

Carl Davis

CARL DAVIS: Carl Davis, I've lived in Evanston for 60 years, which is all of my life.

Q: All right, why did your parents come to Evanston?

CD: I guess, like everybody else that was migrating from the south at that time to find employment.

Q: Where from the south did your parents come from?

CD: Oh, my mother came from a place called Piedmont, South Carolina, and my father came from Texas. My mother, I guess, came here when she was maybe 11. And my father came -- I really don't know when he came, but he was -- I think he was high school age when he came from -- when he and his mother came here from Texas. And his mother was -- my father's mother, incidentally, was the first woman cab owner in the state of Illinois. And my mother, like so many others, did domestic work when she first got here.

Q: What was the name of the, I guess, cab company that your father's mother owned?

CD: Yeah, well, my grandmother, my father, and an association of eight or known other people formed the first Evanston two-way radio taxi cab company, and my mother was the first dispatcher for a two-way radio cab company in Evanston.

Q: What was it called?

CD: Better Cab. Yeah, I don't remember the year offhand, but I can get that information for you, that it was formed, I think, in the -- like late '40s, like '48, '49.

Q: What schools did you attend in Evanston?

CD: I attended Foster School, which at that time was all black. That is all black students with the exception of maybe, when I attended, I think there were three white students there. But 98 percent white faculty. And I guess the thing I remember most is that those white teachers then didn't have any more sense than to think that we black kids could learn. So they tried their darnedest to teach us, and they did a good job. Being a kid, I don't know what the racial or political climate was like, you know, during that time, except that we know that the racial climate was, as it has always been, rather racist, because for an all-black school to have 98 percent white faculty meant that, you know, they weren't -- they didn't hire any black teachers.

Q: Were there any bad experiences at Foster, or (inaudible)?

CD: Mm-mm, mm-mm, they -- during the years that I was there it was all good experience, lot of fun. We learned. We did have a black gym teacher. Well, we had two black gym teachers, three, I guess, a black male whose name was Bouyer, B-o-u-y-e-r, and he had formerly been a captain in

the Army. And he was a very strict disciplinarian who cared a lot about black kids. So we had -- you know, we had kind of fun that kids have from kindergarten right on through until the schools were integrated, and they were integrated when I was in the sixth grade -- when I was in the fifth grade, and we were the first all-school class to go to Haven and Nichols. They only had two junior highs then, or middle schools, as they're called now. And so from kindergarten right on through it was wonderful experiences. Had the kind of situation where if you were not doing what you were supposed to do in school the teacher visited your home, not have your parents come to school, all that kind of good stuff. And very seldom was there anybody standing in the hall. You paid attention in class, and if you didn't then you went to the principal's office and from there back to class, [00:05:00] but none of this putting you out in the hall or putting you in special class and all that good stuff. So I can't think of any bad experiences that I had between kindergarten and sixth grade.

Q: What were some of your activities, like school activities or extracurricular activities were involved in?

CD: When? I mean, high school or?

Q: Let's saying during Foster.

CD: During Foster? Well, they had something called handicraft that was after school at a community type center. But it was over in the white neighborhood, but that was looked forward to by most of the kids because that's where we learned to do woodworking and, you know, whittling, and girls learned to do cooking. Boys learned sewing as it related to tailoring, that kind of thing. Then we had the black Y then. And so a lot of our extracurricular activity took place there. That's where we learned basketball and Judo, and that's where we learned how to swim and just a host of things. We had an awful lot of things that we could do as, as they say now, as a village, that the kids don't have now. We had, at the black Y, we just had everything everybody else had. Went to camp six weeks in the summer, and --

Q: What camp was that?

CD: Camp Wabaningo, and let's see, the white camp was called -- I can't remember the name of the white camp. But Wabaningo was the Boy Scouts, and then that was the other thing that was the other extracurricular activity we all had. Most of the kids then were in the Cub Scouts and the Boy Scouts. And in fact, one of our Boy Scout leaders is a major religious as well as political figure at St. Thomas. He's been there about 30 or 40 years now. But he was my Boy

Scout leader. And then back then we also had Indian Guide, which was kind of like Boy Scouts, where you got a lot of exposure to the elements and learning how to live on your own, how to rough it for three or four days with very little food and all that kind of thing. It was all fun.

