

**Listening to history: David Cecelski explores North Carolina's history, one person at a time** <sup>[1]</sup>

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**Listening to History**

**David Cecelski explores North Carolina's history, one person at a time**

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Historian David Cecelski wrote a popular oral history series called “Listening to History” for the *RaleighNews & Observer* from 1998 to 2008. With the support of the Southern Oral History Program at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Dr. Cecelski traveled across the state listening to, recording and preserving stories that spoke to the state’s history throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. “Listening to History” appeared monthly in the newspaper’s “Sunday Journal,” a special section of the Sunday edition of the newspaper that focused on the state’s cultural life. A central component of the series was the photographs taken by Chris Seward, a veteran *News & Observer* photographer who took nearly all the portraits that ran with the stories.

A few of the stories featured nationally renowned individuals, such as the writer Allan Gurganus from Rocky Mount, civil rights activist Mabel Williams from Monroe, and the saxophonist Maceo Parker from Kinston. However, most featured a broad cross-section of the state's older citizens, including sharecroppers, mechanics, a firefighter, a book mobile librarian, a quilter, tobacco factory workers, a midwife, a gravedigger, and the proprietor of a beauty shop. Major historical subjects discussed include the influenza epidemic of 1918-19, the Great Depression, the Second World War, hurricane *Hazel*, the African American freedom struggle, post-WWII labor activism, the experience of Chinese, Greek and other immigrants in small-town North Carolina, the Ku Klux Klan, and the early history of the AIDS epidemic, among many others.

"Each is only one voice," Dr. Cecelski wrote in the *Carolina Alumni Review* in the summer of 1999, "but together I hope they shape a mosaic of memories as rich and diverse, as sweet and as tragic, as thought provoking and as entertaining, as the North Carolina past itself."

Read [David Cecelski's reflections](#) [2] on the "Listening to History" series from 2008.

