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An Interview with Arby L. Hambric

An Oral History Conducted by Claytee D. White

African American Collaborative

Oral History Research Center at UNLV
University Libraries
University of Nevada Las Vegas

©African Americans in Las Vegas:
A Collaborative Oral History Project

University of Nevada Las Vegas, 2012

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The transcript received minimal editing that includes the elimination of fragments, false starts, and repetitions in order to enhance the reader's understanding of the material. All measures have been taken to preserve the style and language of the narrator. In several cases photographic sources accompany the individual interviews.

The following interview is part of a series of interviews conducted under the auspices of the *African Americans in Las Vegas: A Collaborative Oral History Project*.

Claytee D. White
Director, Oral History Research Center
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Preface



Arby L. Hambric

Arby L. Hambric's book entitled, "To Thee I See: From picking in the fields of Texas to cooking for dignitaries on U.S. Navy ships, a journey I wouldn't change," describes his profound journey from working in the cotton fields as a child to being drafted into the U.S. Navy, before completing high school. During this interview, he recalls the significant achievements of the "Red Tails" and the Tuskegee Airmen. Beginning his 20 year Navy career before military integration, Arby describes the racial tensions that plagued the U.S. Navy in the 1940s, and discusses how he was able to successfully navigate that racist environment for two decades and three war eras.

Arby enrolled in San Diego State College after leaving the U.S. Navy. He also worked as maintenance personnel for Sears and Roebuck and started a catering business with his wife. He became a member of the Southern Nevada Enterprise Community, SNEC Board upon moving to Las Vegas, Nevada, after his wife died. With a family legacy he can be proud of, Arby highlights the achievements of his great grandson Taquan Mizzell, a Virginia Cavaliers running back at the University of Virginia.

As a Navy veteran, Arby often volunteered his time and resources to help others in need. He recalls driving the sick and elderly back and forth from the Westside community to Valley Hospital or University Medical Center, UMC. He also discusses government enforced road closures and a wall that was built to block Blacks from entering the new downtown. This interview sheds new light on military integration and offers key strategies for overcoming environmental racism. Arby mentions a documentary about the closing of the wall and offers his predictions on the future of the Westside.

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in Las Vegas, Nevada
Conducted by Claytee D. White

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African Americans in Las Vegas:
A Collaborative Oral History Project



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Claytee D. White 9/23/2015
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This is Claytee White. It is September 23rd, 2015, and I am with Mr. Hambric at the West Las Vegas Library.

How are you this afternoon?

Fine, thank you.

Mr. Hambric, I want you to pronounce and spell your name, please.

Arby L. Hambric; A-R-B-Y, initial L-E-E; last name Hambric, H-A-M-B-R-I-C.

So Mr. Hambric, we're going to get started by just having you tell me about your early life; where you grew up, how many people in the family?

I had two sisters. I am the oldest of the three children. I have one other sister rose Lee Haynes, which she's a Haynes now. My youngest sister, Mildred Busby, I lost her about three years ago. We grew up in Teague, Texas, mostly. We were born in Centerville, Texas, but we moved to Teague, Texas in 1938 and we lived there even until this day; I mean as a hometown where we live. I would like to say this since, then, if you're saying that. I was in the cotton field for sixteen years before being drafted into the Navy in 1945.

So I don't want you to go that far because you were born in 1925.

Twenty-six.

You were not born in 1925?

No.

So a few minutes ago you told me it was 1925. So it is 1926.

Nineteen twenty-six, right.

So November 24th, 1926.

Yes.

So you will be eighty-nine this year.

I got confused on that television I was watching this morning. Twenty-five on Yogi Berra, but me '26.

Yes. So tell me about Teague, Texas. What was that like? You worked in the cotton fields.

Yes.

Beginning at what age?

I would say six, seven, eight years old or something like that working in the cotton field and prior to that working in yards. There was no industry in that particular town at all. So that was all for us to do was to do yardwork, housework, to help with Mother and things like that and live in quarters and things of that nature.

So describe the quarters to me.

The people where we lived and my mother worked for, we lived in the quarters behind the house all the days of our life mostly until I went into the service.

Describe the house.

Maybe it might have been two-bedroom little house behind the house from the people that we lived in and we worked for.

So tell me how far away from their house was your house?

It was right in the back.

So are we talking about feet or are we talking about...? How far approximately?

Well, I would say in the backyard. It was in the backyard.

So what else was in the backyard of the house? Are we talking about chickens and other things back there as well?

Yes, yes.

So describe it to me.

Yes, we had chickens and other little animals, rabbits, squirrel. That was the about the size of it as I can remember or recall. We had pigs in there, yes.

So what did your mother do in the house?

Maid service, cook and serve three meals a day.

Did any of the children, your sister or your brother or you help your mom?

No, no, because we worked in the yards and things like that.

So tell me the kind of work you did as a young boy.

As a young boy, the only thing I did while Mother was doing that type of work in the home and things like that, I would work out of the home for various, different people, taking care of their lawns, flower beds and things of that nature and mowing their lawn and washing the windows and things like that and doing other types of cleaning.

Did most black kids grow up like that?

Yes, yes, yes.

So what did you do for fun?

Other than school activities, playing ball and things of that nature, what we did for fun, still with us this day, shoot marbles. Other than that shoot a little pool and practice sports in the afternoon. Sometimes we would do something like that.

What kind of ball games were you playing?

To tell the truth, as little as I was—that's why they call me "Poor Pig"—I was playing football. I was the one always got hit and knocked down. So they said, "Well, you're a poor pig." Up until this day some of them at home call me that right up to today. Even yesterday I had a call from someone from Teague reminding me of the homecoming service there on the fourth Sunday in October and wanted to know if I was coming down or things like that. I had said, "No, because

I'm on an honor flight and I'll be in Washington, D.C. the second and third of October and I was returning on the fourth."

What is an honor flight?

An honor flight is a flight that's given for military veterans and retirees. They go to Washington, D.C. and they spend two days. So they get to observe everything there, what is the National Cemetery and all of the malls and all of the museums and things like that and all of the buildings. To tell the truth, in 1954 or '58, I believe I was back there for a short reunion to read twenty names off of the Vietnam Wall. So this will be my first time going back there in this regard, in that way.

So you started to tell me about you were invited to a homecoming. Is that connected to a church or a school?

A church and a school, both. I was invited to both, yes.

So was the church connected to the school?

No, not necessarily.

The reunion that you're being invited back to—

This year is the church.

So tell me about that church. Is that the church you grew up in?

Yes.

What kind of church?

Methodist Church, United Methodist Church. I attended Sunday school there and all the services. I'm a member of the Baptist Church now for the last forty years, fifty years. I'm pretty sure you heard us talk about BYPU. Things like that. So when I grew up as a child in Teague, Texas, I spent at BYPU at that particular church and they were combined with the Methodist Church and

the Baptist Church on that. That's about the size of it.

