

Interviewee: Carl Tinsley
Interviewer: Kellie Thomas
Transcriber: Andrew Sterling

KT: This is Reverend Carl Tinsley. It is March 22, 2007. We are at his home at 2647 Springhill Drive in the kitchen and we're going to begin the interview now. Would you introduce yourself?

CT: I am Reverend Carl T. Tinsley, 2647 Springhill Drive, Roanoke, Virginia, the place where I've lived for 50 years almost – forty-some years.

KT: First, we're going to start with some background questions. What's your date of birth?

CT: I was born 6-11-33. Times was hard then. (chuckling)

KT: And where were you born?

CT: I was actually born in Franklin County in a place called Sontag, Virginia. A little community.

KT: Sontag? S-u-n

CT: t-a-g Sontag.

KT: Did you live there for your childhood?

CT: No. I was 6 months old when my father moved to West Virginia and he was a coal miner and went to work in the coal mines. So, we lived in West Virginia for 7 years. My mother died when I was 7 years old. So, I – Actually, my father came back to his parent's house. It was 3 in my family, my sister, my brother and myself. My grandmother on my daddy's side and grandfather took us in and my father stayed in West Virginia and worked in the coal mine. So, we left West Virginia where we had electric lights, wonderful schools, theaters, company stores, all you could ever ask for and even more than. And then when we came to Virginia, we lived in a log cabin house with a kitchen built off to one side and you couldn't hear nothing but the whippoorwills and the frogs and all that stuff in the evening. They didn't have electric lights neither. Everything was lamp – use lamps. And you couldn't tell whether if there was a light on until you got in the room from the outside. (chuckling)

KT: Indoor plumbing?

CT: No! My Lord. (laughing) We had more than that. We had an outhouse with two seats. (laughing) Two people could go sit down.

KT: So 2 bathrooms in your house.

CT: Yes. (chuckling)

KT: Where was that in Virginia?

CT: That was in Snow Creek. When you leave Rocky Mount going down 220, turn off on 619. It goes all the way around and comes back into Montvale. But some little communities were down the road like Sontag which is on the far side of Chester Creek and after you cross over the creek, you're into what is called the Snow Creek section. So, my father's people lived in Snow Creek. My mother's father and mother lived in Sontag. I was born in a log cabin identical to Booker T. Washington's only it had a wooden floor. (chuckling)

KT: Really? Are any of those log cabins still standing?

CT: No. That was on my mother's father's side. He was a blacksmith. I'll never forget. The cabin was when I was 3 or 4 years old, we used to go to Virginia to visit. We used to go down there to look at it and daddy told me they had to hang me from the rafters when I was a baby to keeps the rats and snakes from getting in.

KT: So you lived there as a child. Which school did you go to?

CT: We had an elementary school called Brown School. It was in the Sontag area and right after you cross Chester Creek, it was probably about another ¼ to ½ mile up on the side of a hill. We had a bus, one bus that used to run, come all the way over to right above our house and turn around. And see, we lived down in the hollow so we walked up the mountain to try to catch the bus. Sometimes, we'd miss it and we had to walk to school – about 3 miles. You better not go back home. (chuckling)

KT: Its better just to keep on walking.

CT: Keep on walking and walk to school. And a lot of times in the evening, we'd have to wait for the bus to come down from Rocky Mount 'cause it dropped off the children that were going to high school, Franklin County Training School. They would be dropped off and then they'd pick us up. A lot of times, we'd just walk home. Especially in pretty weather rather than wait on the bus. It was quite a life. At Brown School, we had one teacher when I was going. It was Miss Chappie Goode (??) bless her heart. She taught from 1st to 7th grade. She taught all of us and I wonder sometimes how she did that. But when I left West Virginia, I was in the 2nd grade I think - 2nd or 3rd grade - 2nd grade I believe. I just couldn't get math. Math was just a "blough". She was a pretty large person but she squeezed in beside my seat and says, "Hun, let me show you how to do this." And you know, from that day on, I went to the head of the class when it came to math, doing math. It was like somebody opened a window for me.

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KT: She helped you.

CT: Yeah, she helped me and I always gave her credit for that. She was a wonderful person. Taught all of her life, a dedicated teacher. One that we should hold in high esteem. She did so much for the community.

KT: You said that was to 7th grade that you had her?