Q: How was your experience at Evanston Township?

CD: It was a good experience too. You know, interestingly enough, growing up in Evanston, lot of us didn't know that we were being discriminated against until we got to high school because our experience at Haven and Nichols was, I guess for the lack of a better term, a rather integrated experience. I mean, you know we went to the white kids' house and slept over. They came to our house and slept over, that kind of thing. And it wasn't until we got to high school when the parents decided, you know, black boys and white girls shouldn't be socializing, co-mingling and that kind of thing. And that to me was the first bit of discrimination. That was the first time I began to experience discrimination or racism. And even though, because kids are taught racism and discrimination, so at that time they really still were not heeding their parents' trappings, so we still had a lot of good times together. And I guess by the time I was a senior, my first real taste of racism was exhibited by my counselor, who suggested to

my parents that they shouldn't even consider sending me to college. I mean, (inaudible) black male, and I didn't think much of it then, you know, but now that I look back on it, I think that was the first time that it really hit me. We were in the conference, and they just suggested that, you know, I mean, we as black males really didn't have brain power to go on to college. And then of course after high school [00:10:00] I experienced it quite a bit because I was the first black that was ever hired to sell anything in a major department store in downtown Evanston. And then subsequently I was the first black hired by a major insurance company to sell insurance, or, as they call it today, to become a financial analyst, or not analyst, financial planner. So it was during that time that then racism and segregation and integration and all that became a real part of my life. Then I became president of the NAACP, started to knock down a lot of walls and confront a lot of people in Evanston, a lot of the power structure, about what we considered deplorable conditions. Being in the mortgage business now, I look back, and when my parents bought their house, like, 99 percent of the black folks then, or African Americans at that point, got their mortgages from somewhere outside this community. No banks would let them -- excuse me -- money to minorities to buy

houses. And so when the fact banks wouldn't lend money to do anything, so when I became president of the NAACP that was one of my goals is to knock down the discriminatory practices at the banks. And we began to do that by challenging the banks to hire, being to hire people at the lowest low, just putting directors on the board.

Q: And what year was that about?

CD: That was in 1972 when I became president of the NAACP. And in order to get the banks' attention we had what was called a reverse banking. What we did was we went to all the banks and asked them -- no, we didn't go to all the banks. We asked which bank would be receptive to hiring a black, and either training that black or finding one that was already capable of being an officer in the bank who could relate to black people when they came to the bank, and at that time there was Estate National Bank and the First National Bank and the Evanston Bank and First Federal. Those were the four lending institutions in the city. And the Evanston bank said they'd like to take a shot at it. So what we did was we went through major corporations. At that time there was Sears. There was A.C. Neilson and a couple of others I can't remember. But we approached them and asked them if they would be willing to put their discretionary funds, which meant that they had -- all

companies have funds in banks that they're not really concerned about how much interest they pay because they use those funds quite often to do whatever. And so they didn't have to be concerned about earning interest on those particular funds. So we had asked them if they would help us present the bank that was going to be most responsible to the black community in terms of our agenda. We want to put a \$100,000 one-day deposit. And that bank -- well, back then \$100,000 was a lot of money. The bank was going to be able to use that money to lend out. So they would make quite a bit of money off of -- so the Evanston bank was the one who tried it, and subsequently they hired an ex-police officer whose name was Marshall Barksdale and put him in a position to be able to make loans without having to go to somebody else, up to a certain amount, and that kind of thing. And that's kind of it in a nutshell. I got clippings from the newspaper. The event appeared in the *American Banker*, which is a daily bank publication. And I can, you know, supply you with copies of that [00:15:00] at some point, 'cause there were other people, other organizations that got together and that were engaged in that effort. So I said I can supply you with the article.

Q: I want to back up a little bit. School activities at Evanston Township, were you involved in any activities or sports then, or?

CD: Not really. I mean, I played football and basketball. But other than that I wasn't engaged in any extracurricular activities like some of the kids were in Y Mu, which had to do with theatrical band and choir and all that. But I went to work every day to help raise my brothers and sisters, so I didn't have a lot of time for a lot of extracurricular after school activity.

Q: What was your first job?

