

Vandell Cobb

Q: Yes. So today is, what, June 25, 2016, about 9:38 at Shorefront Legacy Center. Interviewing Mr. Vandell Cobb. C-O-B-B. Right?

VANDELL COBB: Correct.

Q: All right. So first question to start off with, just to get things warming up, is can you tell me a bit about your mother and father. Who they are, their names, and where they're from.

VC: My father's name is Willie Cobb. My mother's name is Henrietta. H-E-N-R-I-E-T-T-A. Maiden name Love. Married name Cobb. They're from Southern Georgia, Georgetown, Georgia, Whitman County, Georgia. It's a county. My father was a farmer and my mother was everything a mom could be back in the day. She took care of the children, she worked in the fields, she did the cooking, she did the cleaning. I remember when we were -- let me tell you a bit about my dad. He bought 139 acres of property in 19, hmm, 20-something and it was the sort of thing that a black man didn't do back then. You just don't buy, you know, that much property in the South without some sort of going between the whatever. I don't know how it all happened but

it happened. My father didn't read. He didn't write. But he could tell time, count money, and he was quite the entrepreneur. Besides the farm he did all sorts of other things. He cut (inaudible) Sunday morning on the porch. And my mother, she had a garden, must have been about a couple acres, but she would never collect anything from the garden for the family until she had given away a lot of it because she had so much. And the question was asked, why did she grow so much? She said, "So others can have as well as us." That's how I grew up with my mom and my dad. My mother was the disciplinarian, of course. My dad was the worker. And my grandmother, whose name is Henrietta, as well, my great-grandmother's name was Henrietta, as well -- and I have to say I was my grandmother's favorite. When it came to anything that I wanted, anything I needed, anything that wasn't -- anything that my mother said no to, my grandmother said yes. So I just went to my grandmother. Instead of going to my ma I went to my grandmother because I knew what the answer would be.

Q: Great. So what was it like from -- during your childhood growing up in Georgia?

VC: Growing up in Southern Georgia was -- I know now it was typical, you know. You did a lot of work as a child. You

had animals that needed to be fed. You had eggs that needed to be collected. You had guinea eggs that needed to be found because they always laid their eggs in secret places. You had to find them. And we had a henhouse. We had a barn. We had two barns, as a matter of fact. We had a couple of mules. Never had a horse. My dad didn't drive so we didn't have a vehicle. So, as I said, with all this property he planted cotton, peanuts, corn, soy, that I -- peanuts, did I say that?

Q: Mm-hmm.

VC: Yeah, OK. So when it comes time for harvest, then, you know, we had to -- well, first of all, we had to plant it, we had to do all these things. We had to work (inaudible). We had to make sure that it was clean, make sure the grass wasn't choking the plants themselves, and then come harvest time we had to shake peanuts. That's how you did it. They would [00:5:00] (inaudible) underneath them and they would come along, pick them up, shake them and put them on this pole that had a cross on it like this. You'd wrap it around, you'd make this stalk-like sort of a thing.

Q: OK.

VC: So then the peanuts would dry and then they would collect them off of these poles and take them to market. Cotton we

picked it and put it in the barn and then we would take it to -- take that to market, as well. Corn same thing. And, you know, all of it, we always kept some for seed to plant the next year.

Q: Right, right.

VC: So we had to, you know, do that, as well. You know, open the peanuts, save the peanuts and eat some, save some. Same thing for cotton. We kept cotton seeds. In fact, cotton -- cotton -- we used cotton for our mattresses. You'd take the seeds out of the cotton, put it in -- put it in the mattress thing, you know.

Q: OK.

VC: And that was your mattress.

Q: OK.

VC: That's what we slept on. That was -- you know, every bad had its own mattress --

Q: OK.

VC: -- made of cotton you grew.

Q: OK. Had to restuff it every so often?

VC: I don't recall that. I don't -- maybe. I don't know, I don't know. I just know that when you made the bed, you know, you slept and the cotton don't just bounce back.

Q: Right.

VC: You know, it's not like --

Q: It's going to sink.

VC: Yeah. You got to go there and -

Q: Fluff it up.

VC: -- fluff it up and fluff it up, fluff it up, and then make the bed every day. So that's -- yeah. That was how we did it.

Q: OK. How many siblings did you have?

VC: A total of eight. That was eight of us total. Let me try and name them. [Willie Fred?]. Love was his last name. I'm trying to do this in order but if I don't, well, that's too bad because I don't remember. There was Henry. There was Robert. There was [Otis?]. There was Amanda. There was Sally. There was Clifford. And then there was me. I was the last one to come along. My dad was at the time 44. My mother was like 40 when I was born. And I was 10 years -- I was a big surprise. I was the largest one in weight born. I was the latest. I was the latest one born and I was 10 years between me and the next sibling, who was Clifford.

Q: OK.

VC: Irene? Did I mention Irene?

Q: No, you didn't.

VC: Yeah. Irene, she passed when she was five or six of spina bifida. They didn't know then what it was, of course. You know --

Q: Right.

VC: -- became later known that she had this thing. Oh, she had spina bifida. Clifford died in a head-on collision in Tennessee. My mom and dad both died at the age of 89. My grandmother was 85. Robert died when he was 82. Willie -- well, his name was Willie Fred. We called him Joe. He was the oldest of all of us. He passed away 10 years ago or so, something like that.

Q: So pretty long lives.

VC: So my sister Amanda, my brother Henry, and I.

Q: OK. That's cool. So when did you -- when you came North did you come alone or did you come with family members or how did that happen? Talk to me about that?

VC: Always came alone. I wanted to come visit my sister Amanda and my sister -- my sister Sally was the first one to come north (inaudible). And then my sister Amanda was next to come.

Q: They both moved to -- where did they move to?

VC: Evanston.

Q: Evanston. They both moved to Evanston?

VC: Yeah, they both moved to Evanston.

Q: Now, about what years was that?

VC: Good question. (laughs)

Q: [00:10:00] Was that before --

VC: Well, we --

Q: Was that before World War II or --

VC: We can figure it out or you can figure it out later.

Q: Yeah.

VC: Let's see. Excuse me. I am 69 years old. My -- I was 14 when I came here. So it would have been three to five years before then when they first came here.

Q: OK.

VC: I was born in 1946 so they would have come in early 1940s.

Q: OK.

VC: And that's as close as I can get you (inaudible).

Q: That's good. That helps. Actually, no, that helps a lot. Exactly. I can look at some references here and see if I -
- their names pop up somewhere. Sally, was she married when she came up here or single?

VC: No, she was single.

Q: OK. And same with Amanda? Single?

VC: Amanda was single.

Q: OK.

VC: And Amanda married a [Perrin?] family, a Perrin brother --

Q: OK.

VC: -- which was a prominent family here in Evanston. The Perrin family was. She married Walter.

Q: OK.

VC: Walter Perrin.

Q: And Sally, did she marry?

VC: She did marry but she married someone from the south. Ulysses. Ulysses Clark.

Q: OK. That'll help in --

VC: Right. You can get some background.