CT: Yeah, she taught to the 7th grade. See, we left – I think I was in the 4th grade maybe – 2 years 6th grade when my father decided to housekeep again, so he came and got us and we went back to West Virginia.

KT: And where in West Virginia?

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CT: The other side of Beckley, a place called Winding Gulf. It was a coal camp and my father had a house. We lived there until 1947, I believe – '46 or '47. Then we moved back to Virginia, back with my grandparents and I went to high school in Franklin County. At that time, Franklin County only had 11 grades and I was, from going from one school to another, I had gotten 1 or 2 grades behind so I was smart but being poor, not having much – When I was with my grandfather, we had to work. We had to work on the farm. My brother and I, if we never cut another stick of wood or hoe another stalk of corn or tobacco – we've done our share as youngsters. I was 13 years old when I went and got my first job. I worked for the saw mill. He was very good to me, to all of the younguns – young black kids in that area. My cousin and myself, we went to work for him. We walked 3 or 4 miles to work, work all day and walk back in the evening, sometimes we'd catch a ride on a truck. It was just one of those things. I was, at 12 years old, I was 6'2". I was so skinny. (laughing) I wasn't nothing but arms and legs. But I was strong from working on the farm and cutting trees and doing all that work. I was a strong little fella. When I turned, let me see, I think I was in school, I turned 16, yeah, at the end of the year I turned 16 and came to Roanoke with my step-uncles. At that time, my father had married again and my step-uncles, we were like brothers. It wasn't too much difference between our age. Two of 'em were brick masons. They used to work during the winter, laying brick, I mean the summer. But when the winters were bad, they worked at Lewis-Gayle Hospital. They knew people. I came over when I was 16 and got a job. I used to wax and polish those brass doors on Luck Avenue, on 2nd Street actually. And the post office was right across the street. So, I'd pick up the mail for the hospital. And what happened, I had planned to go back to school but when you start working and making a little money and I thought, "Well, I can catch up. I'll wait a month or two." Kinda just kept putting things off. In 1949, it was. And then in 1950, I was still working there. And the Korean War broke out. Well my step-uncle joined the Navy. Of course, they would've drafted him anyhow. So, I wanted to go when I was 16. They had a recruiting station at the post office. So, the guys used to say, "Hey" by me being 6'2", "Come on. Why don't you join the Navy?". And I said, "I don't know. I think I'm too young I

think.”. He said, “Oh”. I said, “I’m just 16.”. He said, “When will you be 17?”. I said, “June.”. He said, “I’ll tell you what. If you pass the test, we’ll sign you up and when you turn 17 and you get permission from your father, you can go to training.”. So, I did. I took the test and I passed it. And he said, “My God! Some of the college kids didn’t pass this test. And you passed it.”. (laughing) Anyhow, we set a date for August. That was after I turned 17 in June and I would leave in August. That’s how it happened. I left Roanoke and went to train. I went to Richmond where I was sworn in, 9 white guys and 1 black and that was me. This was still during segregation time. Training was still segregated. But when we were sworn in, the guy gave the papers to another guy that says, “Wherever he go, you all go.”. (chuckling) He got your meal ticket and everything. So, I’m on the train. I was so afraid, waiting for the man to come and say, “You can’t eat here. You can’t - “. But they allowed us to sit together to eat. And when I got to Chicago, I went to Great Lakes, Illinois. When I got to Chicago, I was still thinking we were in the South and then it dawned on me, “Hey, I’m in the North now.”. (laughing)

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KT: Was it a little different?

CT: Yeah. It really was. I had never seen such wide streets in my life. You know, being a country boy and never been to a big city other than Roanoke and Beckley. Man oh man, that was a thrill. But in Great Lakes, Illinois, there were 3 blacks in my outfit. Out of 265 men there were only 3 blacks. And the fact that they hadn’t been long integrated the Navy, where we could train with everybody else and do stripe for what we wanted to. So I had a 16 week training. 16 weeks, yeah. During that time, my grandmother died and my daddy didn’t tell me ‘cause they didn’t want to break my training. I was so sorry when I found out. I cried like a baby all night. I had to cover my head up so the guys in the barracks couldn’t see me crying. But I made it through training. One of the black guys didn’t make it. It just – He didn’t have the stamina to tell you the truth. And another guy from New York named _____. He and I. And after training, we went to Quonset Point, Rhode Island, Naval Air Station. During that time, you could pick whatever field you wanted to. So, I picked aviation. I wanted to be a pilot. I was attached to anti-submarine squadron 31 and we had about 22 planes, single-engine planes. And all we had to do was patrol the Atlantic coast and keep submarines away and this kind of thing. We had sophisticated gear that we used, SONAR. The receivers were dropped in the water and if we picked up a sub – We had those planes with RADAR. You can pick up a target 500 miles away. This big plane, the one with a big belly that you see, they call that the “Mother Hen”. Then once they picked up a signal, they would vector us. In other words, they’d send us to check it out. We were lighter and we could fly faster. And submarines had RADAR too and about 50 miles maybe they could pick us up. So they’ll dive and we’d plot the time it takes us to get to the place of the dive and we’d start dropping SONAR balls (??) in the water in a whole circle. And it’s amazing. You can get a cruise on (??) a submarine “whoosh, whoosh”. You could even hear people talking.

