

I am Marvin Roger Anderson. M-A-R-V-I-N R-O-G-E-R A-N-D-E-R-S-O-N who's in the early stages of Alzheimer's, and so she could not really give me the background. She was the youngest of my, of the, of my grandfather's children. So she just went to the picnics and had fun. I don't think she was aware of all of the, whatever politics that were involved in bringing the black bricklayers here.

I did find some... I found some old um—just as an aside—my grandfather, and I think I picked up this habit, wrote everything down, little notes on diaries and things that go back to a, the 30s. A little diary from 1938. And every day he would write something down. And he also wrote down his jobs and how much he was being paid, which was interesting to start looking though some of his stuff.

HOW LONG DID HE CONTINUE TO WORK?

God he worked right through I would say a... I've worked it out here. Let me see if I can't find it real quick, with his age and everything. What did I do with it? He was a strong, strong little guy. So was my uncle. They were small, but they were extremely strong. So I think he worked right into his 60s in Chicago. And um...

WAS THERE A REFERENCE TO THAT?

No it was just that I was trying to, work, work... I worked his age out. And so I met him... I first went to Chicago in about 1945. And my grandfather would've been around 72 years old, 73. He wasn't working then. So I would say that he worked through the 1938 into the 40s. By the time I got there he was 69, he was no longer working. My booklet that I was looking at earlier, from 1938, indicates that he was working on a job and had received a, a some monies for performing some bricklaying work in Chicago for some, for some families. A, January 21st 1944 he got Nineteen dollars and Thirteen cents for a job. January 28, 1944, Forty-seven dollars and Forty-four cents. So he was still working in '44. When I got there in '45, '69, I think he was towards the end of his career.

HOW LONG DID HE LIVE?

A, he died in 19... He died at 85. It would have been about 1957. He's 85 years old.

DID YOU VISIT HIM AGAIN?

He came up to Minnesota um... He, I... We saw him from '45, my aunt... He lived with my aunt in Chicago and I would go visit my aunt probably once a year. And he moved in with my aunt. So I would go visit my aunt and I would see my, my grandfather at the time. He was an early riser, very early riser. He was born on a farm. He was a very early riser and he was usually out of the house a, get dressed up and leave the house and he was quite well-known in Chicago. And he spent his days in the union hall, I understand, and a couple places a, along the avenue where... One of the stories of the family, he took me with him one time and left me. Put me in a cab and sent me home. And he stayed. And he would get his hair cut every day, oh not

every day. He'd get a shave. And um... He was quite a, quite an interesting man. And my aunt was so mad at him, I'll never forget, for sending me home in a cab. I was like about eight or nine years old. And the cab driver knew him. He said drop my grandson off. Well he had dressed me up. He woke me up real early. Says we're going out today, put on your best clothes. So I got all dressed up. I thought I was gonna spend the day with my grandfather. And we got to maybe two spots after his shave and he met this beautiful woman. I just... I can't... I can't place her distinctively. All I knew was she was very beautiful and had very beautiful perfume on. And she whispered in his ear. And the next thing I know, he called a cab (laughs) and I went home. And my aunt... The cabdriver dropped me off and I went to the door and I rang the doorbell and my aunt and my uncle were not home. And I didn't have enough sense to ring the other doorbell. So I just sat on this, on the, on the stairs. And I had to sit there for three or four hours. It was fine with me. But when my aunt got home, she had a fit. Aunt Mary said, what are doing out here? Where is papa? And I said, I couldn't tell ya Aunt Mary. I haven't seen him since mid-morning. And she says, "Well how did you get here?" And I said, I got in a cab. And she said, did papa come with you. I said no. He, he got busy, I guess, and he just sent me home and I came here. I thought you would be here. And she just hit the roof. So when he finally got home I was in bed. She really laid into him. And he apologized to me the next day. And a, that was, that was it. Then I didn't see him again for a number of years. And then he got up here. I was about 16 or 17. And they wanted to know if he would, could he move back to Minnesota. And a, my mother and my uncle, his other surviving children, had a big family discussion and he did not want to move to Minnesota. So he went back to Chicago and ne, next time I, next time I heard, he had died. So that was in 1957. I think I was 17 years old at the time. And that was it.

WHAT WAS YOUR MOTHER'S NAME?

Cora Lee. Emm hmm. Cora Lee. She was the youngest of about 11 kids.

IS SHE THE WOMAN JENNIFER REFERS TO...

Yeah.

...THAT LIVED TO BE 102?

That, that's my... That's Jennifer's grandmother. Right. People called her Cupie Anderson. That was her nickname after a, after a a, cough medicine. And my mother was sick and they gave it to her and the other kids couldn't say Whoopie, they called her Cupie. And it stuck with her all of her life. My mother just passed last year at 101 years old. My grandfather was 85. My aunt was in her late 90s. So there was some longevity in our family on, on my mother's side. She was born here. She was the last one born here in 1910. My grandfather came up here with that group of, of African American or black masons to build a 1905 a, capitol.

DID HE STAY AFTER COMPLETING THAT JOB?