CD: My first job where somebody else paid me I guess was in a gas station. Evanston used to have almost as many gas stations as it has restaurants now. There used to be a gas station on every corner. There used to be a gas station right here. There was one across the street and across the street over there. And I think the first one I worked at was right down the street where there used to be the athletic club. They're doing something down there now. Over by the Greenleaf and Dodge. I worked there. Think that was my first -- well, my -- yeah, that was my first job, but the first place I earned money was a paper route. I had two paper routes, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, and that was -- those were my first jobs. Then

I got a job in the summer through the political connections of my father. I got a job in the summer working at one of the parks. And I worked there for the whole four years that I was in high school, and then after that I got a job full time with the city, and I guess my ultimate job with them was driving the garbage truck. And left there because it just didn't seem right that somebody with a fourth grade education and here a black fellow was there had at least a high school diploma was working for this -- these ignorant people. So I left there. About that time the man who was president of the NAACP was looking feverishly to fill his job. That seemed to be something awesome for most people, and that was to sell clothes at one of the major department stores. And so I took that job for about six months. And I guess it had been about three years major insurance companies had been looking for some black to go to work as, you know, an insurance agent. Nobody would take it, and I got real disillusioned with the department store. I was a clothing salesman. And I got real disillusioned with that job and took the job with Prudential as its first black salesman in the Chicago area. And from there I was just -- well, I guess I have to back up. During the summer while I was in school I had the job at the city in the parks, but as soon as I reached 17 my father bought me a brand new

station wagon, and so I also then worked for a black caterer as well as holding the job at the city and as well as holding the job at the gas station. I delivered this caterer's utensils, her dishes and her silverware and all that kind of thing. And that was usually on the weekend. But interestingly enough, that's how I became interested in doing anything of a delivery nature, and since then, from the time I was 17 until the time I was about 24, I think, 23, is when I went into the service, I did this delivery business. And of course, since I came out of the [00:20:00] -- went to the service and came out and did a host of other things and then came full circle because now I'm back in the delivery business with my messenger service and my van service. And it's really funny because I went all the way. Had come full circle to find out that's really what I like doing. I've done a number of other things, but that's really what I like doing. And so to this day I'm doing it.

Q: You mentioned you were in the service.

CD: Yeah, I was in the service when I was 23 into the Army. And I was in there two and a half years. I went into the service and was supposed to get out in September of '61. And that's the year the Berlin crisis started, and so they extended me for six months to go over and guard the wall

while they put it up. Ironically I lived long enough to see it come down. But I was opposed to going to Germany to put up a wall. So I [doctored?] up. While I was in the service I did a number of things. I was public information officer, which covered all the sports and wrote stuff for the newspaper, for the post newspaper and that kind of thing. And so I had quite a -- orderly, what they called orderly experience in terms of knowing what channels orders came from and where they go and all that. And so I just up my own and sent them in. So I was in Colorado at the time I was supposed to get out, in Colorado Springs, so I just typed up my orders that left me in Colorado Springs, and during the course of the two years that I was in the service I had had a little MP training, so they put me in charge of the stockade for the rest of the time that I was in the service. I think they did that for two purposes. One, it was really a jelly job, and I think they thought, gee, he might stay, you know. He might reenlist, but the day they told me I could go I left. But even the years that I was -- the two and a half years that I was in the service were, I think, part of the greatest growing up experiences that one could ever have. I tried to encourage my kids to go to the service. Like college, you meet all kinds of people, but in college you can still pick and

choose who you decide to associate with. In the service you have no choice. You rub elbows with thugs, and you can't say, well, I don't want to be associated with him or her because the ultimate aim was to go off to war to protect your country and all that good stuff, and so you really don't have any choice about who you're going to associate with. I mean, you do to an extent. You don't have to associate all the time with somebody that's not of your choice, but a good portion of the time you do. And so that grows you up pretty good because it's the beginning of your being able to read people and know people and experience, even among African Americans, various cultures. And it's an experience that you just can't get anywhere else. And so I think that that helped me. In fact, I know that helped me to grow up and quick. I didn't have to wait until I was 35 or 40 and grow up. I grew up in them two years. Because the next thing I was sleeping next to people who, you know, were thieves, in some cases were murders, you know, had been in civilian life. And it's quite an experience. It grows you up pretty quick.

Q: OK, what church do you belong to or did you belong to?

CD: Second Baptist, mm-hmm.