KT: Really?

CT: Mm mm.

KT: Its kinda like a cat and mouse game.

CT: See, they had silence (??). Once they know we’re onto them, the silence (??). If someone happened to drop a wrench or something else, “Cling, cling”, you could hear it.

KT: Really?

CT: We never ran into any enemy subs, we had our own subs training. And for 4 years, I was in this outfit. Three years straight - We went to Cuba and spent 3 months in Cuba. And we operated off the carrier and the base. The base was our home base at Quonset Point. I served on about 5 different aircraft carriers.

KT: Now when you say the base, was that Guantanamo?

CT: Quonset Point, Rhode Island. Quonset – Q-u-n, I forgot how to spell it. (chuckling) But it was a

Naval Air Station.

KT: OK.

CT: And they had a lot of planes. That's when I found out – I thought that the Air Force had all the planes but the Navy has as many planes or more as the Air Force.

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KT: Really?

CT: Mm mm. Yes indeed.

KT: So, how long were you in the service?

CT: Almost 4 years. I went in in '50 and I came out in '54. I got out a few months early because my outfit was going on a Mediterranean cruise and my time would've been up in the middle of that cruise so they let me out early.

KT: Now you had said something earlier about segregation and that it wasn't segregated when you went in. Did you ever encounter any hostility or any negativity while in the Navy?

CT: Really not that much so in the Navy. We all went through training together and you had some guys in there who were real racist but they didn't bother me or others because I was the only one – There was one other black but I was the only one. So, we were good friends, especially all the white guys from the South. We stuck together. They used to follow me around. (chuckling)

KT: How about in the community at large?

CT: Now the community at large – Rhode Island is a small state. In town, some places you might go, you didn't really find that much because they wanted the money. But Boston was one of the worst racist states that ever walked on the face.

KT: Really?

CT: Yes, Lord. There were communities in Boston you didn't dare be caught in. You wouldn't make it out. People disappear up there. As a matter of fact, years later, after I had been out of the service and working with the NAACP, we had a state convention up there, a national. And people – The man got up there and said, “You all are welcome. You can go anywhere you want to.” And the people up there got up and told him, “No you can't. It is still just as racist now as it was back in the '30s and '20s.”

KT: Really?

CT: Yeah, because you've got the Italians, you've got different nationalities living there. And those people are very, very, very prejudiced.

KT: Really?

CT: Mm mm. I found that out the hard way.

KT: Did you go into the wrong neighborhood at one time?

CT: No. When you went in town and you went to where the bars were, where the girls were.

(laughing) It was quite an experience to see people. And sometimes even in Rhode Island – Providence, that's where we were, Providence. - You'd go in there and you go into a small place and you could tell people didn't want to wait on you. They didn't have signs on the door saying “No Coloreds here, No black here”, but they showed it. I told my father when I came home on my first leave. I said, “Daddy, the people in the South will rise up and we'll live together and we'll be able to live in harmony among ourselves but it will never happen in the North.”

KT: Really?

CT: Mm mm. Maryland was one of the most segregated states I ever came through.

KT: Really?

CT: Its not that way now. But during the time I was in the service, it was.

KT: How about Roanoke? Sorry, I'm not giving you a chance to drink your coffee.

CT: When I came to Roanoke, like I said, from the country, my first time coming to a city this size and being with people that you know and looked up, you knew it would help you make it. 'Cause one of the guys worked in the hospital, he and I roomed at the same house, Pete. We'd eat at the hospital so,

we'd go across Henry Street, me and my friend, a guy my age named Quincy, Quinton and we'd shoot pool. Do different things. Go to the drug store and buy a Coke, old Brooks' store. At that time, I was a little younger, I didn't go to all of the -

KT: The other places?