He stayed... He stayed a, his big saying was he'd rather be dead in Chicago than alive in any other city in the world. He loved Chicago. He was a... He was a Chicago person all the way

through, um, a very snazzy dresser, very sharp dresser a, a bricklayer had a, had, had, had money I think, I guess you could say. I ran across um, a union card where he had formed the black, Black Bricklayers Association in Chicago. And so he was a union man in that sense. And he stayed here from 1905 and I think he left here a... He stayed here to 1930 'cuz he's in the 1930, the 1920 census.

SO...

And then he went back to Chicago.

...A LONG PERIOD OF TIME.

Yeah I would say yeah, yeah, I think so.

SHOWS SOME RESEARCH.

Yeah, this is him at the 1880s census when he's nine years old. And his brother who was a, older than him, was a bricklayer. Were you able to see that?

IT SAYS BRICK MAKER.

Brick maker. I think...

IT COULD BE...

A brick mason I think. Yeah. My, my grand, my great grandfather was a farmer. In the 1880 census he was...

IS THAT WILEY?

Wiley. Wiley was 38 year old. His son William was 22. So he was like 16 when they start having children back then. Wiley had to be born in 1842, before the Civil War. And that kind of ties in to the idea that in some reports that I got he's listed as a Maladal, which might tie into the fact that in one picture that their family has, he has a war bonnet on, an Indian bonnet.

THAT'S EARNEST?

That's a,

WILEY?

Yeah, that's, that's a, Earnest has it on and he got it from his father. So there's... I've never been able to prove an Native American heritage in our life, but the, he was a farmer in 1880. The Civil War was over in 1862. I don't know how many people had their own farms just 12 years later.

WHAT PART OF TENNESSEE WAS THAT?

It's Union City, Tennessee. It's north of a, north of Memphis. Now not only did they have their own farm, but William his, his son at 22 is listed as some sort of brick, brick maker, whatever.

IN THE TRADE.

Some sort of skill. And then at nine years old my grandfather would maybe pick the trade up from him as a hand-me-down and as a way to, a, as a way to earn. The other people in the family I've been doing some research on were barbers, a, in an around Union City. And so they had a, a number of profession, professions. There's one person that I, I came across today, a half brother of Wiley who was a barber and has his own barbershop in Union City, mostly white clientele, for over 60 years. And that's a source of income also. And that barbering trade was handed down right through their generation. So if the father had it, the son would have it, the nephews would have it. And I actually knew one of the barbers, a, I became friends with later in my life. So I'm thinking brick layer, brick maker, work with brick and handed it down. And I think that's how my grandfather came across a, bricklaying trade.

HAVE YOU BEEN DOWN TO THIS AREA?

Yeah I have.

OH COOL.

I actually went to the Tennessee archives in Nashville to a, do some background research on my, on my grandfather. And I got to the Tennessee archives and (laughs) the amazing thing about it is in Chicago, where I have been a number of time, there's an organization called the International Society of the Sons and the Daughters of Slavery. And what they stand for is slavery has been looked at in a very, very negative way. But the descendants of these slaves need to look at it for what it gave them, what it taught them. I mean they were bricklayers. They, they did the lattice work. They were carpenters. They were painters. They literally built the South. Literally built the South. There, there was long time when it was unfashionable for... Take the jockeys for example. You know, the Kentucky Derby, all of the first jockeys were, were blacks, were slaves and because nobody wanted to ride a horse, get all sweaty and that _____. So they were tanners. They... So this group says if you can... To be admitted into this group, and I knew the two people who were doing it, you just have to show some connection with slavery, you know, plantation worker, whatever. So I did some research and I couldn't find anything. I, I couldn't find any of the documentation that people usually have that shows... On my father's side I couldn't find anything because on his side, even though they were in Mississippi, they owned their own land prior to the Civil War. They lived way out in, in a community outside of a, Aberdeen, Mississippi, so far away from the slave-owning gentry, that they literally had their own town.

WAS THAT ABERDEEN?

It's outside of Aberdeen.

OUTSIDE OF ABERDEEN.

Outside of Aberdeen. And it would take them 20 miles to get into Aberdeen. And so they grew up with their own school, their own farm, their own sorghum mill, their own um... My great grandfather ran a um, a boarding school. They were teachers. Farmers. They ran their own post office. So I couldn't find any records there. So I said I'll go to my mother's side. So... And I didn't really find anything that connected them up with a slave-holding record. And that's when it, I started thinking well if they owned their own land, maybe they were given the land. Maybe they owned the land. Or maybe their might be something to this idea that they were Native American background. And that's where this Mullato stuff comes up. So a lot more research has to be done. What else did you find?

NOT MUCH. YOU FOUND A RECORD OF WILEY JONES OWNING THIS LAND.

Yeah, oh yeah.

OKAY.