Q: Yeah. Tell us -- looking up women's names in census data is so hard because --

VC: Yeah.

Q: -- marriage, change of name.

VC: Right.

Q: So I can find Sally but which Sally is it, you know?

VC: Yeah.

Q: No, that's what it comes down to.

VC: So Amanda Cobb became a Perrin. Yeah.

Q: Where did they both live when they moved here? Do you kind of recall what part of Evanston did they live in?

VC: Well, Sally lives on -- as I said, she was working for a family. So she had a -- she lived in a coach house with that family which was on Sheraton Road.

Q: OK.

VC: And my sister Amanda -- I don't know where she lived when she moved here but I know when she was married she lived on Darrow.

Q: OK. So you come up north in visiting your sisters and staying with them. What kind of activities did you involve yourself in? How long did you stay, one, and what did you kind of get yourself involved in?

VC: OK. Well, first of all, I would come on the train and my sister and her husband, they would pick me up. My sister Amanda and her husband would pick me up at Union Station on 12th and Michigan when Union Station was there. Which, of course, it's no longer there. And they would take the drive down Lake Shore Drive and I would just sit in the backseat and just -- in wonderment at what I saw, you know. You had the lake on your right-side, the eastside. You had the tall buildings on the left. And it was like this dream world kind of a thing to a young boy. And then we would, you know, come on home and spend whatever time I would spend -- usually in the summer. So I spent the summer

months usually in the library, riding our bikes, playing ball, stealing apples. Eating hot dog sandwiches. That was always good. She made great hog dog sandwiches. Yeah. You know, in the neighborhood all the kids got together and they went out, played baseball, the two -- [Foster?] played basketball. Rode our bikes. Yeah, we didn't -- shot marbles, did all that sort of thing. Sort of thing.

Q: All the things that kids would do.

VC: Yeah. All the things a kid would do during that period of time. Like shooting marbles. I never see kids shooting marbles. It's the best game in the world.

Q: It is a good game. I used to shoot marbles as a kid.

VC: No, it's a great game.

Q: Nobody understands it now. They're like --

VC: And if you had that big steel thing.

Q: Oh, yeah.

VC: That was the crown jewel.

Q: What was that? What do you call that? The --

VC: Steel.

Q: Yeah, the steel. What did we call it? We called it something a little bit different. I think we called it like a bomb or something like that. You know, so what -- I

think everybody had like a little nickname for it, like their --

VC: Yeah. If you had one of those, ooh.

Q: You can grab all those marbles.

VC: Ooh.

Q: Bam. (laughs)

VC: (laughs)

Q: [00:15:00] All those marbles are mine.

VC: A short story about marbles. When I was in -- yeah, this is interesting. Hmm. When I was in Georgia I went to school in a schoolhouse. It was a house that was turned into a school and you had first, second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth graders all in one big room. So their teacher would go around the room teaching eight, you know. And granted, there wasn't a lot of kids in the school because most of them was working. So I guess that made it easier. But that's -- you know, and we had the potbelly stove. Potbelly heater, stove, whatever you call that.

Q: Yes, the stove. Yeah, yeah.

VC: You know, the potbelly thing with the pipes.

Q: Cast iron with the pipe and --

VC: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Q: And highly dangerous and starts lots of fires. (laughs)

VC: Oh, my goodness. And when I was five -- you couldn't go to school until you were six. So when I was five I would go with the kids to school thinking I'm going to be going to school, too. And, you know, I'm five. They wouldn't let me come in so I'd just sit on the steps and cry, you know, until I cried out and then I'd just walk back home because we had -- the schoolhouse was here. Thirty yards from the schoolhouse was the church. And 40 yards from the church was our house. So I didn't have far to go.

Q: Right.

VC: But that was a big thing about school. But the marvelous story is the job of the boys from the Wilson School -- the job of the boys was to come early, make the fire in the --

Q: In the schoolhouse?

VC: In the schoolhouse. Schoolhouse, yes. Well, one day, Ms. Foster, the teacher -- she was everybody's favorite teacher. She drove up in her car and we was out shooting marbles. And she says, "Boys, did you make the fire?" We said, "No, ma'am." She says, "OK. Bring me all your marbles. Give them to me. I'm going to take them. And then go make the fire." And we looked at each other. She collected our marbles and she took our marbles and she

says, "I'll give them back to you when you've learned to do what you are supposed to do." So a week later she says, "I'm inviting you boys over to my house on Saturday. Can you come? Ask your parents if you can come. Let me know and I'll pick you all up." Which she did. And she had ice cream for us. She had sandwiches for us. And then she gave us our marbles back that day after she had asked us, "You think you've learned your lesson about being disciplined and doing the things that you're supposed to do?" "Yes, ma'am. Yes, ma'am." And she gave us back our marbles. And ever since then we always made sure the fire was made before we did anything. Always, always.

Q: Easy lessons.

VC: That's how we learn.

Q: Yeah.

VC: You --

Q: Take away those marbles.

VC: That's how we -- hey, that's how you -- if you take away something that means something to someone as a disciplinary act you'll respond in kind.

Q: Yeah.

VC: But at least we did.

Q: Yeah.

VC: Back then -- I don't know -- you know, kids today I don't know what they do.

Q: So as you grew up, you did high school in the South?

VC: I did two years.

Q: OK. And then after high school -- what high school did you go to?

VC: Kaigler. K-A-I-G-L-E-R.

Q: And that was in Georgia, right?

VC: Right. That was in Georgetown, Georgia. Then once I asked my parents -- once I asked my mother if I could move here to Evanston. She said, "You have to ask your father because, you know, he was the head of the house." You know, daddies, they were the head of the house." Now at first I was -- I wasn't scared. I was reluctant because I was afraid he would say no. So when I asked him he said, "Well, ask your mother." I said, "I already asked her. She told me to ask you." He said, "Well, whatever your mother says is fine with you." So that all arranged, I came to Evanston to live in 1961. And I lived with my brother Willie, Willie Fred. We called him Joe. Everybody called him Joe. He was known as Joe. So I'll refer to him as Joe at this point.

Q: OK.

VC: You know his name. SO I came to live with Joe [00:20:00]
and his wife Luevenia. L-U-E-V-E-N-I-A.

Q: I think I'm familiar with that name.

VC: Huh?

Q: I think I'm familiar with that name.

VC: Oh, it's a very, very southern name. Luevenia. Yeah. So we had to go through all the legal things, you know, guardianship. And I remember -- that was -- the first time I rode the L was to the lawyer's office and I was amazed at how the L was going down the track this far from the building and I'm sitting by the window. So we do all the legal things. He became my guardian and I began my - I went to ETHS. Well, they gave me an exam. When you come you have to take a placement exam. I was 14 at the time. And they gave me this exam. I took the exam and got the results and they placed me as a junior instead of a sophomore. At the time I didn't much care. But it caused me to graduate from high school when I was 16 years old. And I had no clue as to what and where -- you know, what I had or what should I do or anything like that. So this is 1963. I became a hippie and did all the things that hippies do. Did. I hitchhiked across country twice to California and worked along the way. You know, everywhere

you went you always stopped, worked, made some money, went further and further and further. You know, you always connected -- that culture you always connected with someone else who was like you. You may not be the same color but you were like them. In the '60s that's the way it was. You could hitchhike from Evanston to California. You could hitchhike back, which is what, you know, a lot of us did.