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CT: Clubs or bars. I did that after I came out the service – I did it before I went in the service. Now I felt good. When I used to leave downtown, once I got across Henry Street Bridge, I was home. I wasn't worried about anybody doing anything to me, people saying things to you or doing anything to you. I was in my own community where we had our restaurants and stores, pool halls, and shoe shine shops, you know, everything. And restaurants. It was always a relief when I got across that bridge. (chuckling) 'Cause downtown, I could go into Kress's and Woolworth's and buy a hot dog and I had to go outside to eat it. They would let you stand outside in the little cafes they had on the streets. You'd go in and they'd sell you something but you had to go outside. You couldn't eat inside or sit down. When I left Roanoke, it was still that way. When I got back, after the service, I went to Rocky Mount and I lived with my father and my stepmother for about a year and a half. I worked at Bassett. I got me a job making furniture. Hardest job in town. (laughing) The first job I had. This is the way it was believe me. On Monday morning, and every morning at the factory, there would be men waiting to be hired. You needed a job, you would just go and wait. If somebody didn't show up, they'd hire you and put you in their place. Now, you couldn't miss a day. You couldn't miss a day. Your supervisor really working with you on that. So when I went there on a Monday and the guy looked at me and he looked at my long arms and he says, "I've got a job.". I said, "What is it?". He said, "Rubbing Filler". I said, "No, I don't think I want that.". 'Cause everybody had warned me, "Don't take the filler of a job. That's the hardest job in the factory. Don't let 'em give you that job.". So I had to go back home when I didn't get hired. So I came back Tuesday. The same guy was standing there saying, "Got the same job.". So I looked at him and I said, "Anybody else doing that job?". He said, "Yeah, Green _____ (??) been doing 16 years.". I said, "Well, if he can do it, I can do it.". So I went on to work. And what I did, rubbing filler - Down in the furniture factory – When you first start out in the lower end, its just rough lumber. They cut it and put it together. By the time it got upstairs where I worked, its a piece of furniture. And the guys are spraying filler on it – You fill the cracks and it dries and you have to rub it to get a smooth surface so they can put a varnish on it. Everything moves on a chain. In the morning, the guy pushes the button to start from the low end downstairs, about a block down and when it got up to where I am, _____. And the only break we got was when the chain broke or something happened and it'd stop. (laughing) And it would be so dusty in there, all you could see was just the round light. That filler dust. And I thought about this as just like working in a coal mine. I was doing that all day long. The next day, I got up to go to work, I was trying to – Daddy done fixed breakfast for us 'cause he worked in another place and I got my coffee and I had to do this. I couldn't even raise my arm. (laughing)

KT: Major sore.

CT: I told daddy, "I'm gonna have to quit. I can't even get my arms up to there.". (laughing) But you know the funny thing, psychological, when they punch that button and that chain starts, we had to take this cloth and start _____ worked on that line and boy, I tell ya, at the end of a year, I looked deformed. My arms through here were so big. You know how Popeye's arms used to look?

KT: Uh huh.

CT: That's how my arms looked. I had a small body (laughing) great big arms.

KT: So you managed to stay there a year and a half?

CT: Yeah. I worked there. I quit there and went to American Furniture Factory in Montvale. I worked over there for a while. Then I came back and worked at the veneering plant. That's where I was working when I got married. Veneer is when they shave logs, you know, different logs to put over

Poplar and Pine. You think you're getting Oak but you're getting really a veneered, real thin slice. And I worked in that veneering plant for right at a year. In fact, that's the only place they held my job for 6 weeks.

KT: Really?

CT: I told the guy, "I'm getting married this weekend and I'll be back next week.". (laughing)

KT: And they're still waiting on you huh? (laughing)

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CT: The guy I worked with, Tommy Webb, told me, "Tinsley, you're the only man I know that the man held a job and wouldn't hire nobody for 6 weeks, hoping you'd come back.". After we got married, we got married right on Rugby Boulevard, 1308 Rugby Boulevard. It was at my sister-in-law's house. We had a weekend honeymoon. The only hotel that was available for blacks was the Pine Oaks Inn up in Salem. And they had 6 rooms, one bathroom. (chuckling) So we spent the night there Saturday night and Sunday, we came back and went up to her mother's house. Her mother and father – Her father was a coal miner too but he quit mining for a while and he was living here. They lived up off of Wildwood Road. They had a big house up there so we lived with them for maybe 3 months. I got a job working at Shoney's Big Boy on Lee Highway. I was hired as a porter, a janitor, or porter, whatever you want to call it. They paid me \$22 a week, 6 days a week and 9 hours a day.

