

## RAZORBACK STADIUM

Henry Childress Sr., likely the oldest living African-American man in Fayetteville, told me about a small group of black men, women and children who consistently attended Razorback football games at Razorback Stadium in the 1940s. In this era, Jim Crow laws still pervaded the South, although the social climes of Fayetteville have always been more progressive than many other Southern towns.

Childress Sr., now in his upper 80s, recalls seeing about 25-40 black Razorback fans at games he attended in the 1940s through early 1950s. They weren't allowed to sit in the bleachers like the white fans. Instead, they had to sit in chairs on the track which then encircled the football field. But black and white fans alike woo-pig-sooied their hearts out during the games against Tulsa, Texas, Texas A&M and SMU, which Childress Sr. attended. A black Fayetteville resident named Dave Dart was the loudest cheerleader. "He'd be out there, out on the side of the field almost. He'd be just a-hollerin' and yelling 'Come on!'" And soon enough, Childress Sr. couldn't help but join the frenzy.

This Hog mania was a far cry from Childress Sr.'s younger days growing up in Fort Smith. Then, he didn't consider himself a Razorback or much of a football fan at all. One reason was Hogs games didn't dominate statewide airwaves like they would after 1951, when Bob Cheyne, the UA's first publicity director, crisscrossed the state to enlist 34 radio stations in the broadcasting of Hogs games.<sup>1</sup>

Plus, Childress Sr. hadn't gotten swept up in football mania at his all-black Fort Smith high school. Lincoln High had cut its football and baseball programs by the time he moved to Fayetteville in 1944, he recalled. He added that in the early 1940s, the school only sponsored basketball. The teens who still yearned for football simply gathered to play it by themselves on a nearby field after classes let out. "We'd go out to the back of the school, and choose up sides."

After moving to Fayetteville, it took a little while to warm to the vociferousness of certain Razorback fans. "It was kind of strange to me," Childress Sr. said. "I just came out and sat and looked." Pretty