Q: Right.

VC: So this is -- now it's 1965 and my number is up and I'm about to get drafted. I don't know this but I knew my number was up. So I -- well, shall I say [Haze Sempio?] --

Q: OK.

VC: His name is Hal. We called him Haze. Hal Sempio and I decided that we would take the Air Force test to avoid the draft, which we did and we were shipped off to Amarillo, Texas for four weeks training, which is normally six weeks in Lackland, Texas. Lackland Air Force Base in Texas. But we did four weeks at Amarillo, Texas, which is in the panhandle of Texas, where you have sandstorms every day. Hundred degrees to the daytime, 40 degrees at night. But we did our four weeks, got out. He went his way, I went my -- I went to New York. I was stationed at Suffolk County Air Force Base in New York. And I wasn't particularly

happy where I was placed so I requested to be retrained in another area.

Q: OK.

VC: So I was granted to cross-train and I did my technical training in Illinois, as a matter of fact. Chanute, C-H-A-N-U-T-E -- Air Force Base in Rantoul, R-A-N-T-O-U-L, Illinois. So I cross-trained into what was called life support specialist.

Q: OK.

VC: A life support specialist handled survival gear for fighter pilots.

Q: OK.

VC: So we worked with Air Force fighter planes, T-33s, T for trainer, F for fighter, C is cargo.

Q: OK.

VC: Just, you know, that letter acronym that you use. So we worked on Air Force, F-101, which were Voodoos, which was reconnaissance planes, and T-33s, which were training planes. We did all the survival for those guys. So if they needed to egress, we taught egression, how to egress from an aircraft whether you were on the ground [00:25:00] or whether you were in the air, whether you were - you

know, how to get out whether you're upside, no matter what.

How to get --

Q: OK. How to get out --

VC: How to survive a bad situation. And we were trained and we taught how to live on the ground wherever you may be, whether you was in Vietnam or whether you was in Evanston, Illinois. If you had to eat grass and you had to live, you know, what do you eat, what do you not eat, what do you drink, what do you not drink, that sort of thing.

Q: OK.

VC: So that's survival.

Q: Right.

VC: That's what I did in the Air Force.

Q: That's neat.

VC: I was honorably discharged in 1970. No, November 1969.

Yeah.

Q: OK.

VC: The other thing I did in the Air Force, I played basketball for the Air Force, United States Air Force.

Q: OK.

VC: I played for the Air Defense Command and we won the championship two years in a row. We beat SAC, we beat MAC.

SAC is strategic air command. MAC is something air command.

Q: OK.

VC: T is tactical air command. And we did win the championship. This can be on or off the record. You decide. I had orders for Vietnam and my commander at the time was -- I think maybe this should be off the record but, you know --

Q: OK. I'll hit the pause. Let me pause it real quick. Boom, boom, boom. And I am -- boom. All right, we're still going.

VC: OK.

Q: So in this part of the in-- so after -- we ended with the draft. You were honorably discharged. Didn't have to fight in Vietnam.

VC: Didn't have to go to Vietnam.

Q: Didn't have to go to Vietnam. OK.

VC: Right.

Q: So -- but so at that point, because you didn't have to go, you were honorably discharged? I'm trying to get that --

VC: No. No, no.

Q: So how (inaudible).

VC: I continued my duties --

Q: OK.

VC: -- where I was on Long Island. So -- but I was TDY in many places. TDY is temporary duty.

Q: OK.

VC: It's TDY, acronym for temporary duty. Were you military?

Q: My dad was. He was in Vietnam.

VC: Doesn't count.

Q: I know. But I was --

VC: What I'm saying, you probably (inaudible).

Q: Yeah. I don't know any of it, yeah.

VC: I'll keep defining, you know, what I'm saying so that you know specifically.

Q: Yeah.

VC: So I was TDY at many different locations, whether it was for training or whether it was re-- whether it was for retraining or updating information, upgrading techniques for survival or teaching others. I've flown over Vietnam many times but, you know, we did over Vietnam and made drops but never set foot in it. And we'd go to Clark Air Force Base in the Philippines and rest and the loadmasters would load, whether it was deceased, whatever. Whatever they loaded it was none of our business.

Q: Got it. Got it.

VC: Our business was to get it back to its destination. Oftentimes it was St. Albans, New York, where the hospital is. Oftentimes it may have been repair based for equipment, et cetera, et cetera.

Q: OK.

VC: But, you know, it was that kind of thing. We simply took care of the aircraft that we were on and took care of the people on the aircraft that we were on. Made sure they were safe, made sure we were safe, that sort of thing.

Q: OK. When you left the military, did you find work afterwards immediately or did you travel? What did you do right after that?

VC: I -- believe it or not, after my discharge I enjoyed what I was doing so much I stayed on the base a month just hanging out with the guys. Hey, you weren't supposed to do that sort of thing but I was sort of like the man, if you will, you know, big basketball star, let him go, he can do whatever you want to do. And it was that kind of a thing. So when I came home I was -- my mind was made up what I would do. I would go to school. At the time I had the GI Bill, which was very good at the time. Very good at the time. [00:30:00] And I went to school at the original Columbia College Chicago --

Q: OK.

VC: -- located at 450 East [O'Howell?] Street, right at Lake Shore Drive and O'Howell, where O'Howell ends.

Q: OK.

VC: Right there. It's now condominiums.

Q: OK, got it.

VC: And Columbia is all over the place now. And I majored in photography. So I was also -- I was on a scholarship. I was a teaching assistant right away. It's amazing what life will teach you when you go to college, when you go -- you know, life experience means so much. I mean your discipline -- not only had I had life experience, I had life experience in the military, which is disciplinary from beginning to end. It's one for all, all for one. You know, we were all one big person, if you will. So I had that going for me. I was very disciplined. I was very learned. So college to me was like wow, this is really kind of easy, you know. I mean I thought -- like I said, hmm, you did graduate from high school at 16. Maybe that had something to do with, you know, maybe just a fast good learner, that kind of thing. But as it turned out, I was just simply a very disciplined individual who had something to do and knew what to do and did it. So that made it real

easy for me to do what I needed to do in school because the GI Bill was paying, the scholarship was paying. You know, so I didn't have to work. I simply went to school and graduated in three years from Columbia College. I graduated summa cum laude in 1975. I was awarded what was called the Order of Lincoln Award, which was given to seniors, graduates, graduating seniors for outstanding achievement in your field. And there were some other awards. I can't remember the name of them now but they were, you know, outstanding awards, like --

Q: OK.

VC: -- whatever -- whatever you was doing.

Q: Did you have to win -- in graduating, you majored in photography?

VC: Yes.

Q: And to graduate did you have to put on a show or anything like that?

VC: Well, no, you didn't have to but here's what happened. James Van Der Zee, who is --

Q: One of my favorites.

VC: You know his name?

Q: Yes, yes.