Yeah. Emm hmm. Yeah. They owned it. So it's a, it's one of those things that a, remains hard to a... And I did find a distant relative of mine a, over in Union City. 'Cuz I left Nashville, flew to Memphis, rented a car and went up to Union City. And I was told, I found that's there's this one relative that knew all of the history. And I tracked him down. I went by his house to see him. And it was a, it was a very unusua... I, I, I hadn't ever met this man before. He hadn't ever met me. And we were sitting there and he was suspicious of me. And I could, you know, I couldn't blame him. I was asking him a lot of questions. And he says, now exactly what do you? And how are we related? And it... I was just trying to tell him this whole story. And it didn't go over as well as I, I would have liked. And I met somebody at the Nashville Archive in, in Nashville at the Historical Society, and I hired her, gave her all the information, and said, whatever you find, send it me. I'll pay you. I'll pay you first if you have something because there are people that hang around the archives and they, they, they offer their services. They're a professional researcher. And I says, that's great. I, I have to get back to work. So here's my name. Here's my number. And she sent me one document. And that's when she said, your great grandfather owned the land. She found the land record. But I never really pursued it again. But that's why I think he's got that brick background, from his brother who was at least 13 years older than he was at the time. And, and to me, from what I know, you handed down skills, whatever skill you had. And then at the time the great migration was from Mississippi, Tennessee, to Memphis, and Memphis to Saint Louis, Saint Louis to Chicago.

WHEN DID YOUR GRANDFATHER GO TO CHICAGO?

That, I'm not quite clear on that. I do know that he was there when Bullock came. He, he was... Bullock was aware of my grandfather's skill, because it was Bullock, I understand, that found them in the South and in Chicago and brought them up here during the strike.

WHICH STRIKE WAS THAT?

Well... The construction... The, the, the Finish and the Swedish bricklayers at the Capitol got into a dispute with the general contractor.

HERE.

Here. They got into a dispute. And as, as I remember it, it was over wages. A, the general contractor had been in the South and had observed the work that black artisans were able to do. And so he contacted, I understand, Bullock, who was a, a mason extraordinaire. They say that he could cut a line without, and make it fit. Just an extraordinary... I, I forget the name of the finishing of mason work. Maybe you know.

(CAN'T HEAR QUESTION)

Right. He could do that ending stite (sic). And the other people could put the blocks in, but when you come to a corner and it has to be precise, that's when they called him in and made him a general foreman. And the dispute was over wages I, as I understand it. And he says, if you guys don't come to work, don't worry about it. I think I can get some people to come up here and finish this work, 'cuz I'm on a schedule. So he sent a, Kassadra out to find work. And around 20 of them came up here including my grandfather.

IN 1905.

Right. Prior to 1905.

PRIOR.

So they came up here and they started working. And when we were at the, the state capitol, what I had heard that at first there was a great deal of tension between the workers because here you got scabs, basically, coming in and doing their work. I don't know if there was a union at the time or not, but still and all. But the skill of them was such that workman over the world can appreciate another person's skill. And they... That whatever tension there were, a lessened because everybody had a chance to work now. Everybody was back to work. And the job got done. And my mother remembers being born in 1910 that every Sunday they would go out all of the, all of the, the brick, all of the masons would go out for a picnic during the summertime and they would play and they would have great fun. And they would cook food. And then after the capitol was finished, most of them started returning to their home, to the South, the winters being one of the reasons that they didn't wanna stay, the job being completed. My grandfather got another job building the original Hallie Q. Brown house in the 30s, which was a community center for Negroes at the time. It was called the Hallie Q. Brown house. And it was on Aurora

and um, Kent. And my grandfather got a job at that. And he also built his home at 1020 Rondo. And he had another job according to my aunt on University and Rice Street a, a few buildings there.

IT WAS BUILT AROUND 1920.

It could have been...

WAS IT THE RITTER HOUSE?

Could have been the Ritter House and it could have been... What's the Ford building?

OH THE BIG ONE?

The big one.

THE ASSEMBLY PLANT.

The assembly plant that was right there at a, University and a, Rice Street.

IT'S STILL THERE.

It's still there. And so I think the jobs were not a, coming as good. The big job was the capitol. That got 20 people or more a chance to build their own home and to get a solid... I understand that the pay was almost equal, if not equal. The contractor. He wanted to get the job done and he paid, which was something that a, I was pleased to hear. But my aunt, who my grandfather lived with, said Saint Paul could not hold a candle to Chicago at the time. He just had to get back to Chicago, had to go back. He could always find work in Chicago. He loved Chicago. He was very well known in Chicago. And he eventually left my grandmother and became a, a absent father.

WHEN HE RETURNED TO CHICAGO.

Returned to Chicago, and said anybody who wanted to go with him was welcome to come.

IS THE HOUSE AT 1020 RONDO STILL STANDING?

It was taken in I-94. All Rondo Avenue was taken in, for the construction of I-94. We lived right up the street from there. My mother actually lived in 1020 Rondo.

DO YOU HAVE PICTURES OF THAT HOSUE?

I don't have a picture of that house.

I'M SURE WE COULD FIND...

I think we could, you... Find a permit for it. Yeah, I think so. May, maybe look for that. Yeah, the legend is he actually built that house for his family.

HE WOULD HAVE THE CAPABILITY.