So did you finish high school?

No.

Tell me how far you went in school and what happened that you quit.

I went to the tenth grade in high school in Teague, Texas. Later I drafted out into the service and things like that. I spent the rest of my years and things of that nature in correspondence courses, but I never went back.

Did they draft you out of high school?

Yes, yes, yes.

That was legal?

Yes.

Were other high school students that you knew drafted?

Yes.

What about white kids?

They were drafted, drafted and volunteers.

So this is World War II?

Yes.

So how old were you when you were drafted?

Eighteen.

Tell me about the military service. Where did you go?

For my military service, when I left there I went to Dallas, Texas for the draft board with the notice that I was to be inducted in Dallas, Texas. From there, after I passed the physical and everything else—I went through all of that for a couple of days—I was sent to Bainbridge,

Maryland. That's where I took my original training, I believe about twelve weeks or maybe fifteen or something like that in Bainbridge, Maryland. As you know or probably would know, segregated. So the blacks had one particular place where they would stay, eat and train and things of that nature. I never will forget even on the bus when I left training from Bainbridge, Maryland to go to Tacoma, Washington, and that was to put the ship in commission here—

Tell me which ship you're talking about.

The U.S.S. Palau, CVE-122, which I am a plank owner on that ship right today.

What is a plank owner?

A plank owner is one that you put the ship in commission and you was aboard that same ship when it decommissioned and went out of commission. So I was onboard that ship for five years.

So you went into the Navy?

Yes.

I thought the Army was the only one that drafted people.

No. Go back to 1932 or something of that nature, no, the Army wasn't the only one that drafted then. But there was a certain thing when they were drafting a lot of those or had those volunteer things going on, a lot of times they wouldn't accept blacks in either one. Now, if you were like how we grew up and you were working for someone on a farm or something like that or in their home, just like that, in that kind of an area and that kind of atmosphere, if they got ahold that you wanted to be a volunteer and things like that they could stop it right there. Also, if they found out that you were being drafted, they can say, "Well, this is my...well, N." They used to use that, and that would stop it right there of you being drafted.

So we're talking about in the 1940s?

Yes.

White people could still say, this is my "N" word?

Yes, yes.

And it could prevent you from going to the military service if they wanted you to stay there and work for them?

Yes, yes, yes. I'm glad you asked that because something I'll tell you. If you want to get into that... This happened in August 14th this year was the seventieth anniversary of "The Spirit of '45" of all of those that went in from '45 to August the 14th this year was "The Spirit of '45," and they was having an anniversary celebration for them down here at Blue Diamond and I went. Through that—I guess I have to get to this—that's where the honor flight came in because I was there that day and they chose me and asked me did I want to go to Washington, D.C. on an honor flight.

So who chose you that day?

Do I have her name with me?

But someone in Blue Diamond?

Yes, yes. I did have her name.

Is she a politician or someone who lives in Blue Diamond?

No, she worked for... What's that company, healthcare? I can't think of it right now.

But that's how you got onto the honor flight.

Yes, yes, yes.

So now, getting back to being drafted in nineteen...forty-five?

Forty-five, yes.

You told me that you went to Maryland for your basic training and then you were on the way to Washington and you stopped to tell me something else. So you were going to, what,

Tacoma?

When I left Maryland, yes, I went to Tacoma, right.

So tell me about that. That's where you had stopped?

I went to Tacoma for another brief of training as a steward. I don't know whether you remember or whatnot as a steward at that time.

Tell me what it is. Pretend I don't know anything.

Okay. A steward is a cook in the service to officers in the Navy or the military, period. That's what you are. So Frank Knox, under President Harry S. Truman, had said, "A Negro and a black man and a Filipino would do nothing else but cook and serve officers in the Navy." So that is where I took my training.

You're showing me a book. That's what this is about. What is this book?

This is a book that I have written.

And it's called *To Thee I See*. It's about "from picking in the fields in Texas to cooking for dignitaries on U.S. Navy ships, a journey I wouldn't change."

Yes, yes, yes. That's all during the period of the time that I was in the U.S. Navy.

So black men in the U.S. Navy in the 1940s who were serving on ships could not do any other job.

It was a very special few that did get in under some kind of a program, but, no, no, no, no, because I know a friend of mine got in a little bit earlier and some kind of way he got in as a machinist or something like that. Now, since you said that let me tell you this. At this "Spirit of '45," the seventy-year anniversary of the war, '45 to August 14th of this year, the seventieth year, I met a shipmate, but he went in prior to me. He went in in 1941 and he served until 1946. So this is where I took over. He paved the way for me. He's ninety-four years old. He's from

Mississippi. I don't know whether you know anything about it, but you remember the Holocaust that happened in Mississippi in 1940?

The what kind of Holocaust?

Holocaust, when they burned up all those black people.

In Mississippi?

Yes.

I know it happened in some towns in Texas, but I didn't know about—tell me about

Mississippi.

Well, this happened in Mississippi.

Which year?

Nineteen forty. My shipmate that went in prior to me and paved the way for me, he was going to a particular college there in Mississippi at that time. The only place they had for black people to entertain was...I forgot how many miles it was from that college. I have his book at home. I met him again at this celebration of honoring "The Spirit of '45."

In Blue Diamond?

Yes. Ninety-four years old.

Now, what is his name?

Leedale. You want his last name?

If you know it, yes.

L-E-Y-L-A-N-D.

Leedale Leyland?

Yes, that's his name.

So now, what did he tell you about Mississippi in 1940?

He was telling me at the time that he grew up and he was going to this particular college how he grew up there in Mississippi and in this particular town they only had one joint there that black people could go to and entertain and the college was a good ways from there. But anyway, when this particular thing happened and they said in particular it was set afire by people that hated.

The juke joint was set afire?

Yes. And it was two hundred and nine people lost their lives in that. Leedale and I believe, if I'm not mistaken, was three others that got out of there alive that are living today.

So did he tell you what happened to cause that?

Yes, yes. He was telling me that for some reason they only had one way in and one way out. All of the windows and things like that at that particular event, like where we go have a dance party and things like that, for some reason the windows were secured in a way you couldn't break out, like wouldn't have the right kind of emergency getting away or getting out of there.

So why did the white people decide to do it that night?

Because this was an annual dance and a celebration for black people to come to in that particular time and I guess it just only happened every so many months or things like that. This is a time when the college was far away and this is where they would come and take part in that also.

So why did the white people...They must have living like this, blacks and whites, many years.

Yes.

So on that night why did the white people decide to burn that building?

There was some kind of lynching and protests went on prior to that and this and that, and so the black people were really protesting this and complaining about that. After that they locked a lot of them up in jail and almost killed a whole lot of them even at that time even before the fire. So

what I'm saying is I guess it took an opportunity for them to do—the Ku Klux Klan and things like that—to do this to them people at that particular time and at that particular event.