VC: OK. James Van Der Zee was always in the back of my mind when I was going to school. I'm thinking, you know, this old guy, you know, he started out, he did all this. So then I said, "Hmm, now I'm going to have all these young bucks out here doing this." So I went to the president of the school, whose name is -- whose name at the time was Marion, M-A-R-I-O-N, Alexandroff. A-L-E-X-A-N-D-R-O-F-F. He was the son of the founder of the college. And I told him -- I mean, that's the kind of relationship the students had with the president. So you can imagine the kind of relationship we had with the faculty. OK. So I went to him instead of going to the department head because I knew the department head to go from -- had to go to him anyways, so why go through all of this when I could just go right to him.

Q: Go right to him.

VC: So I had this idea. I said, "You know, I'd like to do a show, a photography show of international talent. International and national talent and I'd like to do it as an independent study and I'd like 16 hours for it." And he said, "That's a lot of hours, you know, to put on a show." I said, "Well, Mr. Alexandroff, I have to first find if there are any, you know. I have to do a lot of research.

It's going to take all my time." And it did. It took all my time. But I was able to put together this international black photographers exhibit. It was done at the -- it was done at the South Side Community Arts Center on South Michigan Avenue. And in the meantime I had procured [00:35:00] an exhibit of Mr. Van Der Zee's work, which I had at the college. So on opening day -- on the opening of the black photographers exhibit I took the exhibit down from the school and took it to the South Side Art Center and placed it in the -- well, we had the exhibit around the wall.

Q: Right.

VC: And then we built panels. The school spent a lot of money. In the middle they put this whole thing. They had Mr. Van Der Zee's work in the center of it like this, which was pretty awesome.

Q: Wow.

VC: It was pretty awesome. It was a lot of work. Didn't have to do it but it was something that I wanted to do. Like something you wanted to do you did it.

Q: You just did it.

VC: Yeah.

Q: Yeah.

VC: So yeah. That -- no, I didn't have to do -- then I had a one man show.

Q: What -- for that exhibit that you just finished talking about, was that in '75?

VC: That was in seven --

Q: Seventy-four, maybe a year --

VC: Seventy-four, seventy-five.

Q: OK.

VC: Yeah. Seventy-four, seventy-five.

Q: OK. And then you had a one-man show?

VC: And it was out for three months.

Q: OK.

VC: It was a three-month exhibit. And by the way, some of the things that we put up are probably still in the Art Center on the South Side.

Q: I wouldn't be surprised if it is.

VC: We actually built, you know, like panels, put the cover, all that, made it permanent, you know. Couldn't take it down.

Q: OK. So were there panels in the middle of the room or they put it -- mounted against the wall?

VC: No, up against the wall.

Q: Oh, I think they're still there.

VC: Yeah.

Q: Because I had a show -- when I graduated from Loyola I had a photography exhibit at South Side Community Arts Center.

VC: I bet it's the same stuff.

Q: Yeah, I'll bet you it's the same thing.

VC: I bet it is.

Q: Because we pulled that -- I pinned it on the walls.

VC: Yeah, no --

Q: No.

VC: -- you couldn't take it down.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

VC: Couldn't take it down. And --

Q: I'm sorry. One moment.

VC: OK.

Q: Let me --

VC: I'm going to remember where we were.

Q: Yeah. I'm going to pause this. Thank you for your pa--

[break in recording]

Q: I'm recording again.

VC: OK.

Q: So you had your one-man show.

VC: I had my -- my one-man show was during my senior year as well at the Studio Museum in Holland. That would be New York. That's where I had my first one-man show. It consisted of 50 pieces of my work I had done over a period of three years.

Q: Was there -- what was the subject matter?

VC: It varied. It varied from --

Q: So it was like architecture, people --

VC: No, no, no. It consisted mostly of people and documentary type -- I did a documentary on Maxwell Street. That was part of the exhibit. The rest of it was a lot of street photography, what we tend to call interpretive photography. And some of it was experimental photography, things such as lithography, things such as solarizations, pulsarizations. So it was a mix of visuals but mostly photography.

Q: OK.

VC: Yeah.

Q: Do you still have that work?

VC: Some of it I -- a lot of it is in permanent places, art institute, Columbia College has some. Some in New York. Sort of -- and some of it was numbered and limited and sold.

Q: OK.

VC: And I had a number of calls when Prince died. I have a lot of Prince stuff. When Michael Jackson died, when Muhammad Ali died, when B.B. King died. I have all sorts of stuff of these. And I told the people that want -- I said, "Look, you can go online and just take your pick. I don't feel like going through all I have to go through to sell it to you. So I'm going to tell you what, go get it free."

Q: Wow.

VC: Because if I sell -- say if I sell you an image of Ali, I'm going to want X-number of dollars for it and you're not going to want to pay it.

Q: Right.

VC: You see what I mean?

Q: Mm-hmm.

VC: So instead of me, you know, going through all that, look, just go here and click and drag it off on your desktop and publish it.

Q: Yeah.

VC: Because if I give it to you, it's archival. And that's not cheap.

Q: Right, right.

VC: Yeah, that is not cheap.

Q: [00:40:00] So you're kind of allowing this like fair usage of your low-res digital ones that are online because you really can't do anything with it other than small print publications --

VC: Right.

Q: -- for online use.

VC: Right.

Q: And credit you and credit you, of course.

VC: Right, right.

Q: So that actually advertises and spreads your name.

VC: Yeah, it's watermarked.

Q: Yeah, and there's watermarks.

VC: Right.

Q: So then, you know, you're -- that's a smart thing to do. I mean I hear you on that. Smart.

VC: You know, it's --

Q: But yeah. Like to go through all that work to just like --

VC: Yeah, yeah.

Q: It is my time to go through all that work --

VC: Exactly.

Q: -- getting this little bit of money. Just use it, advertise it for me.

VC: Exactly. And all of this stuff is a back story to the bigger story. I mean there's a bigger story to what I just told you.

Q: Right.

VC: But anyway.

Q: No, this is fantastic. So after the -- it sounded like after your shows you started picking up some work?

VC: After my shows I sent out a lot of -- at the time we called them flyers. There was a person at Columbia College by the name of Connie, C-O-N-N-I-E, Zonka, Z-O-N-K-A. Connie was the PR director for the school. I was on scholarship in photography. I was a TA assistant in photography. My work was known throughout the school. "This guy really does good work." And one day Connie approached me and said she needed some photographs of all of the chair-- she needed a photograph of the chairman of the board, all the board members, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera, would I like to take on that project. I said, "Connie, of course." I knew Connie because I'd seen her coming and going. I said, "Of course." So right away my first commercial shoot was the CEO of Brunswick. And I said, "Hmm. This is a beginning of something good here," I decided. Me, this is something good here. So I had the names, phone numbers, contacts of

all of these people that were in business and that's how I started with making money in photography.

Q: OK.