Yeah, yeah. He could do that. My grand... My uncle had a lot of that, that, that skill too. A, a... My grand, my grandfather was... This is an amazing thing. A, he was five foot six inches tall. His average weight was a hundred and fifty pounds. His shirt size was 15. His collar was 15. The size of his shoes was 8. And the size of his glove was a, eight-and-a-half. Now my gr, my uncle was even smaller than him, a, worked as a, a porter and his own a, cleaning company. And I don't know if you've ever seen these huge buffers that actually do, you, you a, you polish floors with? My uncle was smaller than me, even at 12 or 11, could pick there up with one hand, and a, carry a, we... The reason that I know is that we had to go work for him. That was the family tradition. You went work, you went to go work for Uncle Henry. I remember my brother and I, the two of us would just struggle with the, with the wax and the detergent and the buffers. And my uncle used to say, you guys are taking too long. He would just come and just grab, you know, with an amazingly strength, and he said, well you should see papa. I remember I said, Uncle Henry, you seem so strong. He says, well you should see my dad. He would say how strong he was. He said his hands were just like steel. He said when he would grab us and we were bad, you know? We couldn't get away. He'd snatch. He'd just hold us up. And I'm saying that's where that, that must have come from. A, being a bricklayer, lifting up, because back in those days, you pretty much did it all. You carried. You climbed. A...

LIFTED EVERY BRICK.

Lifted every brick. And he probably did it all. And he had an amazing a, resolve, my grandfather did, and so did my uncle. And so did my mother. A, must have been a trait. And so did aunt. They were all small people and they were all just tr, tremendously determined to achieve a, independence, which seems to be a trait that we all have. And they all um, credit my grandfather with this, even though they didn't spend a lot of time with him.

WAS YOUR GRANDFATHER AFFILIATED WITH A CHURCH?

My, my grandmother was. My grandmother was a very devout African American, Af, African Methodist Episcopal person.

SAINT JAMES?

Saint James. Exactly. Saint James. My mother was there for all of her life. Buried by Saint James. And so my... That's from my um... That's from my grandmother. She was very... And that might have also been one of the reasons that my grandfather went back to Chicago. I don't think he was...

THAT RELIGIOUS?

That religious. But my grandmother was. And my mother. Very religious.

WAS THE BOND OF THE 10 OR 12 BRICKLAYERS FROM CHICAGO FORMED ON THE JOB? THEY WEREN'T CONNECTED TO A PARTICULAR CHURCH...

No. It, it was...

...OR FRATERNAL ORGANIZATION.

No. They all... They were... I, I talked to Jerry's aunt about this. Jerry's aunts, a the ones who live in California...

IS THAT THE WATSONS?

Watsons. They remember the bond that was formed by their father doing the picnics, cooking food, a the opportunity to work here. You can, you can stay in Minnesota. It's a lot better here than some of the other places. You can build a home. Your kids can go to school. Let's take advantage of this opportunity and let's do good work, gain a reputation for doing good work. 'Cuz if you didn't do good work, he'd get rid of ya. And he was a, the man in charge of that, that whole job. And he said whoever I bring on this job has to perform at a certain level. And you... His house is still standing, I believe. That's the kind of quality that he demanded of the people who worked for 'em. I believe my grandfather had that quality. My grandfather's only problem was Saint Paul, Minnesota, the cold weather and the lack of the lights of Chicago. And I fully understand that.

CHICAGO IS AN ENTIRE COUNTRY...

It... It was the most incredible visit of my life is to get on the train in 1947 and ride to Chicago with my aunt and just go by her house. And the neighborhood that they lived at the time was just a microcosm of just things that I had never seen before in my life. It was an amazing place in the 40s and the 50s and the 60s, a Chicago that you here about now was not the Chicago that I was introduced to and my grandfather lived in. A, not, not the same.

DO YOU RECALL THE AREA THE HOUSE WAS IN?

Right. Ya. It's Southside Chicago. 6633 Greenwood Avenue South. I remember that because that's what she... I remember that, that's what he told the cab. Where should I take him? 66... Take 'em... 6633 Greenwood Avenue South. And as we got older a, we wound up, we found out later on that we were like right around the corner from the hub of 63rd and Cottage Grove. You know? At 66 this area was where there were numerous a, clothing shops a, banks, lawyers, doctors... It was just an amazing, amazing place, a little microcosm of what Rondo wanted to be. But still it was like going from here ta New York City. I mean it was just an amazing trip for us. And it was that close.

WAS YOUR GRANDFATHER INVOLVED IN POLITICS AT ALL?

Not, not really. Not really. Although a, I've come to find out and my... Wiley, Wiley Jones had brothers and sisters that moved to Chicago. And on one branch of his extended family—my aunt called them first cousins—'cuz I don't believe they looked at... They didn't use the word half-brother or half-sister in this... If they were related they were a brother or they were a sister. And I have a document here that I just got this, (looking at documents) a, that I didn't realize I had, that shows the Wiley Jones, the Blackmores, the Edwards, and the Wells. These are all... And then on this particular one here, that Russell Debois. And the Debois were heavily into politics.

IN CHICAGO.

In Chicago.

I REMEMBER THAT NAME.