Q: Second Baptist, all there all your life, most of your life?

CD: No, as a kid I was Methodist. The only reason I'm at Second Baptist is because when I got married my wife was Baptist, and I didn't attend, after I got to be a teenage, I didn't attend church that often. And so when I got married it was suggested that, you know, the family that [00:25:00] prays together stays together. So, and my wife was very active in church. She'd been very active all of her life in church activities as a child and then as an adult in teaching Sunday school and singing in the choir and doing a number of things. And when we got married I was Methodist. I had formerly attended Ebenezer, and for the first five years we were married we didn't have kids, so for a long time if I went to church I went to Ebenezer, and she went to Second Baptist. So when we had our first kid then it donned on me it didn't make sense to be taking the kid between the churches, so I made the choice to go to join Second Baptist and be with her. So I've been there a good 35 years anyway. And I've held a number of offices, Sunday school superintendent. I was the -- on the trustee board. And, well, I guess that's pretty -- oh, and, well, we have, and they still have, Toastmaster thing, but that's not necessarily Second Baptist. That's just where they meet. But those are the kind of activities that I was engaged in. Oh, let me back up. What I was talking about

first, when I took over the NAACP I had a breakfast feeding program for kids that -- where we started out with kids who really needed breakfast. Evanston had some kind of false image that there were no hungry or poor kids, black or white, in Evanston, and nothing was farther from the truth. We have a lot of kids whose parents made under the poverty level in terms of money. And I convinced a priest and the Kiwanis Club that we had those kind of kids. And once I convinced the priest, which is funny because once I convinced him he convinced some Jewish people that they ought to take part in this. So I started the breakfast feeding program, and we first went to every black church in Evanston to see if we could feed the kids before they went to school. The integration had come in by then, and so the kids had to go stand on the various corners, as they do today, to get on the bus to go to whatever school they were being bussed to. But a lot of the kids went to school hungry. So there was no way in the world for them to learn as long as they had these cramps in their stomach. And so we started this breakfast feeding program. Sunny loaned me a bus. I used to get up every morning at 4:30, go get the bus, about 5:30, go get the kids at all the corners in Evanston that -- about quarter to six, had them up at Covington Methodist Church. They finally decided, yeah,

we'll feed them, and there was a black young lady there who was the cook for a daycare center. So she cooked for kids before she even cooked for the daycare center, and 'cause these kids would be out of the way. They would be back on their buses going to school by the time the daycare center opened, so she had plenty of time. And they were (inaudible). So every morning I'd get up, go get the bus, pick up the kids, and at first we started out with kids who were hungry because they were poverty stricken. Then we did a little study, find out whole lot of kids were going to school hungry that were poverty stricken. Their parents, both parents, were working, plenty of food in the house, and they left it up to the kids to get their breakfast before they went to school. Kids wouldn't get it, so they went to school hungry. So we expanded the program to taking kids no matter who they were. If they were hungry you'd be out on the corner, we'd pick you up. Ultimately we took the program to the high school because it was centrally located. And the superintendent at that time, whose name was Scot Thompson, fought the administration. They didn't really want the breakfast feeding program there, but he suggested that it was a good idea. So the kids -- I mean, we got the kids to be able to go to high school, and when they first took over the

program [00:30:00] then they wanted to give us powdered eggs and powdered milk and all that good stuff. And, you know, so my question to them was, well, what kind of nutrition was that? And secondly and more importantly, every morning before I picked the kids up I ran about a mile, mile and a half around this track. After I pick the kids up I sit down to eat. I'm not going to eat nothing powdered. So they said, well, the budget going -- I said we'll get the money from somewhere. So couple of interesting things happened. We needed volunteers to feed the kids. Not one black parent volunteered to feed black kid. We needed money for the budget. Not one black church, not one black person offered any money. All the money came from Jewish people in Glencoe. They funded the program. And there was only one black lady who volunteered every Wednesday, and she even got her boss to volunteer, and he wasn't black. And she worked at the Evanston Public Library, and she came every Wednesday, and her boss, who was the director of the Evanston Public Library, came and volunteered every Thursday to feed the kids, but all the rest of you know -- and when the program first started, by the kids being mostly poverty stricken, you know, they had some cultural habits that the rest of us weren't used to, like cussing out adults and all that kind of thing. And