"[Gretchen Brinson: A Born Nurse](#) [3]," June 14, 1998.  
 "Rev. Vernon Tyson: [Miss Amy's Witness](#) [4]," July 12, 1998.  
 "[Hattie Brown: A Freedom Story](#) [5]," August 9, 1998.  
 "[Odell Spain: My Way of Life](#) [6]," September 13, 1998.  
 "[Allen Troxler: Shirley's Garden](#) [7]," October 11, 1998.  
 "[Ray Wells: There's a Man for You](#) [8]," November 8, 1998.  
 "[Kenny Davis: It's Like Being at War](#) [9]," December 13, 1998.  
 "[Georgia Rae Dickinson: Like Waves on the Beach](#) [10]," January 10, 1999.  
 "[Betty Ballew: The Place I Love Best on this Earth](#) [11]," February 14, 1999.  
 "[Harry Kittner: A Candle is Lit](#) [12]," March 14, 1999.  
 "[Lois Epps Jones: Zan Epps' Daughter](#) [13]," April 11, 1999.  
 "[John McDonald: This Old Drugstore](#) [14]," May 9, 1999.  
 "[Willis Williams: Life and Death at Devils Gut](#) [15]," June 13, 1999.  
 "[Emma Crawford: A Good Life](#) [16]," July 11, 1999.  
 "[Leila Pigott: An Angry God](#) [17]," August 8, 1999.  
 "[Marta Galvez: We Can Outlast](#) [18]," September 12, 1999.  
 "[Ben Averitt: Doing It Right](#) [19]," October 10, 1999.  
 "[Mabel Williams: Standing up to the Klan](#) [20]," November 14, 1999.  
 "[David Harrell: A Rockyhock Christmas](#) [21]," December 12, 1999.  
 "[Denise Giles: A Hometown Hero](#) [22]," December 26, 1999.  
 "[Hazel Reece: A Quilter's Life](#) [23]," January 9, 2000.  
 "[Margaret Wicker: The Glen Coal Mine Disaster](#) [24]," February 13, 2000.  
 "[Case and Ellene Van Wyk: Flower Fields and Muck Fires](#) [25]," March 12, 2000.  
 "[Rev. David Forbes: The Birth of SNCC](#) [26]," April 9, 2000.  
 "[Otis Hardy: Stars in the Sky](#) [27]," May 14, 2000.  
 "[Charles Wales: Always a Little Music](#) [28]," June 11, 2000.  
 "[Horace Twiford: A 12 Gauge and a Mullet Net](#) [29]," July 9, 2000.  
 "[Adell McDowell: A Frightful Time](#) [30]," August 13, 2000.  
 "[Jim Ellis: Putting in Tobacco](#) [31]," September 10, 2000.  
 "[E.R. Mitchell: Backyard Barbecue](#) [32]," October 8, 2000.  
 "[Kenneth George: Cole's Pottery](#) [33]," November 12, 2000.  
 "[Madge Guthrie: One Clear Beautiful Night](#) [34]," December 10, 2000.  
 "[Dorcas E. Carter: The Great Fire of '22](#) [35]," January 14, 2001.  
 "[Dr. James Slade: People That Do Right](#) [36]," February 11, 2001.  
 "[James Applewhite: The Essences of Things](#) [37]," March 11, 2001.  
 "[Sheila Kingsbury-Burt: The Undercrust of Living Dust](#) [38]," April 13, 2001.  
 "[Mary Everett: The End of the Century Book Club](#) [39]," May 8, 2001.  
 "[Welton Lowry: The Spirit of Henry Berry Lowry](#) [40]," June 8, 2001.  
 "[Mary Lea Simpkins: The Yates Mill](#) [41]," July 8, 2001.  
 "[Wesley Goodwin: Knitting and Hanging Net](#) [42]," August 12, 2001.  
 "[Haley Kelley: Remembering Sugar Hill](#) [43]," September 8, 2001.  
 "[Norman Perry: Redbone Hounds and Wood Pile Dogs](#) [44]," October 14, 2001.  
 "[Elizabeth Ohree: Waiting is Hard](#) [45]," November 11, 2001.  
 "[Joe Johnson: Denim Days in Erwin](#) [46]," December 9, 2001.  
 "[Jan Applewhite: Theater of Dreams](#) [47]," January 13, 2002.  
 "[Don Stith: The Smoke Eaters of Warrenton](#) [48]," February 10, 2002.  
 "[Martha MacLeod: The Highland Scots](#) [49]," March 10, 2002.  
 "[Gary Grant: A Boy Scout Jamboree to Remember](#) [50]," April 14, 2002.  
 "[Robert Frost: This Tramp](#) [51]," May 12, 2002.  
 "[Capt. Eugene W. Gore: The Smell of Money](#) [52]," June 9, 2002.  
 "[David Yeomans: When the Booze Yacht ran Ashore](#) [53]," July 14, 2002.  
 "[Bessie Mizell: We are all in this Together](#) [54]," August 11, 2002.  
 "[Lila Edwards: Great-Granddaddy Sang Amazing Grace](#) [55]," September 8, 2002.  
 "[Dennis Moody: Death is no Different](#) [56]," October 13, 2002.  
 "[Carl Lamm: Glory Days of Country Music Radio](#) [57]," November 10, 2002.