So after you joined the Navy, how did your life change?

It changed dramatically. Just like I said here, I wouldn't change that for anything in the world because I didn't know anything else, just like when I went from my training to aboard ship and things like that. I didn't have that kind of particular learning, not that much, and I thought people lived like that throughout the United States. I didn't know. I experienced that. Just like when I come back to Norfolk, Virginia when they had the sign on there, "We would rather have a dog than a black sailor; keep off the grass." A black sailor wasn't even allowed on the grass in Norfolk, Virginia at this time. So I was one of those.

So how long were you in Tacoma?

I would say, I was in Tacoma about three months I guess, going through that training, the rest of my training for my career would be lack from there on in and things of that nature. So we were in there I'd say a period of about three months.

Then what happened? Where did you go?

I went aboard the ship when they commissioned the ship in Tacoma, Washington. From there we went around the horn to Norfolk, Virginia. I stayed in Norfolk, Virginia aboard that ship five years.

So the ship was docked all of that time?

No. It would go out on maneuvers and training and things like that. In 1951, I was trained for—I'm trying to think. I got aboard out of there just before the Korean War. But we operated and maneuvered it, took part in certain operations and things like that.

Did you ever see battle?

Actual battle, no, but training for it.

So that ship stayed in America?

No.

So where did you go?

We went to the Far East and we went to Okinawa. We went to just whatever place out there. I can't think right now. But all the places.

So in the Far East, where—

The Far East. I'm talking about the Far West now. We went to the Far West first.

So give me the names of the places that would make up the Far West or the Far East.

They're separate.

I understand. So give me the names of some of the places in the Far West.

Okinawa.

And now Far East, are we talking about Japan? Where is that?

Japan, Philippines and China.

So you operated off of the coast of those countries?

Yes, for seven years each, yes, yes. Also, on the East Coast we also went to Israel, Palestine.

Palestine, I believe we were there during that...I'm trying to think of which war that was because the only thing as far as we could go in in an aircraft carrier, you could hear the cannon firing and shooting and all things like that and only someone would go ashore were the admiral and the captain and the staff to meet with dignitaries in Palestine and also we went into Israel and places like that.

And then after how many years you got out of the Navy?

After how many years I got out of the Navy?

Yes. How long were you in the Navy?

Twenty years.

So that was really a whole career in the Navy.

Yes, yes.

You spent the whole twenty years on the ship?

Just about, nineteen years of that was ship duty. In 1951, I was transferred to Quiddnessett, Rhode Island. My assignment was patrol squadron, a VP squadron. Now, that's the one I went to the Far East was during the Korean War, and we were stationed temporarily on an Air Force base, Iwakuni Air Force Base in Japan. The nature of that ship was flying recognizant flights during the Korean War. So just like I'm onboard ship, but the pilots would go out and do these particular types of missions and things like that.

So the twenty-year period starting in 1945 had you there through the Korean War.

Yes.

So in 1965, you got out of military.

Yes.

Any stories that you tell your friends about those twenty years that you'd like to share?

It was an opportunity and a chance to see the world and I enjoyed so much of the foreign travel and things of that nature and to learn a whole lot about the people in Japan, the people in the Philippines and China and also the people in Australia. One of the places, I went to the Olympics in Australia. I don't know what year it is, but it's in this book. I believe at that time that was on the—back on the West Coast, after I was transferred to the West Coast on that. That's about it as far as your question.

But no particular stories that you tell about military?

Shortage?

No particular stories that you tell about your military?

I'm trying to think of what stories would I tell. This is the story of my life right here.

Right. But what I'm asking is when you talk about those first twenty years in the military, do you think about some of the things that happened in Japan or...? What are some of those stories that you tell when you're sitting around talking to your friends?

One of the experiences that I had—you're speaking about Japan. I heard this for years before entering the military. You might have heard when they talked about a black man has a tail. Have you heard that?

Oh, yes, of course. I'm from North Carolina. Of course.

You're from North Carolina. What part of North Carolina?

Ahoskie and I grew up picking cotton.

Ahoskie.

Yes, you know where—yes, because it's close to Norfolk.

He has a girlfriend from Ahoskie.

So I grew up picking cotton just like you did. So tell me the story that you tell about Japan.

The time they call your voice on, "Your black voice on. Let me see your tail." And things of this nature. So it was the American military people as far as segregation; that's the base of it. This is the kind of picture they painted about black people. I'll never forget it. Like when we go out in service at...I'm trying to think. And even into Hawaii, it was really segregated at that time, too. You couldn't hang out at the same place that white people hang out. You had to go to the place that was designated for the blacks. So that is one of the stories. That kind of story happened just about every port we went into either in the Far East or Far West or the Middle East, yes.

So once you got out of the Navy, what happened?

Once I got out of the Navy, I applied for the post office.

Applied for...?

For the post office, yes, yes. Even before that my wife and I, we had a regular catering service and we would do catering for special people and special times.

Where were you living?

In San Jose, California.

How did you meet your wife?

You want me to tell you the truth?

Yes.

I met her at a bar in San Pedro. This is my second wife that we're talking about. I met her in San Pedro. I was drunk. Her and her sister said, "Let's do something about this. Let's take care of him." From then on we become friends and things of this nature. She was living in Los Angeles—Compton, in Compton. From then on we started dating each other and for years until I was transferred to San Diego. That's what ended that. One night on liberty in San Diego I was at a bar. I was drunk and she was with her boyfriend and she seen me and she told him that that's my ex-boyfriend. From then on we were friends forever more. I guess that was for about two or three years or something like that and then I got married to her there in 1961 in San Diego.

Where did you marry your first wife?

Norfolk, Virginia.

Was your ship in Norfolk, Virginia at one time?

Yes, that was our home port for five years.

And she was a native of Norfolk?

Yes. No, no, she wasn't a native. You mean my first wife? Yes, yes. Yes, she was a native of Norfolk, yes.

So what was it like being married in the Navy when you could be shipped out any time?

How did that work?

It was always a sad experience to that extent because you might be in port X number of weeks or months or something like that and then you had duties and things like that and you could only go ashore a certain period of time and things like that. Then once you got married and then a lot of times depending on the duty that you had, you couldn't stay overnight sometimes. But this has changed. That was one thing she really disliked; that. I never will forget it. If I have to say it, through a Christian family that I knew, were very good friends of mine, this girl that I married was a very good friend of that family. So what happened, she got pregnant. So I couldn't turn my back on that and we got married in 1951, I believe it was. Yes, something like that. And one child, my son. I talked to him a few days ago. My great-grandson, Mizzell, Taquan, he plays running back for Charlottesville, Virginia right today and he'll be playing there soon. He's number four.

For which team?

What's the name of that team? It's a university.

Oh, he's at one of the universities.