when the program first started, you know, they called the white folks who was feeding them bitches and all that kind of thing, you know. So on a number of occasions before, as I picked them up, as all this kind of thing developed, you know, I picked them up. I would have a little session with them before they went in to eat. The program ran for three years. When the program ended everybody was hugging and kissing and crying because the program was ending. And because ultimately dropped all of that and became respectful to their elders and the whole bit. It was quite a, quite a deal. So they need to get back to that. I don't know about getting the respect because these kids aren't kidding about life today, but they need to get back to feeding kids breakfast before they go to school. I guess there's some kind of move going on now to do that. The reason the program ended is because the schools came out with hot lunches. And we tried to show them, well, hot lunch still wasn't going to help the kids who had been hungry for the first part of the morning. And when he got that hot lunch he wanted to go to sleep after that, you know. So he still wasn't going to learn nothing, you know.

Q: Aside the NAACP, what other organizations have you belonged to?

CD: What other organizations?

Q: Yes.

CD: Well, the Urban League. I was chairman of the Evanston Community Development Corporation. I served as treasurer of the Evanston Ecumenical Council. And then of course professional organizations. I belonged to the - gee whiz, I'm trying to think of the name of the organization for the insurance company. I wanted to get out of there so bad I forgot everything about it. I can't even think of the name of it, but I'll get the name to you. But I belonged to -- and I belong to the union of course, the AFLCIO, insurance workers international. Belonged to the Christian -- the Baptist Christian -- I can't think of the name of that either, but when I was Sunday school superintendent I belonged to a Baptist group that were -- it was a group of Sunday school superintendents across the country, but I can't think of the name of that either. I was a charter member of [FAM?], the [chess men?]. Trying to think of that other group. Oh, but I can get you the names of all of those too. But I belonged to a host of organizations.

[00:35:00]

Q: Just when the '60s were -- a lot of things were going on in Evanston. There were real estate sit-ins. Martin Luther King Jr. visited here. Were you involved in any of that, or?

CD: Mm-hmm, I was involved in marches. We picketed the banks. We picketed the movie theater. We used to have to sit in the balcony, and soon as the theater said we could sit on the first floor we still sat in the balcony because that was the best place to sit.

Q: So that was the -- sitting on the balcony before the theater was still going on in the '60s?

CD: It began, I mean, it broke down in, I think, in the early '60s. You know, we were still having to sit in the balconies in the '50s when we were in high school, in the early '50s anyway. Then we had a confrontation with the board of education, which ultimately brought about the integration of the school. Yeah, I was part of that. The long nights at school board meetings, of solving the little gray-haired white folks who ran the school board at the time. As a result of our unrest they finally hired a man, Gregory Coffin, Loraine probably might have mentioned that to you. And he became kind of a symbol for black people. They hired him to create an integrated atmosphere in the schools, and that's when bussing first came about. And he didn't have any more sense than to really try to fully integrate schools, staff, and all that. And so then the white power structure decided then it was time for him to go. During that time, I was the president of the NAACP

then. And we had weekly meetings. We had, like, Bread Basket or like PUSH now. We had those meetings every week, but we broadened the scope to include all of the atrocities in all the city government, and so in that weekly meeting we had the mayor, the city manager, the chief of police, the school superintendents all reporting to us in black church at the corner of [Daryl and Emerson?], Springfield. We met there every Saturday morning. We had a newsletter that went over week to people.

Q: (inaudible)

CD: Yeah, I still got some copies of that.

Q: What was it called?

CD: *The Spokesman*. Well, the whole thing, the whole program, that is, the weekly meetings, we also had a radio program every Saturday morning that I broadcast. There used to be a radio station here in Evanston, WLTD. And I broadcast from that every Saturday morning. And the whole program was called Get in the Know. And so the radio program was a division of Get in the Know, and the radio program was called Get in the Know. Then the newspaper was called *The Spokesman*, which was a division of Get in the Know, and then the program itself every Saturday morning people would say we're going to get in the know. And during that time we challenged the school board. They subsequently fired