Debois? He was a judge.

OSCAR D'PREIST WAS THE FIRST AFRICAN AMERICAN CONGRESSMAN.

Right. They, they were heavily into politics. And, and Russell was a confidant of Daley. And Mayor Daley made him the first appointed a, first a, African American appointed to his cabinet and gave him a number of jobs, encouraged him to go to law school at night, get his degree, and he became a judge who got the highest award on this death in Chicago for his fine work. And all of the Debois were involved in that. The Edwards, a... These were all of the self-employed people. Ernest, Wiley and them, they were doing their thing. And a, I'm, I'm, I'm thinking that I thought I'd call today and try to track them down because the name Debois is so. And I did find one and I talked to a nanny and she says, he's not here right now, call back later on today. So I'm getting excited again. This has been great to get me started again a, on this a search of my family 'cuz it's, whoever there's a Debois, I'm pretty sure that some relation. And I'm, I'm gonna follow through on that. And I pulled out all these documents and found out that there's a lot of good stuff going on there that I have. And a, I hope to pursue that real soon, especially the things about Russell Debois, who, when he died a... And I don't have the date of his death, but he was interesting. This initiative... A, he got his job, his first job because he got out of school and he couldn't get a job, so he wrote a letter to President Roosevelt.

GO RIGHT TO THE TOP.

Right to the top. He said I can't get a job. I got this degree. A, can you help me? And Harry Hopkins, the presidential aid, answered his letter and said, you go over to East Saint Louis, Illinois and you're gonna be the Director of the Works Progress Administration. (laughs) That's how he got his job.

TIMING.

TIMING.

Ya, and so, I mean this is... All of the family has this sort of flair in us. And then he became a, head of the office of Price Stabilization. And then he joined the city administration and, and Daley appointed him his administrative assistant. And he said, were, what, what are my duties? And he said, work on the budget, work in the poverty program, help out with neighborhood problems. I mean these are just the job description. And then he became a judge and he was given the Edward H. Wright award for his public service. And in 1976 he was the Illinois State University distinguished alumni. And so that side of the family was involved.

SO ERNEST KNEW THESE PEOPLE.

Ya. Ernest knew these people.

KEPT IN CONTACT.

Kept in contact with 'em. Actually my Aunt Mary knew them. My Aunt Mary, who's aunt _____ (can't understand) That's the same line Russell Debois. That's the big line. She won't... These are all your, my cousins. And then here we come down here to the, the after that. She knew 'em all.

HOLDS UP DIAGRAM

This is a big family tree here that um, I've discovered, going through these documents. And this is the handwriting of my Aunt Mary who has a, a, a... My Aunt Mary was 14 years older than my mother. And she applied for a job. And they said you're, you, we can't hire you because you'll be too old. I mean there was an age limit. So she got my mother's birth certificate and became my mother and worked until she was in her 80s. She was a German translator during the war.

THIS IS AUNT MARY?

Aunt Mary. And a, so later on as she got Alzheimer's, she thought she was my mother a whole lot. (laughs) I don't know how we got on it one time, but she, she told to my mother that a, well Cupie, you know you're older than me. You always... But Aunt Mary, I'm not older than you. And we got into this big conversation because Aunt Mary had decided in her own mind that she was 14 years younger in order to keep this job. And she worked well into her 80s in Chicago. And she was a, a, a, a great note taker. And a, she's one of the leading lights of the family and just a, a person who just drove the education in everybody's mind.

WHAT WAS AUNT MARY'S LAST NAME?

A, Thomas. Mary Thomas. And she and my grandfather lived in this, and, and my uncle... She didn't have any children. And so um, that's where grandpa, Papa stayed with her.

SHE'S THE ONE WHO FOUND YOU ON THE DOORSTEP?

She's the one that found me on the doorstep. And a...

THERE WAS NOBODY...

She wasn't, she wasn't... She wasn't a... She wasn't one to... She had asked me to come a, stay with her at one time. And a, I said no, I didn't wanna move to Chicago at, at that time because I was in my... But she was always willing to take us to, to the museums, to the um... We saw every museum, the Field Museum. We saw the a, Planetarium. We saw the art museums. We just... She just took us everywhere and was such a great inspiration to my first cousin, a, who got a Ph.D. here—my uncle's daughter. And um, that part of the family gets its drive for education from Aunt Mary, who was just a marvelous, marvelous woman.

WHAT LED HER TO STUDY GERMAN?

A job. A job. I mean you... Could... Which you could back in the, in tho, in that, in those days. And she got a job. And she would translate German documents for the government, which was pretty good I would think.

THAT'S SOMETHING.

Ya, I was... I was very impressed with that when I heard. That's... That's something that a, I guess it's... Our family just believes in that. An um, you, you, you'd put yourself in the position to be hired. And you train yourself so that when the time comes, they, they will hire you because you've, you've studied hard. And I know it... She has a great influence on my life. along everything I've done educationally. It's... She always was a great sup... My mother and all of 'em, but she would just be thrilled with every, everything that I achieved as if, you know, it was, it was a, a great family moment. You know? She was always encouraging and um, throughout my educational career and lived to see me get a lot a, a jj, a doctorate degree. And so she was just as proud of that as she could be.