VC: Kraft Food was another client. Xerox was a client. And I had sense enough to just go to the top, you know. I had that sort of maneuverability and what good are your contacts if you don't use them? They're no good. I mean what good is a friend if you can't call on him? So what good is a contact in the business world where money is made and I need to survive. So I -- that's where I started. I started with these guys. There's a couple of women, too, that was on the board. But I started with them. I -- you know, we had conversations doing the shoot, you know, what I did. You know, when the shoot was over I -- you know, I simply asked, "Can I call on you for work?" And they said, "Of course." And then they would give me their card. On the back of it they would write down the name of the person who was in charge of the department that assigned the work. They said, "When you call tell them to contact me and I will tell them to give you the job." So that's --

Q: Yeah.

VC: That's how I got started.

Q: Wow.

VC: So I did contract work from '75, yeah, to '77 and *Ebony* and *Jet* was a client. *Ebony* and *Jet* was a client during school. I would get assignments from them while I was in school.

Q: OK.

VC: And I was recruited by *Ebony* a couple of years -- I was recruited by *Ebony*. *Ebony* made offers. I will make a kind of offer and then, you know, think about it. In the meantime they're still giving me work to do. They're offering, I'm countering. They're still giving me work to do. One day I took in a completed assignment and they said, "OK. Would you like to join the staff at this amount?" I said, "I will do that." And that's when I joined *Ebony*, September 17, 1977. Hmm. In the meantime I sold my contracts to other photographers. [45:00]

Q: OK.

VC: With the understanding with the client that these people would be acceptable because I couldn't just sell the contract and then, you know -- I mean, that's just not the way you do business.

Q: Right. Right, right, right.

VC: You know, somebody shows -- oh, you know, he sold the contract to me. No, no, no.

Q: Right, right, right.

VC: No, I'm going to call Dino first, let him know I'm selling my contract. "This is the guy. You can trust him. He's good. Here's some samples."

Q: Right.

VC: "Will you accept him?" So then when they said --

Q: Right.

VC: -- "OK, we'll -- if you accept him, we accept him."

Q: That's good client relationship, yeah.

VC: Right. But I didn't know if I was going to have to cross that bridge again so I wanted to make sure that it was stable when I went over that bridge.

Q: Right.

VC: That it was stable for me to come back if I needed to. So sold the contracts and became a staff photographer for Johnson Publishing Company, publishers of *Ebony*, *Jet* magazine, Fashion Fair Cosmetics, Ebony Fair. Ebony Fashion Fair Show and many times personal photographer to Mr. Johnson.

Q: Wow. Wow.

VC: Yeah, yeah. That's why 1975 was the beginning of a 13 -- 32-year relationship.

Q: Wow. Thirty-two year?

VC: Let's see, '75 -- I'm sorry. Seventy-seven --

Q: Seven.

VC: -- to 2008. How many is that? Thirty-one?

Q: Yeah, I think so. Two thousand eight.

VC: And then, you know, if you want to count the years I
freelanced. But as a staffer it was 31 years.

Q: Right, right. OK.

VC: Is that right?

Q: Eighteen, 20 -- no.

VC: Ninety-seven -- 31 years, yeah.

Q: Yeah, 31 years. Yeah. Got to use new math. Called
fingers. (laughs) So in your body of work while working at
Ebony, I mean how many shots do you think you've taken?

VC: I have no -- I have no clue.

Q: Do you keep all -- do you have all the negatives or did
Ebony keep all the negatives?

VC: They have some, I have some. Negatives, transparencies,
and digital images. That's what it consists of. OK.

Q: You're looking at your résumé.

VC: I'm trying to figure out -- yeah, 1977 to 2008.

Q: OK.

VC: And this is my fact sheet. You're going to need this.

Q: Yeah. (inaudible) copy of that or --

VC: I can't even pronounce -- when we get to foreign countries, you know, Syrian president, Lebanese president, the chief Israeli negotiator, [hasman leader?], all these people. These are things -- you're going to need the correct spelling of the name.

Q: OK.

VC: That's why I brought this.

Q: Beautiful. May I see that real quick?

VC: Oh, OK.

Q: Just want to look at it.

VC: It's sort of in chronological order.

Q: All right. Wow. This is just fantastic.

VC: You can hold on to that if you want.

Q: Oh, good, good, good. Because part of our goal -- you know, our goal is --

VC: Let me see if *Ebony South Africa* is on there because we did an *Ebony South Africa* as well. Got to be on here. It's in here somewhere. If it's not in here I have to bring it up. Oh, yeah, here it is.

Q: OK.

VC: That -- this one is very important.

Q: I can imagine. Because that was the time -- what years were that?

VC: This -- November '75. This was the -- we launched -- we'll get to this but I'll just tell you now because it's so interesting. No, we'll wait.

Q: We'll get there. (laughs) So you did for -- you're the staff photographer for *Ebony*, *Jet*, *Fashion Fair*, *Ebony South Africa*, and whatever else -- other tasks that they assigned you to.

VC: Whatever Johnson Publishing Company assigned me to do I did. But on your mass (inaudible) you'll find my name on *Ebony* and *Jet*, the *Ebony Fashion Fair* programs. I don't know if you want to get into that now or --

Q: Yeah, we're going to get --

VC: *Fashion Fair*, whatever. How -- no, you do it the way that you're going to do it and I'll just -- I just do what I'm told.

Q: So for *Ebony* and *Jet*, because I know those were like their mainstay magazines --

VC: Right.

Q: -- you were -- were you the chief photographer for the time you were there or were -- no?

VC: I was not -- we did not have a chief photographer.

Q: [50:00] OK.

VC: We never had a chief photographer. I was -- in terms of longevity, I was second in longevity. Moneta Sleet, who -- Moneta, M-O-N-E-T-A, Sleet, S-L-E-E-T, comma -- I mean period, comma, Jr., was the first black Pulitzer Prize winner in photography. He was ahead of me. He was -- he had more longevity than I did.

Q: OK.

VC: And Sleet passed away in -- let's see, the Olympics in Atlanta was, what, 1992, was it? Ninety-six? But he died the year after that.

Q: OK.

VC: Yeah, we -- that was the last assignment we did, was the Atlanta wi-- Atlanta Summer Olympics. Was the summer Olympics, yeah. Do you have internet connection?

Q: We do. So it should say Shorefront Guest and that one is -
- opens up.

VC: I -- but you know what? I don't need it because --

Q: It's all there.

VC: If I need this --

Q: OK.

VC: If I need this, it'll just be --

Q: Gotcha.

VC: Ooh.

Q: No, sorry, that's fine. (laughs)

VC: Not mine. Whoa.

Q: Actually, better yet -- yeah, that's perfect.

VC: OK, go ahead. Sorry.

Q: So you said there were four photographers. So it was -- the first person you mentioned?

VC: There was Moneta Sleet, Jr. There was Maurice Sorrell. S-O-R-R-E-L-L. You have to look at it (inaudible).

Q: No problem. I'll look that up later.

VC: I'll come back to you later.

Q: Yeah, the staffers. And then that was me. I'm trying to give you them in order. It was James Mitchell, Fred Watkins, and the first -- we had our first female photographer. Her name was -- let's see, Valerie -- V, V, V. Valerie Goodloe. She was the first female photographer we hired as staff.