Coffin, but they were really fearful after they did that. And we had the upper hand, but as usual, black folks do a lot of talking. They don't do much action. So as a result of firing, the white folks thought the town was going to be torn apart. Not as much as a streetlight was broken. So from that point to where we are now, white people began to move in a fearless way. In the beginning they were fearful, but from that point on said people just make a lot of noise. They aren't going to do nothing. We had a lot of games, if you can call them games, and the Robinsons were recipients of that. In terms of the busing, they were able to become the first minority company [00:40:00] to hold a bussing contract, and they've had it ever since. And as a result of that, a lot of other people, I guess, have benefited in a byproduct kind of way because they've been able to hire a lot of people, not at a lot of money, but I guess another byproduct of that is they all had to have CDL license, so a lot of them have gone on from Robinsons to do other things like drive 18-wheelers and become traffic managers and all kinds of things in the transportation industry, so you know, we can say that a lot of people benefitted from that. But we didn't benefit anywhere near what other ethnic groups would have -- did benefit who had less opportunity. There was a time in

Evanston when the chief of police was black. Now, this is all at the same time. The chief of police was black. Two school superintendents were black. We have a --

Q: What were their names?

CD: Joe Hill was superintendent of district 65, and Margaret [LaBot?] was a black woman who was superintendent of 202. And Billy Logan was the chief of police. Mary Thomas, who is now a judge, was the assistant corporation council. Harlan Mayberry was the assistant city manager. Lee Buick was the superintendent of streets and sanitation. Clifford Sloane was the assistant forester. I'm trying to think. There were some other people. But all these people were in place at the same time. In other words, we had control of the city.

Q: What year was it, about what year (inaudible), '60s, '70s, late '70s?

CD: Seventy, late '70s, early '80s. And didn't seem to make any difference in terms of our gains. I don't know whether Evanston is so unique. I haven't lived anywhere else, so I can't really attest to the way blacks treat each other wherever else they live. What we see economically would suggest that we're pretty much the same everywhere. But even now black people in high positions don't talk to one another, which is a phenomena to me because we've all lived

long enough to know that we're all vulnerable, and so we're more vulnerable when one doesn't know what the other one is going through. But we still don't talk to one another, I mean, the positions in positions. I say we, you know, not in that position, but those who are in positions of authority, and we don't have that many now. We still have a problem in this day and time backing up one another. We look at, you know, Harold Washington. He died, and we squabbled to get -- to never receive that position again, probably. In Evanston the white folks hadn't voted for Loraine she wouldn't be here. Lot of black folks in our first attempt at the job at least went to the poles. But then her second bid, just because she was unopposed, we didn't give her very much support. And we still don't, you know, at this stage of the game. So I used to say Evanston was a unique place, but as far as black people are concerned it's not unique. We just are reactive. We're not proactive. And so we never plan. A group of us were talking about that the other day. There was a black man who's head of American Express. His name is Chenault. A great business and economical feat. [00:45:00] But even he can't put anybody in place under him to succeed him. And we do not fight to see that that takes place in any position we have whereas other ethnics -- we get blacks on

the board of banks. Every other ethnic group is on the board to serve its people. We get on the board of a bank, we decide to keep as many people out of the picture as possible. And it doesn't make sense to me. Like I say, it's a strange phenomenon. But it's not just germane to Evanston. It appears that that's the way it is everywhere black folks are in positions of power. We don't build succession.

Q: Nineteen sixty-eight there was, I guess, a radio station in Chicago called WIND.

CD: Mm-hmm.

Q: I don't know what that was, but they had a program called Evanston Racer, supposedly. Do you remember recalling --

CD: I wasn't aware of that, mm-mm.

Q: When Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. came to Evanston were you involved in that in any way or?

CD: Mm-hmm. I mean, I marched with him. I wasn't -- I didn't have anything to do with the planning or anything like that, but I march with him, mm-hmm.

Q: Who were or who was your major influence in your life growing up?