YOU WERE THE LIBRARIAN.

Here.

THE LAW LIBRARY.

Ya. I had a law career and then I... I had a law career with a firm in Minneapolis and then in '75 I took a position in Africa. I studied and lived in Africa for a year working for a Minneapolis company. And on my return, I had to... We were in a country where the property was being taken over by, after a coup. And so we were thinking of going to the International Court. And in order for me to understand just what our rights and obligations were, I had ta go to University of Minnesota ta... I didn't know where to start and somebody said, well there's a law librarian in

the University of Minnesota whose an international lawyer. Just go talk to him. And Bruno Green his name was. And maybe he could help you. And it turned out that Bruno Green was one of a number of a, refugees in the Second World War that were brilliant jurist, a Jewish jurist that fled Nazi Germany, came to the United States and they just kind of drifted into law librarianship because they couldn't take the bars or whatever. And he was an international lawyer in Geneva. And this guy looked at that case and he just said, this is great. And over the next three or four weeks, he impressed me so much with his knowledge and his skill and his, this, this eruditeness this, this great guy. I said, before I go back to practicing law, how I can I do what you do? And he said, well if I was you, I would go to the library school and take some basic courses in organization because that's all I'm doing, is just taking you through. I know all of these things. And I said, that's a great idea. So I said... I went over to library school. And a, they said, well we're just getting ready to start. You're too late, but you can audit a course. And I said, great. So I sat down and I audited three courses in library school. And when the semester was over... They were on the quarter system. ...Bruno Green came over and he had the dean with him. And the dean of the law school said, I've heard great things about you. I understand that you're my senior's, my third year law students don't know how to use a library. Would you be willing to come to the law school and the law, the library will hire you, but work with students as they do they do their senior papers. And I said, well you guys have been awfully good to me, I can postpone, you know, going back. I had enough. So I did that and I took some more courses in library school. By now I'm registered. But then when that semest, quarter was over, I says well I guess it's time for me to go back to a, better find a law firm or something, figured I was going to do. The reference librarian said, I haven't had a vacation in 40 years and I wanna write a book. Would you be willing to work for me just over the summer and I'll be back. And I said well I cc, I can to this, but you know, it's getting... I've been doing this stuff now for six months and I've gotta figure out what I'm gonna do. She said I'll be back. So she leaves. And right before she's supposed to come back on September, she falls down and she breaks her leg and she's hospitalized. So I say, wow. So I says, well I only have three more courses to take in library school and, and write a, a thesis, so why don't I just stay and what the hell, get my degree. I'm this close to a masters degree. I said it, it's kinda, it's getting interesting now. So I did that. And when all it was over, the dean came and says, how would you like to join the law school faculty, you know, as the reference librarian? Well by this time my money had run out. It'd been a year. And I said, you know the old Japanese proverb, if a twig falls into the water, you just follow it. You don't swim against it. Maybe this is something that a, I should try for awhile. And I it for three years and I finally said, enough is enough. Either I'm going to go back to practicing law, or I'm going to find a career in a librarianship, but I gotta... I can't stay at the university. Providence struck. The day I said that, a guy came into my office and he said, do you know that the Minnesota Supreme Court is looking for a new librarian and today is the last day you can submit your resume. I came over... He told me that at four o'clock. I got over here about quarter to five with the traffic, submit it and I was hired and the rest is history.

CAN WE GO OUT TO THE CASINO AFTER THIS?

(Laughs) I'd love to. I'd love to...

TALK ABOUT THE FACT THAT YOU NOW WORK ACROSS THE STREET FROM THE BUILDING THAT BROUGHT YOUR ANCESTORS HERE.

A, that, that, that was it. (overlaps) I mean I'm here at a building... I'm here at the state capitol. I knew my grandfather had worked on it. I'm over there. That's where our offices were. In the Ford building that I think he might have worked on... My first office was the Ford building. I was there for ten years. All... And then we had an office in the state capitol. So I'm walking through this building every day, both buildings. I'm wondering if I'm hearing the echoes of my grandfather or not. He worked on this building. My mother was very, very proud of it. You know? Papa did this. Papa did that, you know? He... Working where papa... Papa helped build that building. And I mean accord... According to my mother and Aunt Mary, he was probably the only mason on the whole building. (laughs) Nobody... No one else had anything to do with it, except Papa.

WE'VE TALKED TO THE GREAT GRANDCHILDREN OF A CRANE OPERATOR'S FAMILY WHO ACCORDING TO THE FAMILY, ZEBULON OLSON WAS THE ONLY CRANE OPERATOR ON THE PROJECT.