Q: OK.

VC: The one and only. She was the only one.

Q: OK.

VC: Yeah, she was -- she was based in California.

Q: OK.

VC: Sleet was based in New York. Sorrell was based in Washington, DC. Fred Watkins was based in New York and

Washington because we had to replace someone. James Mitchell was based in Chicago. Chicago headquarters was my home base.

Q: OK.

VC: And I say home base with a loose tongue.

Q: Yeah. (inaudible) travel -- everybody kind of traveled but your base of work --

VC: Everybody traveled but I -- well, yeah, everybody traveled. Yeah.

Q: But the base (inaudible) --

VC: Base, right.

Q: Your (inaudible) was that.

VC: Right. Because you did do local stuff, too. So you had a base. So something was happening in Washington, Washington in most cases took care of it unless they wanted somebody else to go do it, you know.

Q: It kind of worked like that.

VC: They had their things --

Q: Right, right.

VC: -- where they wanted a certain person to do a certain thing, maybe another city. So you'd just fly to wherever you needed to go --

Q: Right.

VC: -- and just tell the person, "I'm here." (laughs)

Q: (laughs) Well, I can imagine with that because a photographer, you're literally up in someone's face. So they kind of look at personality matches, the photography style that you might do. And maybe unique --

VC: Personality.

Q: -- relationships and personalities. They'd, you know, say these -- you know, the photographer and this person are compatible, you know.

VC: Yeah. See, when we went on assignments we didn't represent ourselves per se. We did but we represented *Ebony* magazine. We represented Johnson Publishing Company. We represented Mr. Johnson. You know, so he -- we traveled that way. We worked that way. It was a -- it was first class, man, all the way. It was no -- it was -- I mean it was the black publication in the world at the time. You know, it's -- it was [00:55:00] an experience that you would like every photographer to have. You photographed the biggest star of the stars and you didn't just show up. You spent time like we're spending time here talking. You would spend time with them, get to know a little bit about them, enough about them to be able to direct them because in magazine photography you are allowed to direct, whereas

in newspaper you don't dare. I mean it's just law. You don't direct, you simply record.

Q: Right.

VC: But when you're doing cover shoots and things like that, you become not just a photographer. You become a director, a producer. You become -- because you have to prove everything that everybody's doing. You know, the stylist. You know, you got to -- you know, everything -- you have to look at your image and say, "OK, this is -- this is what I envision this to be and I have to light it accordingly." I have to do -- I have to execute this now. I have to execute all of this work that everybody has done because everybody is dependent on that one picture that goes on the cover because that's what sells the magazine.

Q: Yeah.

VC: That's what sells advertisers. Advertisers is what makes money. You know, without advertisers --

Q: Right.

VC: -- subscribers --

Q: That's it.

VC: You know, you can never make money off of just subscribers. You can make a little bit of money off of just subscribers but you can't make millions.

Q: Right.

VC: You know, we were at 2.5 million a month at the time. At the time it was \$40,000 a page for advertisement. So it's a lot of money.

Q: Yeah.

VC: So when you do a cover the person had to be pop-- well, you had to do a projection because you published -- you published two months before so if something happened in the meantime you've got to somehow figure out how to get this in here. You've got printing time. You have -- you had all this stuff that has to be done before --

Q: Right, right.

VC: Before fruition of the product that you intended to give.

Q: And it happens fast.

VC: And it happens fast. And it happens really, really fast.

Q: Happens fast and you have a definite deadline.

VC: Yeah. It wasn't a story because it was a weekly. So you kind of got the information out, you know --

Q: Boom. Right.

VC: -- (inaudible). You got it out right away even though some of the stuff in there was late because it changed from day-to-day. It is not like you was doing *USA Today* --

Q: Right.

VC: -- the newspaper because -- they did laser printing, by the way. That's why they could, you know, do stuff overnight. They did all this laser printing and we was just going to the press. So it took -- a little delay in action there.

Q: (laughs) Tell me a bit about your work with Fashion Fair.

VC: Fashion Fair I did -- first of all, I did the Fashion Fair shows. Not all of them. I mean there's too many of them to do. I think they did 250 shows a season. I did the major shows such as Chicago and New York, Washington, New York, California, Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, Hawaii. That was -- I mean Fashion Fair shows. I mean Fashion Fair, I would travel every year with Mrs. Johnson to Italy and France. That's where we would do au coutures. We'd do that entire collection over there. We shot boards over there for the show. You know, they put the boards up on the stage. You know, we did all of that in Europe. We shot all of that over there. I mean you rent location. You rent assistance. You hire models there. Black models that didn't speak a lick of English. And I'm looking at these girls. These -- they don't speak English and I don't speak what they speak. "What am I going to do?" So I had to hire interpreters. I mean there's just some things had to be said. There are other things you could gesture, you

know, but you needed a voice in some of this stuff. And most of it [01:00:00], when you're doing covers and couture, especially coutures because -- and understand that I may have of a couture and an understanding that [Isee Morah?] may have may be totally different. So I have to interpret his intentions, not mine. So I have to talk to designers, these people. I mean Isee Morah was a favorite, was Mrs. Johnson's favorite, and I spent a lot of time with him. And, you know, he'll explain to me, like you make photographs, I make coutures. It's -- when you make a photograph you're the only one that has it. This is a couture. I'm the only one that made this. So I have to talk to him about it, what was -- what did you have in mind here, what was the best way to show this, what is the best light for this, and then I have to create it. And that was -- God, that's like a month in -- a month in Italy in Paris every year. That was every Fashion Fair. You know, not just a show but every Fashion Fair as an entity. Yeah.

Q: That's probably like your long project, is a -- for -- I mean just throughout the years, just --

VC: Well, you're always --

Q: Always working for -

VC: -- pulling pictures from that for your program, for your promotions, for all of that. You're always pulling -

Q: Yeah.

VC: You're pulling pictures all the time for that. And then as a -- is that too much stuff to bring? Bring it anyway. You know, it's a magazine. Ebony Fashion Fair has a magazine and, you know, I don't know what kind of images you want to run with this but, you know, I have stuff available, some stuff available. Some stuff isn't because of rights and things like that.

Q: Right, right.

VC: Some things I can get to you quickly, some things -- I don't know what your deadline is. I mean this --

Q: Yeah.

VC: -- may run 2030. I don't know. So yeah. You're there for a month. So you always -- Ebony Fashion Fair is always pulling from that but then the magazine itself is pulling from it because they have to promote it. And you can't keep using the same picture over and over so you've got to have all these pictures, all these pictures. And you can't screw up. Let me put it that way.

Q: Right.

VC: You know, Mr. Johnson had a thing. His favorite -- not his favorite but he's known for this. "Failure is not a word I accept." So if you screwed up, that was a failure, therefore he didn't accept it. And when you did screw up and, you know, everybody's going to screw up, you find out about it. You knew about it. Yeah, yeah. I've heard it.

Q: Did he pull you in the office or --

VC: Oh, wherever you were. Office. (laughs)

Q: (laughs) It became public comment, huh?

VC: Oh, wherever he found you. That's where you got it.