CD: My grandmother and my father. Well, I guess my grandmother, my father, and my mother. My mother was a major influence in my life in how to treat people, and my

father was an influence from a political and, I guess, how to do things. One of his favorite sayings was always it's not who you know. It's how knows you. So just be sure that a lot -- you make sure a lot of people know you, whether you know them or not, make sure a lot of people know you, which turned out to be a pretty true axiom because you never know who knows you. And so in trying to do certain things sometimes people would say to me, "Yeah, I know you." And I'd look and say, "You do?" You know, "Yeah, I read about you in the paper. You did this. You did that. You made a speech over here. You made a speech over there. And I liked what you said," you know. And so as a result, yeah, I'll help you with this particular project. So that kind of thing. So it really is kind of important as to who knows you, not so much who you know. But he was -- he, my mother, and my grandmother were great influences in my life. My mother and father were -- I mean, my grandmother and my father were pioneers. You know, they were the first to do a lot of things, and so that kind of followed in my life by being, you know, the first to work in the department store, the first to work at a major insurance company, the first to form programs that were outside the realm of sports to help kids. We used to have a [mini bike?] program, and then the mini bike program

kids who are hard to reach and kids who could go either way, who were helped by that program because everybody couldn't play basketball. Everybody couldn't play football, so here we had another carrot, so to speak, these mini bikes. And kids did some phenomenal things in order to be able to come every day after school and ride these bikes. And some of the requirements were that a kid had to excel every semester in school, one semester over the next, not necessarily in the same thing. In other words, you didn't have to get better at English if you was bad at English. But he had to get better all the way around. And if he was a behavior problem he really had to get his act together. And that helped a lot of people. That program ended, and so a good portion of the people who were in that program are now the ones who are the dope dealers, and they come to me every so often, and they say, you know, the kids today need a little better shake than they getting.

[00:50:00] Why don't you start the program again? And I say to them, why don't you start the program? You know, that's something you can do legitimately with that money, and you can put it back into the community. And maybe it'll even help you change your mind about what you doing, you know. But you know, in terms of the pioneer thing, just did a lot of things. I mean, I was first chairman of

the Evanston Community Development Corporation, got the first money that they got from the city in order to begin to do the things they were doing. So in terms of the influence, it just seemed to follow. Since they were pioneers I became a pioneer.

Q: What was your feeling when Evanston (inaudible) closed?

CD: When the YMCA closed?

Q: Yeah.

CD: That we really had nothing then to turn to. We had nowhere to turn to. Going to the white YMCA didn't interest anybody in that era at that time. We knew that we would not be cared for by white supervisors as we had been by our own. Competition was different. No matter how good you were, that was another time in which you experienced real racism because no matter how good you were you didn't play, you know, white folks are always all about winning, but back then they didn't have to use us to win because there were more of them on the team, and so they could use them to win if they could win. And so, you know, a lot of good people did not get an opportunity to show what they could do or to excel in sports as they later did because, you know, as we did get an opportunity to play, then we broke all kinds of records, and we're still doing that. So now it's the opposite. You know, you look at a basketball

team, there's usually five black people on the floor or 10, you know. But back then the Y closed, you know, we didn't know what we were going to do in terms of swimming. They didn't want us in their pool. So we lost a lot. You know, we lost a lot of associational kinds of recreational associational kinds of things that, you know, that still can't be replaced. They're still not -- whites, I mean, we go to the Y now and accept it, and to the white Y and all that, but like everybody else we had our own culture, and so there were things -- there was a camaraderie that you don't build when you're sitting on foreign soil, so to speak. So everybody thought we -- you know, just end of the world. Lost our Y, you know. And that was the hub of our social experiences at the time. So it was quite a loss. I still think it. And I still think so, you know. I mean, I think if black kids could get together now under the supervision of black people, you know, all these people shooting one another and killing one another and carrying on --

Q: We've covered a lot of ground here. Did you go to college?

CD: Mm-mm.

Q: No. Did you get a chance to approve those pictures at all?

CD: No, I didn't, uh-uh.

Q: These are our pictures that I accumulated through time of doing this research.

CD: (inaudible)

Q: So that's --

CD: Nineteen twelve. This is at the Y.

Q: Mm-hmm.

CD: Mm-hmm. That's at the school.

Q: You said your mom was -- lived here all her live, your mom?

CD: Mm-mm. She came from -- well, she lived here longer than she lived anywhere else. She came from South Carolina.

Q: OK.

CD: She went through Foster school. [00:55:00]

Q: OK. Did she ever talk to you about her experience at Foster school or anything or?

CD: No, not really. You know, we used to talk about the teachers. There were one or two teachers that she had that we had who were still there when she -- but other than that, never really talked about, you know, her experience as it related to racism or anything like that.

Q: That's across the street when the street lamps first went in.