Ya I... I... I mean that's how Aunt Mary looked at it. And that's how... Whatever my Aunt Mary did, she had a great influence on my mother—14 years. And so she said, well Aunt Mary says, you know, that Papa was a, this. And then when I met the Watson and them, I, I got a little bit more of the story. And I understand the important role that he played. But you have to understand that... And you probably understand this, worker's families, people did, didn't have much. They take great pride in the accomplishments of their an, of the, of their people. And when you're Negro or African American, whatever it was, and you... They took great pride in being accepted as um, tradesmen or art, artisans—being able to say I can do this job. And in light of some of the things that happened afterwards, it's, it's, it's nice to be able to say there was a time before unions got to be more discriminatory than other things and there were fights, those sort of things. And people couldn't get into elec, electricians union and this sort of stuff. There was a time when there was harmony that grew out of chaos. A, a, a... We're bringing these guys in because you guys won't do it. But then harmony ensued (pause) because there was respect for getting a job well done. So my father was like that. My mother was like that. My aunt. Obviously my grandfather was like that. So... That has stayed with me all of my life. Do the job right and um, you can... You may not get everything you want. You might run across some a... Some people might stand in your way because they don't understand that, but that doesn't affect the person you are.

THAT'S THE STORY WE'RE TRYING TO TELL. FAMILIES OF THE 500 TO 1,000 ARTISANS HAVE THAT.

Right. Well you know, the memory... My father was a union man. My father worked for 50 cents a day on the railroad as a waiter. And um, he had a degree, but he couldn't get a job. He studied Latin. He wound up as a waiter on a railroad. (EMM HMM) Northern Pacific. Transferred here in the 30s. Met my mother in the 30s. Worked at 50 cents a day. Well he and

a, a guy named Finney. I don't know if you ever heard of William Finney. Corky Finney the old um...

MACIO FINNEY.

Macio Finney (talks over) and my father formed the Local 516, the union. And they worked their tails off to get a dollar-fifty cents a day. But that never stopped them from... My father rose through the ranks and he became the number one waiter on the Northern Pacific Railwa (sic). And of the three presidents that were the presidents of the railroad, they had a private car, a luxurious car that used to go behind the trains. My father was the chef/waiter for three of the presidents. And he had some really tough times, you know, trying to get this union started, you know, threatened his job and all. But he said if it's right, you know, you stick to it. And people are gonna respect the work that you do, and eventually things will turn around. And, and, and it did. You know? He died a, pr, a ha... He died, you know, a, a much too early for me, but he accomplished a lot with, you know, with what he had. And that was the... That was the thing that, that um, this sm, this community gave me, this sense of pride in what you do.

WHAT WAS HIS FIRST NAME?

Lucious.

LUCIOUS...

I called him Archie. And, just as an aside, the funniest thing... I'll tell you one other story with my daughter, my daughter has... She's part Norwegian. So right now there's a, a, a program in Norway _____ (Etebeest) where they... Are, are you familiar with it?

YEAH, MY DAUGHTER LIVES IN OSLO, SO YA.

They bring Americans over.

SHE JUST HAPPENS TO LIVE THERE.

No. No. The... The program. They (talk over) bring Americans over and they put 'em in Norway so six weeks or so and they see how they react. So...

SHE'S GOING TO DO THAT?

So she's applying for it. And I said a, well... (OC: That'd be great.) in 1940... In 1942, the king of Norway, Olaf, was treated to an across the country tour to study the operations of the U.S. trains. This is a kickback, right? They would come here to study trains because we had such a fine railroad system. So my father's on the private car. They go up to Seattle and they pick up the king of Norway, Olaf Emarta (sp?) and they take him from Seattle to Yellowstone Park where they get him on another train and he goes around. So by the time he gets to a, Seattle, the president says a, this is Archie, he'll be your... He's our cook, you know? Blah,

blah, blah, blah, blah. And he says, well I'm not really hungry. He says, why is that your majesty? All this food, all this different stuff I've been eating. I just don't feel like anything. He says, well don't worry, Archie will fix you up. So he says, fix 'em up. And he says, what do you want me to fix him? He says, you're the cook, I'm just the president of the railroad. So our family legend is, my father goes back to the kitchen. He does this. He does that. He whips this. He whips that. He just serves this stew to the king of Norway. And the King of Norway says, by God, that's the best thing I've had all, since my trip, a, I want you to give me the recipe. And my dad says, I have absolutely no idea, but I, I'm hoping that he'll forget, for, forget this. So they drop him off three days later. And I just found it. It's from my daughter. Three days later they dropped him off and he hasn't said anything about it again. So my dad says, wew, you know, that, that was gone. So in the mail—and I found it—is the program, huge picture of King Olaf that he signs to Archie. The wife signs with the request, let me have the recipe. I said, you send that over to Norway and tell 'em that your grandfather was a part of this big hoax that maybe we'll come up with the recipe and you'll get on the program. So maybe it all... That's what my dad was, was able to do. So it's... It was a funny story and now she's trying to go to Norway and I found this program. And I'm gonna give it to her so she can mail it into the...

SHE'LL MAKE IT.

I said, what the heck, you know? Let's, let's go for it, you know? And I wanted to see him, a, when he came here. He came. He was like 85. And 85 or 86, and the Carlsons brought him here, I don't know, 20 years... I wanted to take the picture out to show him 'cuz there's a picture of him and my dad and the queen. And I wanted to say, that's my dad that gave you that recipe, but I couldn't figure out how to do it and I just gave up on it.

