would raise hogs to kill and beef to kill and we'd have chickens. I can see momma now, wringing those chicken's necks. She was the best little wringer. I used to know how to cut up a chicken, but I don't do that anymore. I only buy the breast now.

I lived on the outskirts of town, the poor side, where we didn't have a bathroom. We didn't get a bathroom until I started dating Chuck--an inside one, we had two outside ones. So I know what hard times were, but I also knew we had some good times too.

Hoed cotton. Picked cotton. My mom, she could out pick any body in a day's time. They would weigh the cotton at the end of the day. She was such a tremendous lady. That's probably why she is in such bad shape as she is now.... I always cry. But I didn't have it as hard as she did because she plowed mules.

My son didn't marry until he was 33. I was seventeen, but I liked just a few weeks being eighteen when I married. Here he is with a baby. I told him, "When I was 36, you was sixteen years old and now you're 30 and you have a six-week old baby. I feel sorry for you in 20 years." It's just a mother's right to worry.

But, that's what I wanted to do. I didn't have any desire whatsoever to further my education at that time, I just fell in love is what I did. That's what I did. I could have had an advantage. I could have got a job and gone to school. But I fell in love, and we've been married 39 years. Next year will be the big 4-0.

It's changing now, but back then you could get out and walk everywhere on this main road; take your kids walking and you knew everybody. Now it's changing.... but it still hadn't stopped me. I still have that feeling that this is still my hometown.

To me its greatest value is you still have your quiet type neighbors that allow me to ride my lawn mower down the street with my granddaughter on it and look stupid. That's one of the greatest values, people; the people that are here and who have been here forever. They just are real good people, very good people.

I've met a lot of people who have come in here and say, "If you can take and get rid of all your mobile homes and bring in these big fine homes, you know, to build here. Just look what it would be." And I say, "But why change the character of our Reidville. This is our little community of Reidville, and besides, you know, we all were here before you were." And I really feel strongly about that, come in and help us make the change, but don't bad mouth what's here. You know, what I'm saying?



It was 1976 when the fire department started. Chuck had been going out a lot by himself. I had not been thinking about it whatsoever. We were out here at First Baptist Church practicing softball. Ruby, my sister-in-law, said, “Don’t you think it would be a good idea for us to go down and help fight fires? We could help during the day.”

My husband didn’t like it but he knew he couldn’t tell me “no.” You can talk me out of something, but don’t tell me “no.” But then he was so excited once we got trained up, he would let us run our own calls, ‘cause he could stay and work. He didn’t have no worry about it.

That was so much fun, you know. ‘Cause we would come from every direction to see who was gonna get down there to answer that fire call first. That siren would go off and wake us up in the middle of the night and boy, we would have our gear just sittin’ there ready. For years we didn’t have anything, any type of gear at all. Only helmets and boots, that is all we had.

Oh, it’d be hot. It’d be hot at those fires, especially in the summer time. But I don’t miss it. I miss the fellowship, but not rolling them hoses up, washin’ those things, and freezing to death. I remember we went early one frosty morning, it was ice. So myself, and my brother-in-law, we went in what we call the Red Dog, we went over to Brookhaven, back then that was one of the first housing developments. Those were real nice houses. And the chimney was on fire and we went to pump water and it was froze. So, a woman’s intuition was to go in there and get a pot of water. I went in there and they had dirty dishes in the sink and I got a pot.

Yeah, I remember that one very well, fighting a fire with a pot, a cooking pot. And back then, this was before fire hydrants were ever as many as they are now. We have had to stand and just watch them burn because we didn’t have water supply to put them out. That was always real hard to have to do because there just wasn’t enough.

You don't realize how many stars are still up there.  
If you look yonder way, it is lited up from everywhere else.  
When all these lights are off, it is like old times, you know.

They say progres s is good, growth is good, but I beg to  
differ with that. We are just too set in our country ways.

Back then, late in the evenings, you could hear a car coming  
and you pretty well know who that was, not no more.

By its rattle, you know, it had a certain rattle to it.  
The rattle, the sound, you knowed who it was.  
You can't do it today.

It was amazing like that.  
Quiet. Peaceful.  
There was trouble going on, but it was always local.  
Very seldom was it from the outside, you could find out  
who it was.

You try to block out everything now 'cause there so  
many vehicles, or you never would sleep.





People still think that the people of South Carolina are dumb, hill-billy, rednecks, and maybe there are some, but definitely it isn't like it used to be. Just because we sound like this, does that mean we are unintelligent? That was always my biggest pet-peeve. Just 'cause I talk like this doesn't mean I am an ignorant person. It just means I got manners.

Tatoos.... This one is an angel. Can you tell? I've heard elephant, scorpion, and dragon.

My pet-peeve is littering. I can't stand it. I'll write you a ticket in a heartbeat. I am a conservationist, I like to call myself. Simple things. I believe in recycling. I can't stand when people throw away something when they could just go throw it in the recycle bin. That chaps my butt. Karma is a son-a-bitch and if you don't learn it soon, then you will learn it the hard way.

Religion? People believe what they want to believe, that's fine with me, doesn't effect me either way. I don't like being forced or pressured or told to believe this way. You don't know me, how can you know I am a bad person just because I don't believe in God. That's always chapped my butt.

The closest thing I would be is a Pagan because I believe there's life in everything. They call me a tree hugger at work and I don't care. When I come to work, I look at it this way, I am not here to be liked, I'm here to do a job. I like to say, "I hate everybody equally, some I just hate less." No, I treat everybody the same: race, creed, color, I could care less.

It's not personal to me. I'm just doing a job.

I've lived in a lot of the South. For the most part, everybody's a bible-thumping Southern Baptist. God will smite you if you do this. I'm sorry, you can't tell me that just because a person's gay and does everything right and lives good and lives as a good person, that that person is going to hell. That's horseshit. I'm sorry.

This is the most reddest of red counties in the state and in Spartanburg County. It is a 90% republican county. That's fine, that doesn't mean I've got to be one. I don't consider myself liberal; I consider myself a free thinker. I don't agree with everything that the democrats say and I don't believe everything that the republicans say. I'm gonna vote for the person who I think has the best issues that I believe in.

I am a Southerner and proud to be one. I love it and wouldn't change anything about it, other than I wish there were more free thinkers in the South and less organized religion. But obviously, that's going to take a long time, if ever, to break. But that's fine, it doesn't change the fact that I still love where I live.

That's one thing I can say: I'll always have job security. There'll always be cops. What do they say? The two things you can count on is death and taxes... and always cops having a job.