CD: Mm-hmm. This is (inaudible). This is Mr. Jay's house. Tony Dawkins? No, but it sure looks like him. I probably know most of these kids. I can't identify them right now,

but it's something. Oh, Dan Philips, Mr. Boyd, Sam White. Can't think of that guy's name. He used to be a fireman. And Ms. Hunter. I don't recognize any of these white folks. That dude used to work for the --

Q: I think that's a brotherhood council.

CD: Huh, this dude used to work at the city. That Mr. Butler?

Q: Yup.

CD: Who gave you these?

Q: Evanston photographic studios.

CD: Oh, OK.

Q: Some (inaudible) to the historical society. Like that picture. They have the original picture there, which, I'm going to try to get a better copy of. We just borrowed for day, made a scan of it, but (inaudible) duplicate negative.

CD: Yeah, OK.

Q: Isabella Garnett.

CD: Yeah.

Q: (inaudible) right there.

CD: Right, OK.

Q: You were born in Chicago, right?

CD: Mm-hmm, that's because we couldn't -- when I was born they didn't -- the community hospital, I'm trying to think, it was just being built. Mrs. Garnett's house was somewhat of a hospital, but there weren't a lot of people -- there

weren't a lot of kids born there. And we couldn't go there. (inaudible) hospital or to St. Francis. Yeah, this is the old building, yeah, the old Emerson -- the old community hospital, but it was also, was it Dr. Pen's house? Yeah. OK. Yeah, that's what it looks like now. We own it. Yeah, Dr. Fry, Dr. Hill. Now, what was this man's name? Dr. -- hmm, can't remember his name.

Q: (inaudible)

CD: Here, this is Dr. Winfield.

Q: Is she still here?

CD: She was the first black -- was she the first black? Yeah, she was the first black to serve on the school board, I think, on district 65 school board.

Q: Is she still alive.

CD: Uh-huh. Yeah, God, what was it? Dr. Washington, Dr. Washington, Dr. Hill, Dr. Fry. [01:00:00] I forget his name. Dr. Winfield, she's a pediatrician. He was a general practitioner. She was a general practitioner. He was a general practitioner. I don't think he was a doctor. I think he was on the -- this is the hospital board, yeah, at that time. Oh, that was the other thing. I served on that board too for about 10 years. Brother had it going on.

Q: Do you know when your livery -- your grandmother's cab business was -- was that here or (inaudible)?

CD: Mm-hmm, yeah, that was here.

Q: Do you remember when that was formed?

CD: Yeah, right after him, I would imagine. I got pictures of her. Name of her cab company was -- well, the name of her cab was peaches. She was called Peaches, and she had this Peach's Cab thing. I can't show you pictures. I'll get you pictures of that.

Q: That'd be great.

CD: That's the Y here. That Ms. Garnett?

Q: That's Carrie Smith.

CD: Oh, OK.

Q: Larry Smith's mom.

CD: Oh yeah. OK.

Q: That's another Butler Building.

CD: Mm-hmm.

Q: That's where it was on --

CD: It was next door to the Y.

Q: Yeah, actually, this -- this is the other one. This is on Davis.

CD: Oh, OK.

Q: (inaudible) Grove between (inaudible) --

CD: Oh, not -- yeah, OK. I didn't know he had something somewhere else.

Q: He had several buildings.

CD: Oh, OK.

Q: Three altogether.

CD: Hmm.

Q: Those are all unidentified people.

CD: That were -- yeah. Who's that?

Q: Andrew Scott. And original earlier settlers.

CD: OK. Well, interesting collection. This is Mt. Zion? Yeah.

Q: No, Ebenezer.

CD: Ebenezer, all right, oh yeah. That's the way it looked before they burned it up. That's the basement of Ebenezer. Mike Summers, [razor?] short. I tell you, boy, he became the director of black choir. He was the last director, I think, well no, Green. Yeah, no, he was. Bunny Hutchinson (inaudible) Day, haven't seen him in years and years. (inaudible) I'm going to skip over some. Mr. Bryant. He was a black developer. The houses on Greenwood between Pitner and Fowler on the south side of the street were all built by him, and the houses on McDaniel from Dempster down to, let's see, Dempster, Crane, down to Greenleaf were built by him. [01:05:00]

END OF AUDIO FILE