SO HE ACTUALLY DID GIVE HIM THE RECIPE?

No. He, he... He never did (overlaps). He never. He's never ____ a recipe, but he said I... I said, daddy, what did you actually fix there? He says, Joe... He called me Joe. He said, I have absolutely no idea. He said it was maybe a roux. It was like a soup, you know. I put some ox... I think it was oxtail soup, because that was my dad's favorite. (EMM HMM) Oxtail soup with potatoes and barley and all kind of stuff. My dad was a great oxtail stoop (sic) guy. We couldn't stand it, but the king liked it. (laughs)

WE NEED TO CONTINUE THIS CONVERSATION WHEN YOU HAVE MORE TIME.

Well it's been ver, very enjoyable to remember that. And I do thank the, your program for a, giving us this opportunity to contribute to what is bound to be a, a very worthwhile study. I, I, I hope that the study and a... I heard it and I, I'd like to see it um, established even more that the harmony that was established by the workers here, it wasn't because of the hostile work environment that my grandfather left. It was only because of the, the town and itself and a, his desire to remain in Chicago that um... I can show you one picture, then I'll leave.

I WAS GOING TO ASK FOR PICTURES.

I have a picture of my grandfather that a, would show you why he would have difficulty living in the city of Saint Paul. That was his normal attire.

CU OF GRANDFATHER.

That was my grandfather when I first met him, spats, a top hat, a cane, a shirt that was tailored. A, all of this life he was a very a... They used to call these guys dandies—well dressed men that when they came home they would get attired and walking around Saint Paul like that in the 1910 would have been... But in Chicago it was, it was well accepted that a...

NO PLACE TO GO HERE.

(laughs) You're right. Go out to the fair. (laughs) But my grandfather was a very well dressed man. And he a, really, really enjoyed a... He enjoyed a...

**CAN I LOOK AT THAT? WE'LL GET A COPY TO USE ON THE WEB SITE.
WHAT'S THE OTHER PICTURE?**

That was just him. That was just him as his a... It's a little bit...

TAKE IT OUT.

Sure I can take it out of there. It's a little bit... Just a, a profile of him as...

BRING IT CLOSER TO YOU.

Ya that was, that was papa.

HE LOOKS LIKE A DETERMINED MAN.

Oh he was. He was. He was. He... He knew what he wanted to do and he did it. And he was an extremely strong man from what I've heard. My closest... My uncle was such a... I worked with my uncle for at least a, four or five years as a, as an assistant to my uncle cleaning. We cleaned the North... You remember the Northwestern Bank up on Seventh Street?

EMM HMM.

US Bank up a... The US out on a University Avenue. My grandfather... My uncle cleaned a number of buildings, a number of buildings around town. And he, he a created his own wax that he developed 'cuz he said, you know, if you don't have good wax, you have to come back in the middle of the week. And I can only... Can't afford to come back here. You know? So we will put this wax down and at 12 years old he taught us how to run this huge buffer, just, just run it. 'Cuz he said, I don't really have time to come back to do this. I'm doing other things. So I want you two to learn how to... My unc... My cousin learned how to do it. You guys gotta learn how to do this stuff. You're almost... You're men at like 12 years old. (laughs) He said, you

gotta learn how to do this. You have to... I don't have time to... So I said, okay. And so years later when I was like about 16 or 17 years old, I was in high school. A, I bought a car. I had my first car, a 1954 Chevrolet. And my parents said, you have to pay for it a, you know. It was three hundred and fifty dollars. And so I had to get a job after school. So a guy told me this woman is looking for a... She has a cleaning service. So I went to apply. And a, and, and she had a number of office buildings. And so when I got there, you know, I'm 16. She said, well I'll have to send Frank with you. I said for what? She said, well Frank will teach you how to, you know, how to do all this. I said I can do everything Frank can do. And she didn't believe me. And everythem (sic) unc, whatever he taught me I could... By the time I finished I had my own buildings that I could get to after practice. I could set my own schedule. And all she had to do was go by, go in and make sure it was clean. And I had my own responsibility. I had like three office buildings that I cleaned all on my own. I didn't have to wax it. I told her, Mrs. Brown, when you want the building cleaned? It has to be cleaned by 9 o'clock the next morning. I said, don't worry. Just trust me. Sometimes I'd go at four at five, six. Sometimes I'd go at 9 o'clock at night depending upon... But I always got the buildings clean. And that's what Uncle Ernie had taught me, how ta, that determination. So we should continue this conversation.

Casiville Bullard it was my understanding that Casiville Bullard was the foreman of the workers that were bought to Chicago to work on the, the state capitol. A, being the foreman he was in charge of them and responsible for their work in a sense. He vouched for them. And my grandfather was one of the people, one of the brick, bricklayers, brick masons that Casiville selected to work on the state capitol. And they formed a friendship that as far as I know lasted throughout both of their lives.

I, I agree then to give you that a, permission to use my interview to build your resources.

WHO BUILT OUR CAPITOL?

Right. Fine. All right.

***** END OF INTERVIEW *****