KT: Wow.

CT: Wow, that's right. (laughing) And then I worked part-time at the hospital – Roanoke Memorial Hospital when they only had the one building. Then I got a job at the City as a cleaner or janitor and I worked there almost a year. In 1957, I got a job on the extra board at N&W. So I quit the City and I was working, making twice the money when I went to work for the railroad. Oh, that was good. Lord, we were in heaven then. (chuckling) Cost of living was cheap and everything and I was making twice the money at the railroad than I was making at the City. My salary at the City was \$235 a month at that time. When I was working at the railroad, I was making over \$400.

KT: Wow.

CT: Wow is right. And everything was going wonderful for 3 months and then we got cut off.

KT: Oh.

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CT: Laid off. They merged with the Virginia Railway and you gotta eliminate some jobs so, last hired – In fact I was working as an extra man anyhow but I got kicked to the street. So, I went back to Shoney's and worked for Shoney's Big Boy. I worked out in the community and did floors, washed floors and did windows for people. Any way I could make a dollar. And I got called back to Norfolk Southern, I was still on the extra board, so you might work one day a week or maybe one day and a half, depending if anybody didn't get laid off, you didn't get to work. So I went to work for Bluefield Hardware 'cause I was working at Norfolk Southern at night whenever they needed me and it used to be right beside H&C Coffee downtown. I drove the truck, delivered furniture and appliances on over, drove to West Virginia to Bluefield Hardware out there, bring stuff back and taking it out. And I'd work when I could at night at the railroad. It wasn't until about '59 I really began to dread the work. I quit Bluefields because it was too much on me really. I finally got a regular job at the railroad. I worked as a janitor and then I went in the mail room. The mail room was the only job, decent job, there for blacks at that time. You could wear a tie and a shirt. And we handled all the incoming mail and all the outgoing mail which was company mail and US mail. I worked as – there actually was somebody off from that work and finally when 2 of the guys retired so I got a job there. I finally ended up running the mail room and liked it 'cause I was selling real estate on the side. I had gotten my license to sell real estate at a real estate agency and I was selling real estate on the side. And the reason I did that was because I was trying to buy a house and I couldn't. The bank wouldn't lend you no money and you just couldn't get – and even thought I was making pretty good money and my wife was working, they said

they couldn't depend on her. She was of child-bearing age so they wouldn't consider her salary at all. That went on for a while and one day, in the mail room, there were boxes all around where we had put the mail up for everybody, every department. So, I liked it because when I got my work caught up, I could go out and show a house and come on back when a train came in to be there to get the other mail. I made sure my work was done. One of the messengers one day come down – they would hire maybe a kid out of high school to be a messenger and come to find out, he was making \$200 more a month than I was and I'm running the mail room. So, I met Mr. Dunlap. He's the vice-president at that time. I met him in the hall 'cause he'd come by and pick up his mail all the time. I said, “Mr. Dunlap, its a shame that the messengers make more money than we do in the mail room where our responsibility is so much greater.”. He said, “Well, I'm gonna tell Turner to go over there and get you fellas a raise.”. Turner was the building manager. So he went over there and talked with personnel and came back and met me in the hall. This was before I started preaching, OK? And he said, “I got you boys a raise.”. I said, “How much?”. “3 cent on the hour.”. So I told him where to stick it. I was angry. I really was. I was angry.

KT: I would imagine.