University of Virginia in Charlottesville, Virginia, and he plays football for them. He got a scholarship. After he got out of high school, he got that. To tell the truth, I had never seen that boy in my life. But the year before then, 2012, he was in the Army football bowl game in Houston, Texas. It would have been Houston, Texas, but I think they moved that game to Austin. And that was the first time I got a chance to see him face to face. Even to this day we talk a lot. I

have never seen that child face to face. I talked to him last week. I used to go to North Carolina a lot, Charlotte. When my son got married to his second wife that was where I got to meet my great-grandchildren. This is my youngest granddaughter and she is the mother of this particular boy, Taquan Mizzell.

He's the one that plays for the college?

Yes, number four with the Cavaliers. He'll be playing this Friday.

Great. And you watch his games?

Every one of his games, yes. Come to think of it, since you said that I did not know—we didn't find out until it was the day the game were, they played UCLA their first game this year. If we had known it, Trish and I, all of us would have drove down for the game. We were so saddened when we found out that the Cavaliers were playing at UCLA.

So now, aren't the Cavaliers a professional team?

It's a college team. I think that's the name of that team, the Cavaliers, yes. That's a college team because this is his first—what they go in the first year, a freshman, junior?

Freshman is the first year.

This is his second year.

Sophomore.

Sophomore, yes. The Cavaliers, yes.

So after you left the Navy and you started working for the post office, where were you living?

I did not go work for the post office. I had submitted an application. At this particular time, if anything was closed and you were a retiree of the military, you could open that to take the exam.

I took the exam. In the meantime, I went to work for Sears and Roebuck as a maintenance

personnel there and I worked with them for five years, also. In between that when it came up for me to be accepted into the post office, I turned it down. I turned it down. Prior to that, my wife and I in between that, that was when we started serving people in their homes, in particular in between there doing that catering service.

So this is the second wife?

Yes, yes.

Now, where are you living, which city?

San Jose.

So you were in San Jose—okay, good.

To tell the truth, I enrolled in the San Diego State College. I have to be frankly about that. I never looked back. And I served on the National Baptist Convention for fifteen years. Just like at the church, I'm at Second Baptist Church here, I served at the Brotherhood for twenty-seven years. It's in the book. I'm trying to think what I was getting to.

So how long were you in San Jose?

From the time we got married. I must have went to San Jose in 1962. I was transferred from (Ford Ship) in San Diego. That's when I was assigned to Westpak.

So you left San Jose in 1961?

No. I left San Diego in 1960 and went to San Jose. That was where I met my wife again. Let me think of something else that might have happened there. Only thing I can think of, it was one of the best duty stations I ever had in my life.

Now, are you still in the military service? I thought we were talking about after you got out of the military service and you start working for the post office.

I took an exam for the post office, but I did not work for the post office.

It was five years later.

No. Instead of 1965 when I retired and I would say 1966 or during that year, I went to work for Sears and Roebuck and I worked for them for five years.

Then tell me what happened.

After retiring? No, no.

Did you retire after you left Sears, five years at Sears?

No. I just left. I just resigned.

And went to where, doing what kind of work?

To tell the truth, this is during my retirement. This is when I retired. Truthfully I got a part of the Council of Churches. Start doing work of visiting people and taking care of the sick, the homeless and those in need. That is the only thing I did of that nature until this present day. I never did take another full-time job. It's been all volunteer work for me ever since then.

But now, at some point you went back into the military; is that right?

No. When I left the military, I retired in 1965.

So in 1965, you had already been in World War II, the Korean War, and had already done a tour of duty in Vietnam?

Yes, yes, all of my military duty was behind me after that date, yes.

Tell me what it was like to serve in Korea.

It was quite something being aboard ship and you could only go on liberties and things like that at certain periods of time and things like this. I was one of those stewards that served dignitaries and things like that. There was time when I would have to fly with them to another port where the admiral or someone else was required to be for that particular time during the Korean War. That was when I was stationed on this Iwakuni Air Force Base with this VP squadron that was

doing recognizance flights during the Korean War. A lot of times you got ready to go on liberty or something like that and they said, "You can't go; we need you." So this is one thing my wife was disgusted about and things like that and she pushed me to retire and I did.

But before you retired you then served some time in Vietnam?

Yes, yes. I was on active duty.

Right. So how was that Korean experience different from Vietnam?

It was very little being on an aircraft carrier and in a squadron because I never did go actually into battle, but I was along onboard ship. You might remember we were the first one to fire a missile during the last war, when the war started in Iraq. Let me get to that. Yes, we had that type of missile at that time.

But tell me what your experience was like in Vietnam.

Personally my experience in Vietnam was just like it was in Korea and things like that, being aboard ship, an aircraft carrier, something like that and being out at sea for X numbers of days and months.

Were both of those ships aircraft carriers?

No, no. I served with (Des Fought Five), which was an admiral, it was a flagship on the U.S.S. Los Angeles, CA-135. About three or four different ships. The U.S.S. Helena. I can't think of their names.

What is a flagship?

That's where the admiral in charge of that command or that fleet has his staff on that and that was the reason why I shifted from ship to ship, when the flag was transferred from one to the other, in that regard, in that way.

So is that a ceremony that goes on when the flag is transferred?

Oh, yes, when the flag is transferred. It might be a couple of years before. Yes, yes, if you change command, yes, there's a ceremony, yes.

When you were in Vietnam, did you encounter any Vietnamese people at all?

No. No, I did not. No, I did not. But I had a good friend of mine during the Korean War prior to going into there. He was the one, this admiral that transferred me from the East Coast to the West Coast to keep me from going into Vietnam. I have a picture of him in the book. He was shot down in Vietnam.

Did he become a prisoner of war?

Yes, yes, yes. You want to see it? That's him right there.

I was an usher at Joe Louis' funeral. You know that.

No, I had no way of knowing.

This is the first black major POW in Vietnam. You heard a lot talk under the Bush administration about Halliburton.

Yes, of course.

Let's see. That's the old man, Halliburton.

Which one, this guy right here?

Yes, yes, yes.

You were in service when the integration of the military took place?

Yes, yes.

Explain what happened, how it happened.

There was so much segregation onboard ship and at that time, well, throughout the whole year.

You remember me telling you about Frank Know said, "A black man would do nothing but a cook and a steward in the Navy." So it was that way. You were in separate quarters. You ate

separately. You did everything of that nature. When you went ashore you went ashore separately. You didn't mingle with each other on liberty. But back aboard ship you were segregated as far as sleeping quarters and things like that and as far as eating quarters and things like that and even in the military, like West Point.

I'll tell you this. In 1947, we took the two highest black ranking officers in the military at that time. I'll show you this. That's Harry Truman and MacArthur. That's Chappie James. You've probably heard of him. He is the first four-star. I've got to get to B.O. Davis. That's me there.

So he's turning through his book showing me some photographs.

This is the first ship I was on and I was the captain's steward. This is the ship, that aircraft carrier that we're talking about.