"Elizabeth Sanderlin: Old-Fashioned People <sup>[58]</sup>," December 8, 2002.  
 "Karen Bethea-Shields: In Joan Little's Cell <sup>[59]</sup>," January 12, 2003.  
 "Allan Gurganus: Telling the Story from Birth <sup>[60]</sup>," February 9, 2003.  
 "Wilma Horton: All the Old Tent Show People <sup>[61]</sup>," March 9, 2003.  
 "George Graham: Fried Shad on Blue Monday <sup>[62]</sup>," April 13, 2003.  
 "Pota Vallas: A Greek Heart <sup>[63]</sup>," May 10, 2003.  
 "Joe Lewis: We weren't Afraid <sup>[64]</sup>," June 8, 2003.  
 "Ethel Blalock: The Primitive Baptists Endure <sup>[65]</sup>," July 13, 2003.  
 "Loretta Gunter: Always a Family Beach <sup>[66]</sup>," August 10, 2003.  
 "Rudolph Knight: History Right Here <sup>[67]</sup>," September 13, 2003.  
 "Vernon Lee Creekmore: In Old Currituck <sup>[68]</sup>," October 12, 2003.  
 "Marta Colson: Iilda's Beauty Shop <sup>[69]</sup>," November 9, 2003.  
 "Dan "D.T." Dale: The Fears They Had <sup>[70]</sup>," December 14, 2003.  
 "Joe Floyd: The Lightship Relief <sup>[71]</sup>," January 10, 2004.  
 "Marvin Jones: Making a Day <sup>[72]</sup>," February 8, 2004.  
 "Rachel Stotesbury: As Time Goes Along <sup>[73]</sup>," March 13, 2004.  
 "Rene Whitney: So Many Blessings <sup>[74]</sup>," April 11, 2004.  
 "Bunny Sanders: Serpents and Doves <sup>[75]</sup>," May 9, 2004.  
 "Maceo Parker: These Kids are Fantastic <sup>[76]</sup>," June 13, 2004.  
 "Maude Ballance: Ocracoke Cooking <sup>[77]</sup>," July 11, 2004.  
 "Watts Auman: Peach Picking Time <sup>[78]</sup>," August 8, 2004.  
 "Evelyn Zaytoun Farris: Love Stories <sup>[79]</sup>," September 12, 2004.  
 "Ray Wyche: A Rainy Day Hangout <sup>[80]</sup>," October 10, 2004.  
 "Myrtle Peele: Book Dreams <sup>[81]</sup>," November 14, 2004.  
 "Eddie McCoy: Write-Off Kids <sup>[82]</sup>," December 12, 2004.  
 "Doc Borden: D-Day <sup>[83]</sup>," January 9, 2005.  
 "James Everett Brown: The Most Comfort in the World <sup>[84]</sup>," February 13, 2005.  
 "Annie Louise Wilkerson: A Life of My Own <sup>[85]</sup>," March 13, 2005.  
 "Judith Shaw: Railroad Street <sup>[86]</sup>," April 11, 2005.  
 "Ardathy Spikes: Somewhere like DuPont <sup>[87]</sup>," May 8, 2005.  
 "H. O. Golden: A Man's Work <sup>[88]</sup>," June 12, 2005.  
 "Kathleen Hanchey: The Pink Supper House <sup>[89]</sup>," July 9, 2005.  
 "Edward Tie: A Second Life <sup>[90]</sup>," August 13, 2005.  
 "Clarence Alston: It was 1919 <sup>[91]</sup>," September 11, 2005.  
 "Mary Cannady: At Dr. King's House <sup>[92]</sup>," October 9, 2005.  
 "Eppie Rhodes: The Home Front's Dispossessed <sup>[93]</sup>," November 13, 2005.  
 "Fred Lockamy: Sorrow Valley <sup>[94]</sup>," December 11, 2005.  
 "Karl Fleming: Show Me Life <sup>[95]</sup>," January 8, 2006.  
 "John McNeill, Sr.: A Dream World <sup>[96]</sup>," February 10, 2006.  
 "Alice Eley Jones: Herring Fish <sup>[97]</sup>," March 12, 2006.  
 "Alethea Williams-King: The Widow's Mite <sup>[98]</sup>," April 8, 2006.  
 "Karen Willis Amspacher: Harkers Island Ends Here <sup>[99]</sup>," May 14, 2006.  
 "Mary White: A One Teacher School <sup>[100]</sup>," June 11, 2006.  
 "William M. Hill: At the Mortar Box <sup>[101]</sup>," July 9, 2006.  
 "Lennis Ipock: The Dead Ones <sup>[102]</sup>," August 13, 2006.  
 "Lennie Christianson: Alligator River Life <sup>[103]</sup>," September 9, 2006.  
 "Lovie Shelton: God Dealt Well with the Midwives <sup>[104]</sup>," October 8, 2006.  
 "Ike Murray: Things that Last <sup>[105]</sup>," November 12, 2006.  
 "Terry Shinn: High Rock <sup>[106]</sup>," December 10, 2006.  
 "Tibbie Roberts: Free as the Marsh Ponies <sup>[107]</sup>," January 13, 2007.  
 "Sallie Powell: Determined to Teach <sup>[108]</sup>," February 11, 2007.  
 "Mel A. Tomlinson: Rubber-Band Man <sup>[109]</sup>," March 11, 2007.  
 "Delia Perkins: The Waters Came Down <sup>[110]</sup>," April 8, 2007.  
 "Sallie Powell: Mr. Dewitt's Lake <sup>[111]</sup>," April 29, 2007.  
 "Velma Coltain: The Wind was Howling <sup>[112]</sup>," May 13, 2007.  
 "Dwight Burris and Ernie Foster: Old Drum <sup>[113]</sup>," June 10, 2007.  
 "Marvin Tupper Jones: Pleasant Plains <sup>[114]</sup>," July 8, 2007.  
 "Alfred Fisher: Bay River <sup>[115]</sup>," August 12, 2007.  
 "Henry Ramsey, Jr.: My Own Love of the Blues <sup>[116]</sup>," September 9, 2007.  
 "Nancy Grady Wilson: Making Something Good <sup>[117]</sup>," October 13, 2007.  
 "Ann Johnson: This Woman's War <sup>[118]</sup>," November 11, 2007.  
 "Athenia Moses: Standing Up for the Things We Believed <sup>[119]</sup>," December 10, 2007.  
 "Helen Hoggard: Salt Pork & Cracklings <sup>[120]</sup>," January 12, 2008.  
 "Ammie Jenkins: Where the Cool Waters Run <sup>[121]</sup>," February 10, 2008.  
 "Milton Styron: Born a Commercial Fisherman <sup>[122]</sup>," March 9, 2008.  
 "Loraine Nelson: If the Threshers Spent the Night <sup>[123]</sup>," April 13, 2008.  
 "Henry Johnson, Jr.: The Engelhard Café <sup>[124]</sup>," May 10, 2008.  
 "Joyce Williams: Farm Days <sup>[125]</sup>," June 8, 2008.