(laughs) And that's no joke. And that's on the record.

You got it wherever he found you. (laughs)

Q: (laughs) Wow. Kept you on your Ps and Qs.

VC: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

Q: Tell me a bit about *Ebony South Africa*.

VC: *Ebony South Africa*. Wow. Mr. Johnson decided to start a magazine in South Africa. It was decided that the magazine would be named after *Ebony*. *Ebony* magazine was actually named by Mrs. Johnson. So the intent was to name it after *Ebony* magazine, so it was called *Ebony South Africa*. I went to South Africa on a journey during apartheid. Twenty-two-hour non-stop flight during apartheid and you couldn't go direct from JFK in New York and go straight

down. You had to go from JFK to Europe, then come down to West Africa, then go across Central Africa to West Africa - - East Africa and then come down to --

Q: South Africa?

VC: To South Africa. That was just how it's done. I was told by Mr. Johnson to find a black photographer in South Africa [01:05:00] and rent equipment, lighting equipment from him or her. Now, we in South Africa -- it's apartheid going on. Black people don't have all that stuff. So I was able to find four or five black guys who did photography. They say they were photographers. I don't really know. But they did have a unit. They had a -- one may have a power unit, one had some crude light. You know, like that. So while I'm pulling this together they're back in Chicago pulling together a cover for this premiere issue. So I pull all the stuff together and I say, "OK, we can do it. I found a space. I've rigged the lights to do the cover." They said, "OK. We'll call you and let you know who the cover's going to be, where they are," blah, blah, blah. Turns out that the cover of the premiere issue of *Ebony South Africa* was Ms. Universe, who was black, and Ms. South Africa, who was black. They were the -- it's like a dream kind of a thing that happened, that Ms. Universe happened

to be from South Africa and was black. Ms. South Africa happened to be black. So --

Q: You got them both.

VC: There you go. Got them both. And if you want to look here, here are the names. Augustine -- Augustine, A-U-G-U-S-T-I-N-E, Masilela. M-A-S-I-L-E-L-A. That was Ms. Universe. Ms. South Africa was Basetsane -- Basetsane it's called. B-A-S-E-T-S-A-N-E. Makgalemele. M-A-K-G-A-L-E-M-E-L-A. She was Ms. South Africa. So they -- those were the -- that was our premiere issue in South Africa, *Ebony South Africa*. And the content was some things from the States because South Africans was interested in what black people was doing here, at the same time incorporating that with issues of the day in South Africa. And at the same time I would be remiss if I didn't say that a byproduct of the magazine being there was a gateway to get Ebony Fashion Fair cosmetics into the country. To get into the major stores, which is what happened. That all happened. And we partnered with -- Mr. Johnson was the majority owner of the magazine. We partnered with some white South Africans over there, a percentage, because she needed to do that. I mean it brought some white people into the mix in South Africa, which helped out in many ways because if you go in and

you're just you and you have no force or no power within a country that you're not in in the first place, then, you know, who do you go to?

Q: Right, right.

VC: So we partnered with some very influential people, including Hugh Masekela.

Q: OK.

VC: Hugh Masekela was part-owner and then there were two white partners and Hugh Masekela. So we brought them in. Who doesn't know Hugh Masekela, right? So that's how the magazine got started --

Q: OK.

VC: -- and the content was as usual. American content which was already ready to go. All you had to do is --

Q: Cut and paste basically.

VC: And then you had a guy named Michael Cheers, M-I-C-H-A-E-L, Cheers, C-H-E-E-R-S. He was our editor in South Africa, Johannesburg, South Africa.

Q: OK.

VC: He was our editor there so he would handle, you know, the day-to-day operations of the magazine there.

Q: So what year was that that came out?

VC: What year?

Q: Yeah.

VC: Nineteen seventy-five. You met with --

Q: And you did the premiere issue cover of that one.

VC: [01:10:00] *Ebony South Africa*.

Q: Of *Ebony South Africa*. Do you have a copy of that?

VC: I sure do. It's --

Q: Do you have a couple copies of it?

VC: If you want to publish a picture of it I will go to the bank and get it out of the vault.

Q: Ooh.

VC: Oh, I think --

Q: I like the sound of that. Have to get it out --

VC: Oh, I have to get it --

Q: Let me go to the vault.

VC: Well --

Q: Well, because it's --

VC: It's not the only thing in there.

Q: Right, right.

VC: Right. I mean, come on. It's never happened before. It's the only one.

Q: Right.

VC: It's the only one. What am I going to do, keep it at home?

Q: Right, yeah. Get it all thumbed up and (inaudible) like that? No.

VC: "Hey, look at this." Rip.

Q: That's how you lose a friend real fast. (laughs)

VC: Right. "Oh, this is nice. I will put this on my wall."
Rip. No. (laughs)

Q: (laughs) Yeah, we don't want that to happen.

VC: Yeah. I can either give you an image of it --

Q: Image of it would be perfect.

VC: -- or --

Q: Yeah, we don't --

VC: Because if you handle it --

Q: I don't want to handle it. (laughs) I don't want to be that one person, that fateful person, rip. (laughs)

VC: No, no, no. I mean it's just a piece of paper.

Q: Yeah, I understand but, you know.

VC: It's --

Q: We're working --

VC: I've learned that things that doesn't have eternal values, you know, they're not worth very much if they're not -- if they don't have some eternal value at this point in my life. You know, I give stuff away. I mean it's not that I don't need the money. It's just that it means more to me

to give it someone than it is to hoard it and it just sits there. However, it means something to sell something, as well. I just sold a bunch of stuff, thank goodness, this year. A whole bunch of stuff, which is very nice.

Q: Well, I think because the talk is -- you know, what *Ebony's* doing with their archives, it's becoming more and more --

VC: It's that and the fact that the magazine is no longer in the Johnson family. You know that, right?

Q: Right, right. Yeah.

VC: Yeah. So *Ebony's* --

Q: Ebon-- we've been falling it.

VC: And this company that owns it is not well known and we're not sure if it's black owned or not. We're not sure about a lot of things.

Q: Right, right.

VC: So these things become more valuable as it declines.

Q: They go away, right.

VC: You know, as it declines the more valuable these things become.

Q: I understand.

VC: So yeah. No, no, no. I can get you an image of it.

Q: That would be great because I think -- and (inaudible) of my house, like if there's some select images that we can utilize.

VC: Possibly.

Q: Yeah, possibly. You know --

VC: Yeah.

Q: And some of it's not going to be like mostly -- it's not necessarily the body of work that you've done.

VC: Right.

Q: I may ask for like photographs, like do you have a photographic view of your childhood, you know. Maybe your first piece that you did in the exhibit, like a sample of that. So yeah, those are the things that we kind of ask for.

VC: I'm going to bill you. Let's see, you're Bill. That's appropriate.

Q: I'm making you dig. (laughs)

VC: But, you know, that's good. That's good because I need to do that anyway. I really do. I need -- right now I'm -- no, I'm sorry, go ahead.