I want to know what happened when integration took place.

Well, it was a terrible thing. There was a lot of fighting and a lot of this and that.

A lot of fighting between...?

Just us regular personnel fighting black.

So the black sailors and the white sailors were fighting each other?

Lots of times. Lots of times. Even not aboard ship and on liberty when you went ashore. That's where most of the fighting and things like that happened. Then when you went out you couldn't go to only certain places unless it was where Negroes go, just like what happened in Mississippi.

I know all of that. What I'm asking you about is when Harry Truman said that the military service is now going to be integrated, what did you see happening? Because you were still in the service at the time.

Right, right.

So explain to me what happened. Tell me the whole story.

The whole story. When that did happen, because I manned the rail for Harry Truman that signed that on the top of an aircraft carrier two and a half hours at nine degrees cold. You had to stand up there as long as the President of the United States was in the area, and so I did that. Then in some cases and things like that, the segregation—even though he signed it in 1948, it went on for years. I can even go as far as to say up until I retired it was always...Forty-eight until 1950 or something like that. It was five or six years before it got to where it kind of leveled off and things like that. What I was getting to, at the time he signed that—and this is when I was aboard that aircraft carrier, too, the state department sent two black officers aboard the ship. Even they came down and interviewed me three months prior to sending them down aboard ship. I was assigned to take care of these two black officers because they didn't want any kind of segregation and things like that. Did you ever hear of B.O. Davis, General; Colonel B.O. Davis?

No. I've heard of Benjamin O. Davis.

That's the one I'm talking about. His father was a brigadier general at the time they brought him aboard this ship, 1947. His son at that time was a four colonel and the handsomest black man I've ever seen in my life.

Yes, I've seen those photographs.

Beautiful. I loved to walk behind that man and do things for him. So we took them to Africa for the hundred-year celebration in Monrovia. I know you're familiar with that particular area and things like that. How segregated this was even at that time—oh, wait a minute. This happened before then, before he signed that order. But I know you don't know anything about a shellback.

Well, I want you to tell me. I want you to pretend like I don't know anything.

Okay. Coming aboard ship with those two black officers and the highest black officer in the military at that particular time—and then even his son went to be four-star; he was the second

one behind Chappie James—when you go past the international dateline, this is how prejudice these kinds of things were. If you hadn't passed the international dateline or something of this nature, you are called a "pollywog" until you go through this particular type of initiation. They were trying to see how they were going to get around putting these two black officers through there. But yet and still, they had to go and have all that garbage, what they saved garbage for three or four months, something like that if you're retiring, to watch all this and this grease down your stomach and things like that and put it all in your hair and cut all your hair off and shave that. But these two black officers were exempted to an extent. That's about it on that to explain how that was.

So can you tell me your experiences when the military was integrated? Could you tell any difference?

For a long time, no. For a long time, many years it was still segregated throughout the whole military to every ship that you was onboard of.

So during World War II there was a unit of black pilots. Did you ever have any interchange with the black officers who flew the planes, black pilots, the "Red Tails?"

No, no, no.

When you were in the Navy, did you know what was happening? Did you hear about them?

Yes, yes, yes. Have you heard about him, Colonel Curry?

No.

He's the one that forwarded this book. Since you said that I heard a story of them going through the Naval Academy or West Point and things like that. Well, they themselves were segregated. They had to eat at certain places and couldn't mingle with certain officers.

This was in 1940s.

Yes, in 1940s.

Of course.

I don't know. I could go on and on and on.

Go ahead. Go on and on. Do that.

Just like they were segregated even going through the academy and things like this and the same thing with the Tuskegee Airmen, a good friend of mine.

Right. So Tuskegee Airmen, the "Red Tails," that's what I'm talking about.

Yes. A good friend of mine, he's retired from the Tuskegee Airmen right now, Bill Winston. You ever hear of his name?

No.

He was Tuskegee. General Davis, B.O. Davis, General, he was the commanding [officer] of Tuskegee Air Base at one time. That was shortly after it got integrated. That's where he went to. They placed him there. I think about the only—was it Powell during the Gaddafi incident? No, I won't get into that because I don't know all of that that happened in that area and things like that.

From time to time, I would have a chance to talk to Brigadier General B.O. Davis and Colonel B.O. Davis. He's the one that I said was the most handsome man I ever seen in my life, black man. During that experience was when they wanted to go up to the flight deck and watch some operation and things like that and I would assist them getting them up there. Or maybe they wanted to go down and look at some other part of the ship, the engine room, I would assist taking them down there. So I would walk ahead of them. If any sailor or anything like that was doing some work in the area, my duty was to say, "Gangway." Whoever it was he was supposed to stand aside and clear that passageway coming through there in that regard. But it was segregated.

Did they get out of way when you said, "Gangway?"

Yes, yes. They had to obey that. They had to obey that. There was one thing, especially when you're taking those high-ranking officers, the captain of the ship or those kinds of dignitaries that's onboard and things like that, they had to obey you. Now, as a petty officer, second, first class or whatsoever, and white petty officer, you could not give a junior seaman an order. You're a petty officer. But that was the discrimination.

A petty officer is like what? Like a sergeant or a major or...?

Yes, yes.

What is it like?

Well, when you go from seaman or something like that to your first grade of petty officer, you are an E-3 or E-4. So that's just like a first sergeant in the Army, I think like that.

But at this time the whites did not have to obey a black person with more rank?

No, no. Even if you had the rank of a sergeant or something like that they did not have to obey you because you were black, yes, yes. Well, nothing else about it. It was just that way.

So do you know anything about the Tuskegee Airmen and Benjamin Davis? Do you have any other information about that?

No, I do not other than what we discussed. No, I do not.

So after your military service, how did you come to Las Vegas, at what point?

What brought me to Las Vegas? When my wife died; that's what brought me to Las Vegas.

She died in San Jose?

Yes.

So why Las Vegas?

I had an uncle and an aunt living in Las Vegas. After she died I come through here to visit them

on the way to Texas, Dallas, whatever you might want to say, and I stayed with them a few years—well, a few weeks, months and things like that. Then I got to where I would...Sometimes I was so restless I might would drive all the way to Texas and stay three or four days and drive all the way back to San Jose. When I visited them here in Las Vegas, I liked it. I really loved it. The things were, what made it so convenient, I said, "Well, if I move there I would be halfway between here and Texas and I could get up and drive straight through overnight thirteen or fourteen hundred miles." So that's what brought me to Las Vegas and I've been here ever since.

Since which year?

Nineteen seventy-eight.

So did you work at all since you've been here?

No, no, no. I was part of the MGM fire.

In what way?

Helping people.

So tell me about that day.

Displacing people out there. What did we do? We went out there and we just helped in any kind of way in displacing a lot of those that didn't have any place to go. That was primarily what I did in that particular service with the Billy Graham crusade at that time.