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CT: And I told him where to put it and I kept on walking and I went upstairs to the freight traffic department and they had a job on the board for a file clerk. So Mr. Maynor, he was an administrator and I told him, “I want that job. I got seniority and I can get it.”. “I don't know if Mr. Turner is gonna let you go.”. I said, “If you don't, I'm gonna be the richest black man in town. I'm gonna sue this company.” So, anyhow, I got the job and started making \$200 more a month. And I moved around. I moved from file clerk to rate clerk. And I had to qualify. You had 90 days to qualify for these jobs. Filing is simple, anybody can do that. Working rates and doing rates is a tremendous job because you have to go through books back to the year 1942 and bring it all the way up and put increases on it. I worked trans-con which was the West Coast line. Nobody would help me except for one white guy named Bobby West. He worked with me and helped me a lot. The guy that was the chief clerk in there, he tried his best to get me disqualified but I made it. Then I went from there to tear (??) bureau to piggyback. We called the piggy intermodal and I worked at intermodal for about 5-6 years back to freight traffic and I worked as a chief clerk until the merger with Southern and then they moved our – they moved all our titles back and we didn't – try to put everything together so everybody just became a clerk. Before they had different positions you could bid on, Chief Clerk, Assistant Chief Clerk and different things. Then they made all of 'em just clerks. So I worked there – Well, I worked at Norfolk & Western for – including time off and on for 38 years. In 1971, I was called into ministry. I was working piggyback at that time. As a matter of fact, they did a story on me in the N&W magazine that - I have it around here somewhere but I don't know where. (chuckling) And the title was, “The Best of Two Worlds” 'cause I was able to pastor a small church in Catawba and also worked. They really couldn't afford a pastor. My pastor made me feel like I was on top of the world. When they called me to that church, he says, “Brother Tinsley, if I had had a church like this when I first went into ministry, I would've been sittin' on the world.”. I got up there, the people couldn't sing, wouldn't sing. I had to do all the singing until I got – (laughing)

KT: And it worked, huh?

CT: Yeah. I finally got the church ____ and baptized my first people. In fact, there was a funeral for one of the girls yesterday – not yesterday, day before yesterday who was one of the young ladies that I first baptized. She was 54 years old when she died. But I stayed up there for 7 years but I had other churches too. At one time, I was pastoring 3 churches and working.

KT: Wow.

CT: What happened, I would have 2 on the first Sunday and 1 on the second Sunday. And then when I went to a full-time church, I had a full-time church in Natural Bridge, Virginia. I pastored at Indian

Rock at 2:00 and then I'd go at 7:00 to Catawba.

KT: So you did a lot of driving.

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CT: Oh, God, yes. But it was a joy for me to do that and then I didn't stay at Natural Bridge but 1 year and then I got called to First Baptist Church in _____ and I pastored there for right at 15 years. I took a sabbatical and had brain surgery and went to Buena Vista to help them out and they called me to be the pastor. So I went there going on, would be 15 years this actual July.

KT: When you said you had brain surgery, what was - ?

CT: I had a pituitary gland tumor. I was blind in my left eye and the tumor had killed the main gland that gives your body what it needs. So when they found out, they gave me medicine to supplement what my gland wasn't doing but I still had to have the surgery because I was blind. So they went up through my nose and into the middle of my head took the tumor out. The first operation was in '92. I had to have it again in '99. So, since then, I've been doing pretty good.

KT: Did you get your sight back?

CT: Oh, yeah. My sight came back after the first operation. What happened, the doctor said the tumor was like a clothesline, the optic nerve rather. The tumor had propped up the optical nerve like you would prop up a clothesline so once they removed the tumor and let it down. But there was some swag in there so he took some fat out of my side and put it in the hold that the tumor came out of. When I woke up, he said, "Can you see?". "Yeah, doctor, I can see.". (both laughing) That was a great thing really.

KT: To get your sight back?

CT: Yes, Lord have mercy, yeah. And you know the fact that being blind, I didn't know I was blind. I knew something was wrong 'cause for the past 3 or 4 months, I didn't have no energy and my joints was aching. I felt like a 90 year-old man and I told my wife, "I don't know how a 90 year-old man is supposed to feel but that's what it feels like.". (laughing) We laughed about that though. And when I found out that I had the tumor, I went to work one day and normally I take my glasses off to work. I just set 'em on the shelf. I was trying to read some small text and I couldn't read it and I took my glasses and put 'em on and it didn't help it. Taking 'em off. And I said my eyes are changing. I need to call my eye doctor. So I called him and told him I needed to see him that week. So he said, "Alright Carl, come on in on Wednesday.". "OK Doc.". So I go see him and he covered up this eye and said, "Read the chart". "OK Doc". Closed that eye, nothing was there, black spot. I said, "Doc, I'm blind in my left eye.". Well, Dr. Shordrees (??) and I were pretty good friends and he said, "Carl, this can't happen this quick. What happened? Have you seen anybody since you've seen me?". I said, "Yeah. I broke my glasses when I was downtown. I went to an optometrist and he fixed the glasses and he also checked my eye.". So he called him and he ran every test he could think of. He finally called a neurosurgeon and made an appointment for me to see him that day. When I went to see him, he ran some tests and told me I had to have an MRI to be sure what was wrong. But I just knew I had a brain tumor. I was just, Oh God.