“Sonny Williamson: Ain’t Love Wonderful?”<sup>[126]</sup> July 20, 2008.

## Subjects:

Biographies<sup>[127]</sup>

Personal and oral histories<sup>[128]</sup>

## Authors:

Cecelski, David S.<sup>[129]</sup>

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22 March 2016 | Cecelski, David S.

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## Links

[1] <https://www.ncpedia.org/listening-to-history> [2] <https://www.ncpedia.org/listening-to-history/david-cecelski-reflections> [3] <https://www.ncpedia.org/listening-to-history/gretchen-brinson> [4] <https://www.ncpedia.org/listening-to-history/vernon-tyson> [5] <https://www.ncpedia.org/listening-to-history/brown-hattie> [6] <https://www.ncpedia.org/listening-to-history/spain-odell> [7] <https://www.ncpedia.org/listening-to-history/troxler-allan> [8] <https://www.ncpedia.org/listening-to-history/wells-ray> [9] <https://www.ncpedia.org/listening-to-history/davis-kenny> [10] <https://www.ncpedia.org/listening-to-history/dickinson-georgia-rae> [11] <https://www.ncpedia.org/listening-to-history/ballew-betty> [12] <https://www.ncpedia.org/listening-to-history/kittner-harry> [13] <https://www.ncpedia.org/listening-to-history/epps-lois> [14] <https://www.ncpedia.org/listening-to-history/mcdonald-john> [15] <https://www.ncpedia.org/listening-to-history/williams-willis> [16] 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<https://www.ncpedia.org/listening-to-history/horton-wilma> [62] <https://www.ncpedia.org/listening-to-history/graham-george> [63] <https://www.ncpedia.org/listening-to-history/vallas-pota> [64] <https://www.ncpedia.org/listening-to-history/lewis-joe> [65] <https://www.ncpedia.org/listening-to-history/blalock-ethel> [66] <https://www.ncpedia.org/listening-to-history/gunter-loretta> [67] <https://www.ncpedia.org/listening-to-history/knight-rudolph> [68] <https://www.ncpedia.org/listening-to-history/creekmore> [69] <https://www.ncpedia.org/listening-to-history/colson-marta> [70] <https://www.ncpedia.org/listening-to-history/daledan-d-t> [71] <https://www.ncpedia.org/listening-to-history/floyd-joe> [72] <https://www.ncpedia.org/listening-to-history/jones-marvin> [73] <https://www.ncpedia.org/listening-to-history/stotesbury> [74] <https://www.ncpedia.org/listening-to-history/whitney-rene> [75] <https://www.ncpedia.org/listening-to-history/sanders-bunny> [76] 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<https://www.ncpedia.org/listening-to-history/shinn-terry> [107] <https://www.ncpedia.org/listening-to-history/roberts-tibbie> [108] <https://www.ncpedia.org/listening-to-history/powell-sallie> [109] <https://www.ncpedia.org/listening-to-history/tomlinson-mel> [110] <https://www.ncpedia.org/listening-to-history/perkins-delia> [111] <https://www.ncpedia.org/listening-to-history/powell-sallie-0> [112] <https://www.ncpedia.org/listening-to-history/coltrain-velma> [113] <https://www.ncpedia.org/listening-to-history/burris-foster> [114] <https://www.ncpedia.org/listening-to-history/jones-marvin-tupper> [115] <https://www.ncpedia.org/listening-to-history/fisher-alfred> [116] <https://www.ncpedia.org/listening-to-history/ramsey-henry> [117] <https://www.ncpedia.org/listening-to-history/wilson-nancy> [118] <https://www.ncpedia.org/listening-to-history/johnson-ann> [119] <https://www.ncpedia.org/listening-to-history/moses-athenia> [120] 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