What did Billy Graham have to do with the MGM fire?

He was having a crusade.

Billy Graham was there having a crusade when the fire happened?

Yes.

Oh, I didn't know that.

I was one of the ushers at the Billy Graham crusade.

Oh, so that's why you were there, okay.

Yes, yes, yes. I was also an usher at Joe Louis' funeral. That's in this book.

You told me that you were on the SNEC board.

Yes.

Tell me about that.

Are you familiar with them closing F Street?

Yes.

I had surgery in 2008, I believe it was, at a clinic on Flamingo. I'm pretty sure you know where that clinic is, right down there from where that hospital was.

Desert Springs?

Yes, yes, yes. But they had a certain place down there on Flamingo where the Navy had a unit there. To make a show, I went in there. That's why I'm wearing something like I'm wearing right now on the body. The machine malfunctioned twice and they had to get me off of there and get me back, just let me go back to home or hospital after I recovered and things like that, and I did. So finally again—I believe this was October.

Of 1978? No.

No, no. I'm getting up to 2000 something now when I had that surgery when I was working with that. When it malfunctioned at that particular time I was pronounced dead. But they got me on a Flight for Life to O'Callaghan and I stayed there two days.

To where?

O'Callaghan Hospital.

Where is that?

Right below Nellis.

Oh, so out at Nellis Air Force Base.

Yes, yes, yes. You never hear of O'Callaghan Hospital?

No.

At that particular time that was the only other than what they had on the base there was the hospital because they have like four floors.

So this was a military hospital.

Yes, yes. Now it's veterans. It was an active duty hospital at that time. I'm trying to think, who was the governor at that time? I think his name was O'Callaghan. Yes, it's named after him.

But anyway, when I got out of the hospital—this is 2008—one day I was—I'm on Adams. You know where Adams is?

Yes.

You know where F Street is?

Yes.

When I walked out of the house that evening and I seen all of that commotion gathered down there at that wall on F Street, someone had come by and asked me, "What is that? Where is this and where is that?" I said, "Well, you're looking at it right down there." I became involved seriously about what was going on. At the next meeting of the community meeting where Trish Geran is the one that organized that—and I'll say to you today, as I said to many, a lot of them didn't like it. If it hadn't be for Trish Geran keeping that together that wall would have been closed right today and I'll tell you why I say that.

Well, they actually closed it.

Yes, actually they closed it. Yes, we just reopened it the eleventh of December last year.

Right. So that day they were out there about to close it.

Yes, yes, yes. That's what the protest was about, right. I went to Doolittle for the next community meeting and things like that and that was when I met Trish Geran. By me being a member of Second Baptist Church and I was one of the officers of that church, when they organized this protest to march on the Strip and things like that—

What march on the Strip?

You didn't know they had a march on the Strip?

Not in 2008 for F Street. Are you talking about back in 1972 with Ruby Duncan?

No. This was 2008 they organized a march on the Strip.

So what happened? Did they actually march on the Strip?

Yes, they marched from the Strip down to the convention hall where Convention Center runs all the way from the Strip from the New Yorker.

From the New York New York?

I believe that's New York New Yorker. I couldn't march with them that day because I had surgery, but that was where the march took place on the Strip and they marched all the way down the Strip to Convention Center. That's when they cut all the way over there to that other tower that was up there at that time, I believe. But that's where the end of the march was at.

I'll tell you this since I said that. When I was on active duty, President Truman through the Freeway and Transportation Act—are you familiar with that act?

No.

Well, there was a clause in there, a statement, but it was discussed that if a church was on that particular city or something like that you could not block that street. I asked that question many times before the city council, but I hadn't got an answer to this day. Why did you spend forty million dollars closing that wall? What they did, they were blocking off the black from the

new—well, you know what all they got over there now, the new downtown. They didn't want the black to come in there. Me, I was taking people back and forth to the hospital and to the doctors and that was a straight shot for me right there on Adams. I was taking care of Mother Patterson at that time. I was living on Cunningham, but I would come over there and take care of her every day and every night and things like that. If she had a rough night or a rough day, I would stay right there. But if I had to take her to the hospital or to the doctor, I could shoot right through there.

Down F Street.

Down F Street to right there where that... You know what I'm talking about, the IRS building.

Oh, to the IRS, okay.

You know where? That corner.

Stella Lake?

No, not Stella Lake.

Oh, I'm thinking about the FBI building. Oh, oh, yes, the IRS building right there near the Smith Center.

Yes, yes, yes. So I could cut right through there. And I would always be at Valley Hospital or UMC or which one they got took to before the paramedic got there because I took a straight shot.

So by cutting this off—and this is what I brought before that SNEC board many, many times.

What does SNEC stand for?

Southern Nevada Enterprise Community.

Oh, so it's not—okay. So when you said SNEC earlier, I thought you meant the SNCC of the 1960s.

No, no.

You're talking about—okay.

Since you said that you remember Ethel Pearson?

Yes.

That's why I called Trish Geran right today. I've said it many, many times. She is the Ethel Pearson of the 21st century.

Yes, because she's trying to stop the freeway.

Yes, yes, yes.

Now, can I go back and find this march in the newspapers in 2008?

Yes, you can. I believe I got some clippings of it if I'm not mistaken. Horsford. What's this other... You know who I'm talking about, the tall one. I can't think of his name. We're good friends.

Say that again.

I was thinking about the assemblyman.

Not Steven Horsford, somebody else?

Yes, Steven Horsford played a good part, too, because he's the one that took that to the assembly, what I told them. When I sent this letter to Washington, D.C. concerning that, he got ahold of Carson City. They sent a letter back to Carson City after they read my letter. I had sent a letter to every one of the legislators here. If you ever get that book that's in City Hall, my name is in it.

Anything you want to look for, just look up the name of a person. What was I talking about?

We were talking about the march on the Strip.

Yes.

Well, you were talking about the person who was in the legislature.

Yes, Horsford was the senator, the black senator.

So you're talking about the state senator.

Right, state senator. I never will forget it because I sat right down there at the Grant Sawyer Building. We didn't go up there for it, but they showed it to us. When Governor Gibbons? Was he the one that vetoed that?

Probably.

He was the one. When they got that letter from Washington, D.C. pointing that out—I got a copy of the letter, I think, still—and said get ahold of me right away. They did get a hold of me. That was what turned the tide. It was really what turned the tide. I don't care what they say about Steven Horsford and what he might have done otherwise, but he was the one that took that and got it through the legislature. Yes, he did. Yes, he did. You probably remember Willie Davis, pastor of Second Baptist Church.

Oh, Reverend Davis.

Reverend Davis, yes, took all that money and I was on the trustee board at that time. I was one of those that wouldn't allow anything to go wrong moneywise on the board.

Wouldn't allow anything to do what?

Anything to be done wrong on that board.

Good, good. Well, this has something to do with a federal grant.

Right. Right, with the federal grant.