Q: Yeah. Oh, another question I have, actually, you know, you being a photographer and doing what you're doing with your body of work, what we're seeing is what you're seeing when

you capture that moment. Do you have any photographs of someone who photographed you doing your job?

VC: I think I might have one right here, if this is what you're talking about. It's a picture. I think it's in Damascus. Yeah, that's something here. Picture of me. Oh, yeah, here's one here. Just happened to be in -- this is in Lebanon. Reverend Jackson was there. That is Reverend Jackson --

Q: Yeah.

VC: That is Reverend Jackson being interviewed on the bombing out in Lebanon and the guy's name, the writer there, [01:15:00], he's a well-known writer, he used to write for *Time*, then he came to *Ebony*. I can get his -- his name is in my contacts but --

Q: OK.

VC: -- I just don't recall. But it's the kind of thing you're talking about?

Q: Yeah, exactly. You know, you in your element, you working.

VC: That's that. That's not work. That's just -- that's a good one.

Q: You rock.

VC: Maybe not. I'm just trying to see what I have here because what I have here is not everything where I'm working.

Because a lot of this stuff is just -- oh, here I'm on my way to Vietnam. On my way to -- I was traveling with the Tuskegee Airmen. This is our plane. We're on our way to -- what's that place? Iraq.

Q: OK.

VC: So that --

Q: I mean your shots like that are what I'm looking for. You know, you in action.

A: OK.

Q: Not necessarily like the end result of your lens.

VC: Right.

Q: Because, you know, I have to deal with like that balance of rights and all that other stuff.

VC: Right. Well, are you looking for more stuff like this?

Q: Yeah, stuff -- you in action --

VC: Right.

Q: -- doing it.

VC: We actually doing it. Yeah, I believe there's some more in hard copy but this just happened to be one that Reverend Jackson's photographer took of me in action. There's one of me working on the campaign trail of Obama that you're probably interested in. Yeah. And that résumé will probably answer a lot of questions you have.

Q: It does, it does.

VC: I hope it does anyway.

Q: This is fantastic. Do you have like a portrait of yourself that you use in PR shots?

VC: Yeah, there it is.

Q: Yeah, we got to use that one. (laughs) No.

VC: (laughs) That's my Jimi Hendrix look. No. Ask that question again, please.

Q: A portrait of you that you use in PR shots.

VC: I don't have one.

Q: But if we want to identify one that you want to use?

VC: This is the most recent picture of me. But no. I think, you know, we can take -- we can take --

Q: We'll find one, yeah.

VC: -- an iPhoto.

Q: OK.

VC: That'd be great. Oh, wow. This is -- I didn't know this was here. That's as (inaudible). That's my high school graduation picture.

Q: OK. UTHS?

VC: Huh?

Q: UTHS?

VC: Yeah. UTHS.

Q: What year did you graduate from UTHS?

VC: Nineteen sixty-three.

Q: Wait a second, I want to write it down just to make sure I got it.

VC: Yeah, 1963 and our commencement speaker was Jesse Owens. I thought that might be important. Most people don't remember who spoke at their graduation but -- I wouldn't either except --

Q: But that was Jesse Owens.

VC: -- that it's Jesse Owens. What am I looking for? I don't know. Oh, this is after a shoot. Recognize Bill Curtis. But anyway, like that --

Q: I mean those -- that's what we like to see. You in action doing these things instead of being behind the lens --

VC: Right.

Q: -- where we just see the final subject.

VC: Right.

Q: It's you actually doing it. That places you there --

VC: Right.

Q; -- much better than that.

VC: And also in hard copy I have, oh, my God, pictures of me with certain people. Right. With Mr. Mandela, like with -- well, I have pictures of me with subject matters --

Q: Right, right.

VC: -- that you may want to fill some space. Because a lot of time -- I don't know how much space you have but a --

Q: Yeah, we try to do about --

VC: -- lot of publications like to -- like to have --

Q: Yeah, photo op.

VC: -- space except what a lot of publications do wrong is they use too many images --

Q: Right.

VC: And they're --

Q: Too small.

VC: -- too small to see.

Q: We tend -- because we do it online we tend to use no more than four but when we do the printed version we tend to add more to it --

VC: Yeah.

Q: -- because we have more space to work with.

VC: Right, right.

Q: You know, especially if it's something that's interesting. But even more so -- I'm looking at, you know, a longer term project that you might be interested in and that's actually doing more or less, you know, like a book that really focuses on you and your career if you're interested. And

the reason why I'm asking that is that Shorefront has a publishing arm that we are beginning to launch. And we've done a few publications. We've been working with

[01:20:00] Rose's youngest brother, Spencer Jourdain --

VC: Spencer, yeah.

Q: -- on a series of books about family history. I'll show you a copy of it. I'll bring it over (inaudible).

VC: Thanks.

Q: This is the first of three.

VC: Wow.

Q: And it's beginning in New Bedford, Massachusetts where his grandmother was from and then talks -- and then goes into - - second half of the book goes into his father and then his father coming to Evanston, Illinois. And so this is actually just being released and just being advertised as we speak.

VC: OK.

Q: So this is one type of book that, you know --

VC: Oh.

Q: -- we're looking at doing. So we have a series that we want to work with.

VC: I always like to look at the ISBN number. You know, that legitimizes a lot of things. One of the books that was

given to me in Jerusalem -- I happened to be perusing Amazon and I saw this book and it was asking \$700 for this book. I go, "God, I have one of those." I said, "Amazon has one and they're selling it for seven." So I went to a collector. I won't name the book but it was given to me in Jerusalem and it was a manuscript of -- I can't even think of the word. But wow. I took it to this guy. He said, "You actually have a copy." I said, "Yeah." He said, "Is it for sale?" Hmm. I couldn't read it anyway. I didn't know what it was saying. So anyway.

Q: Yeah.

VC: But yeah.

Q: So yeah, we're looking at doing this because, you know, again -- and you know what? I want to stop the interview here.

VC: OK.

Q: Really want to thank you for your time on this. I mean you spent the last, what, two hours talking.

VC: Really?

Q: Yeah.

VC: Wow.

Q: And this is fantastic and I really, you know, am in awe.

VC: Do you want to finish this another time?

Q: I mean I might have some follow-up questions as I go through it. I'm going to (inaudible) this down, get on a computer and listen to it again.

VC: OK.

Q: I may have some follow-up questions. I may have to come. I don't know if I can come to you or you want to come back over here to continue this.

VC: I'm open to whatever. If you're going to be here because I see you're doing business as --

Q: Yeah.

VC: You got business hours.

Q: Yeah. This is our normal business hours.

VC: Nine to five.

Q: It's just funny though. Every time I plan something, that's when people come down.

VC: Of course.

Q: When I don't plan anything nobody comes down.

VC: Of course.

Q: I mean it's like --

VC: Right. You get in the --

Q: It always happens.

VC: You get in the shower, phone rings.

Q: Yeah, exactly. That's my life.

VC: Yeah.

Q: So --

VC: So no, I have no problem with that. That I'll put together some photographs.

Q: Right.

VC: I'm sure you're going to have follow-up questions --

Q: Yes.

VC: -- and --

END OF AUDIO FILE