But now, this is completely different from what we were just talking about; is that right?

Yes, yes. But that's a part of my story in there about that. Now, where were we?

So anything else about F Street that you want to talk about?

How segregated it was to an extent. I just delivered something yesterday. Wait a minute. Was it yesterday? Yes. To Las Vegas Paving. It was Trish Geran that got—well, we did; I supported—

that got people hard on that project to work on that project until that project was completed. I don't know whether you are familiar with that documentary that was made. Through her we brought the "Inspector America" in here.

What documentary?

You didn't see a documentary about the closing of the wall?

No.

Of F Street? But anyway, Trish brought that. When the "Inspector America" came in and they inspected that wall, Trish and I were the only two pictures in that documentary on that camera and he told me to say whatever I want to say and I said, "Bring this wall down." That was the end of that. But that truly happened. That's when this picture was taken, later, later. That's the construction work on that. From there on in, it took about three years.

It took about six years.

Yes, about six years. I was one of those that were complaining about that. I said, "Now, this could have been within fifty-two days if they would have done the right thing." But they kept hemming around it. You know how it got started? Mayor Goodman and a lot of them were talking about it cost seventy million dollars. You know what it ended up costing? Less than twenty, I think thirteen million. But this is why they were trying to put this over on the black community and things like that. Later on they formed this SNEC. I think it was—I know it was Trish Geran and this Armstrong girl—I can't think of her first name right now—formed this Southern Nevada Enterprise Community and we meet every three months.

Are you still meeting?

Yes, yes, yes. Mr. McGentry called me a few days ago. I'm one of the only ones that don't do any computer or anything like that and don't have an email. I have an email, but I send it right

directly to Trish.

So what are you discussing at the meetings now?

What are we discussing at the meetings now? Since you said that we've been through quite a few meetings off and on, in the last six months. Are you familiar with this project coming through here on Losee Road?

Yes.

I said to them, "That's nothing but fast tracking. You're bypassing this community. You did nothing in this community but come by and beautify the streets a little bit on D Street, put some trees in there and things like that." And they said they did this kind of big deal. I made a bid to buy on Jackson Street. You know where that barbershop was on Jackson Street?

Yes.

Trish Geran's father used own that barbershop. But I wanted to get something started there for the Westside and I made a bid to buy that. Then when I come out, Mr. Cotton—you ever hear of Mr. Cotton?

He used to own one of the clubs I think.

Yes, yes. And then he owned that building, too, had something to do with it after Geran's father died and how it changed places. That's when I found out that it was sold. I started looking into this and looking into that and found out that the city or somebody working for the city or some of their friends even right today own most of the property in that area.

So the city owns most of it?

Yes, right today.

So the city and, what, the churches?

The churches own nothing on there but the church, where they got their churches.

Don't they own all those parking lots over there where they park for the business park?

Yes, that's all they own.

Don't they have a lot of property, though?

Second Baptist, we've got property, yes.

And Victory Baptist?

What else has Victory got over there? Victory right on the corner of Jackson Street. Victory owns all of that. I'm trying to think. Mr. Hughes used to have that liquor store there. They own all of that now. All that came about in between there some kind of way. But they do. Victory owns all of that. Second Baptist owns everything from there on the other side of Victory with that apartment and things of that nature and we've got two buildings on the other side. And a parking lot that's on the south side down there, we own that.

So what about the Town Tavern? What is happening with that right there on Jackson Street?

We fought hard for that man to get that Town Tavern reopened. You know we got it reopened? But it was a mismanagement, misappropriation of money and how someone has—they were in court last week to finalize that.

So it was purchased by whom?

It was purchased by a foreigner and it went to the court different time, different time, and that's what they're in court right now, having it finalized. I think there's one more court hearing or something like that to finalize that. But he lost. It came back to the original owner, but something happened in between there.

So it went back to Mr. Green?

What is his name?

Elijah.

Yes. He lives right there on F Street.

That gold building.

Right. It went back to him. But something happened in between. So this is what the court procedure is now. I'll think of that lawyer in a minute. But they won that. That's what they're fighting about right now. They're working on it down there in that building right now, today. It went back to him. So this is what the dispute is back.

But right now, it's been reopened by some people from another country?

No.

No?

There's some work going on in there, but it went back to—I don't want this to get out.

So you think Mr. Green still owns it?

To the last of my knowledge, yes. I don't want to get too far into something like this because I was called about this a few days ago. Yes, yes, yes. You can kind of say that; put that in that way. Don't quote me as saying he still owns it.

So what do you think the future of the Westside is?

Real bad.

Explain that to me.

I said in 1978 when I came here, "If the black people don't get together in this community, it will be like this when there's a hundred years." So that means us coming together. In Baltimore where I went to Bainbridge Training Center and when I went back there some years later—I'm with the Interfaith Council here. We used to do some good work, good work for the community. I said, "As long as black business, you don't own nothing, you're not going to ever profit." Let's put it

this way. Your money comes in and turns over about three times, your money, my money, anybody else, to pay rent, buy food, pay car note, house note, and it's gone out of the community. You cannot prosper that way. When they closed Vons—what's his name? You know who headed up that; that basketball player.

Magic Johnson.

Magic Johnson. Magic Johnson stayed in there an extra two years losing money to try to help this community. Myself and...I'm trying to think who else. What's that man's name? He's still living because I seen him not too long ago. Seven of us got together. We tried to form a co-op to own that store for the community; and therefore, the community would have a part in that, but we never got it going. We didn't succeed at that. What you got in there right now? A black barbershop. You had a beauty salon place in there. It's closed.

Buy Low closed.

Buy Low?

Did it close?

Yes. Buy Low? It closed, yes.

When did it close?

Oh, I really don't know. That's what brought the basketball player. You know who I'm talking about.

No, no, no. I'm talking about the grocery store that's over there now.

It's still open.

Oh, okay. So that's what I was talking about.

Yes, yes, yes, it's still open. But you look to most of the business, what is catering it? You don't see a lot of black catering into that store or anything like that. About the only thing, you've got a

black girl on something there right down from AutoZone shop right now or something else. I forgot what it was.

A couple of clothing stores.

Yes, yes, a couple of clothing stores.

The bank is over there, automobile parts.

Yes, right. That's AutoZone, yes.

So what do you see as the future when you say it doesn't look good? So you don't have any hope for this community being able to turn itself around?

Until black people are able to own what's in that community and things of this nature. That's what I was telling him about that beautification program. I said, "The only thing you did"—the only reason why they went over and did that is when this helicopter go over there to photograph this city, it's to photograph throughout the world to marketing. They wanted that to look good. But it hadn't done nothing for black people. That community store closed. Someone just come back in there just now and got a 99 Cent Store in there now. And we kept them from closing...What's that, Granny's Chicken?

I don't know.

Yes, they closed just about everything in there. The only thing in there now is that Granny's Kitchen restaurant.

So are you talking about the Edmond Town Center or are you talking about something else?

I'm talking about on Jackson Street now and D Street.

Oh, you're back on Jackson Street, okay.

Yes, yes, yes. I'm pretty sure I'm through with Edmond Town Center.

So I didn't know you had jumped back to Jackson Street.

Oh, okay. Let's go there then. What else? I think that was about the size of what I experienced.

So tell me about the Interfaith Council. You work on the Interfaith Council?

Yes.

What kind of service does the Interfaith Council supply?

They were a council of people that bring all churches together and things like that and the community did things together. It was just a beautiful—and this is when they started having Martin Luther King Parades and things like that on certain days. I organized a male course at Second Baptist Church twenty-eight years ago. When we first started this when I was a part of the Interfaith Council, each year on Martin Luther King's birthday, they would have something in Summerlin.

Why Summerlin?

Well, this is one of the churches that was supporting it. Yes, yes, we would go up there.

Anything else you'd like to add?

I don't think so.

Well, thank you so much.

Thank you so much. Thank you so much. I wanted to give you this.

So tell me that thing about the three dollars when you left Texas to go to the military.

I'm going to give you a copy of that. That was all the money we had. That was my mother's and father's. That was their rent money. You ever heard anything about what they used to have that Bull Durham Tobacco in?

Oh, chewing tobacco? Yes.

Yes, chewing tobacco in that little bag that the smoking tobacco came in. That was all the change

that they could get together and put together for me to leave home. That's what was given to me.

Did you pay them back?

Down through the years, yes, yes. Until my mother died, and my family, I did that. That was one of the primary reasons why I left home and stayed in the military after being drafted. Just getting back to that Mississippi man, the same thing happened to him. If it hadn't been for World War II, that was how we got migrated out of the South. That's why I said Saturday at that...He paved the way for me. He went in in 1941, stayed until 1946, but he went back and he went to college. He's the author of eleven books now. He lives here in Nevada now, in Henderson.

Great.

I'm trying to get what I was trying to say about him. I didn't know nothing else to do but what they had assigned for me to do when I got in the Navy. I never will forget it. I'll tell you this. Let me give you this. I don't think you need any of this, no. The Buffalo Soldiers. I am now an honorary member of Troop Nine and Ten of the Buffalo Soldiers and they've done some work. A lot of people don't know much about the Buffalo Soldiers unit that's here. So much has started after that and the same thing leading up to this.

I was also on the committee to elect Horsford, Steven, to go to Congress. I got out and did a lot of work for him and things like that. I don't know whether or not you are a supporter of the Democratic or—

Of course.

You are?

Of course.

I can share this with you then. Some got upset with me. What I just gave you and just showed you on that article, that college and what they gave me that award Saturday, a lot of people got

upset with them because it's a conservative organization. When I joined the military, I made it very clear that you're going to have to honor my service. Remember where the scripture said, "It has no respectable person." That means being fair and honest with everybody and everything. When they called me and talked to me about it, said they wanted to honor me, they wanted to give me an award, and when she told me what she told me, I said, "Yes, I will accept it." A lot of people got angry about it because they said that's a Republican organization. But I said, "When I fought and gave my life for World War II and Vietnam, I didn't do it for no party; I did it for the country that we love." And so that's where I still stand on that even though I'm a registered Democrat. Some of them got upset with me because of this. But they are the only one that reached out after this article came out by the Black Image that wanted to do something and give me an award. I just talked to her this morning, thanking her for what she gave me in that award that she gave me and all that. She wanted to know and find out—I told you I was going to Washington, D.C., right?

Yes, the honor flight.

The honor flight, yes, yes. She was talking to me about that this morning and she told me, "Before you go we're going to give you something."

That's great.

You'd be surprised. When she gave me that award there that day—well, I'll say it to you. Let us always do what's decent and right before all people. I believe in that. And something else I believe in, you can't treat all people the same, but you can treat everybody right. This is what we must do.

When she gave me that award after I spoke for a few minutes there after the main speaker, then she went back and came back and she gave me an envelope. This is the first time in

my life that I have received money from somebody. She gave me a check.

Okay, good.

She did. She did. And then told me this morning when I was thinking of her what she did. She said, "Well, I'm going to give you something before you go to Washington, D.C."

That's great.

If you look—I don't have it with me—in my book, my mother, she got her high school diploma at the age of seventy-nine.

Wow. That's great.

I don't think I have that in the book, all of that. But anyway, it's on my website. I have what you call for those children going to college. That's what the purpose of this money goes to, a scholarship. I'm giving five thousand dollars a year. For the next three years I'm going to give them five thousand dollars—for four years. This is what I had listed and called "scholarship and debt free." That's what I'm doing with that.

That's great. That's wonderful. Our kids need lots of money. I said our college kids need lots of money.

Ooh, yes, yes, yes.

It's real expensive these days.

Yes, yes, yes. Do you have a copy?

No, I don't.

I can hardly write. Today is nine, twenty-three, isn't it?

Yes.

[Colloquy not transcribed]

You know I'm the only African American in the state of Nevada to wear this medal, don't you?

No, I don't. What medal is it?

The Korean War Medal.

So what is it for? What did you do to earn it?

Being a part of the Korean War and it was a peace medal, Korean War. They awarded me this medal in 2012 at the Caesars Palace.

So who awarded it to you?

The Korean government.

Oh, that's from Korea.

This is from Korea, yes. You ever heard of Reverend Moon?

Oh, yes.

I was invited to his funeral, but my sister died at the same time. When both of them died at the same time, I had surgery at that time, too, and I was unable to travel and that's why I did not go. I didn't even go to my sister's funeral. I didn't go to my brother-in-law's funeral. I was unable to travel. We were so close together. We were, yes, my youngest sister.

"To Claytee, my very special beloved." You've been so wonderful. I'm trying to think of what world must I use there.

Just sign it.

Just sign it? Okay. Yes, I'll do that. You know about the medal; that I'm the only African American.

Yes.

That's a special note for you right there.

Thank you so much.

Claytee, thank you.

Yes, this is wonderful.

Thank you. Thank you.

[Colloquy not transcribed]

Well, I'll tell you this. If this community don't come together and what we did back there in Baltimore...I think things are bad back there now. On that Interfaith Council, we came together and worked with the Interfaith Council. The Interfaith Council is the one that helped us a lot back there and this is what I tried to get going here, but they wouldn't support it. We've got three hundred black churches to come to together and they pooled their money. In two years' time, we had four black banks on the each side of the city—north, east, west, south—in the city of Baltimore. I think it's bad back there since the economy hit back there in 2008. People got to have banks together, people owning black banks, more businesses. They just come together. They were prospering good. I still say until this city comes together and these churches...

[Colloquy not transcribed]

Don't let me hold you up.

No, I appreciate this so much.

[End of recorded interview]