KT: You had the feeling?

CT: That night, I didn't sleep a wink.

KT: So '99 was your last surgery?

CT: '99 at UVA. The first surgery was here in Roanoke. It was a miracle. When I went to see the neurosurgeon, he told me, "Reverend Tinsley, I'll tell you what. There's a man named Duncan. He's done 8 operations like yours, 8 or 9. And he is the best I've ever seen. I want you to go see him.". So I did. Me and my wife went to see him. He talked with us and he told us all of what he was going to do and he did it. He done something – Starting that Friday, I had to have surgery on Monday, so he put me on steroids. He said, "I'm gonna give you steroids every 4 hours and that's to make the membrane in your head tough so when I press down, it won't tear it will just be like jello. I'll press down in there

and it'll come back.”. That's when I found out why people use steroids. Now you talk about making you feel good and giving you energy. Lord, have mercy.

KT: It gave you energy and - ?

0.39.57.4

CT: Yeah, after I had surgery and I'm laying in the bed the day after and everybody says, “You had surgery?”. I said, “Yeah”. (laughing) All I had was a little drip patch across my nose and I came home after 5 days. I looked out there in the yard and it was spring, about this time. The grass was growing and I wanted to get out there and rake the yard so bad.

KT: Five days after surgery.

CT: Yeah, but what he did the day after surgery, he began to take me off the steroids gradually, gradually. My legs ached me like a tooth ache. I couldn't understand why my legs were hurting so bad until much later. It was withdrawal. I know what people go through when they have these withdrawals. Some of 'em, their whole body hurting 'em and they go through different things. But my legs.

KT: That's what bothered you?

CT: Oh, God, they ached like a tooth ache. After I got through that and I was home, I felt like I could run a mile. Stuff got out my system. (chuckling)

KT: Different story.

CT: Yeah. I was back to normal.

KT: Let me back up to, you had mentioned that the year that you had got married to your wife, how did you meet her? And where did she live?

CT: My wife was born in West Virginia but she lived in - Her father was a coal miner like my dad but she had an aunt that had a lot of land in Franklin County. Her aunt gave her mother a farm over in Franklin County about 3 or 4 miles from where we lived. Her brother, she had 5 brothers and 4 sisters. 2 of the older sisters were married. That's where we got married was at the older sister's house. We used to go across the mountain as kids and play with her brothers and sisters. And she was going to Brown School. When she started her first year, she was a little unique. She didn't walk with - We'd all be walking, playing and she'd be ahead of everybody, swinging that lunch bucket. My brother used to pick at her and she'd take bucket and beat him up. She was a mean little thing. When we'd go across the mountain to play with 'em, they'd peep around the house and see us and take off. Anyhow, I had thought nothing more about that. We went back to West Virginia and they went back to West Virginia finally. They stayed out there. She went to school at Conley High School which was an integrated school. Right out of Mullins a place called Valwood. She graduated and she moved to - Came to live with her sister in Roanoke, her older sister on Rugby Boulevard. I met her brother one day downtown and I said, “Where's Yvonne?”. Let me regress. I didn't see anyone until I was 18. Her grandfather died so they were down from West Virginia - She was still in school. - for his funeral. I was home on leave. So, me and my step-brothers - We were all about the same age - we went up to see 'em. Her sister and I were in the same grade when I was going to school. I said, “I'm going to see Delores” but I wound up sitting on the couch beside her. And she had bloomed and blossomed. Man, I tell ya. (laughing) So we got in the car and rode around town, you know, like young people do. And we started talking so I took her address and she took mine and we started writing each other off and on for about 3 ½ years. And I didn't see her but that one time. She sent me a picture and I sent her a picture. I wouldn't show the guys her picture when I was in the service 'cause I thought they'd accuse me of robbing the cradle. She looked so young. (laughing) But I kept her picture and when I got out of the service, I kinda just broke away from that part. I was working at Bassett and living at home. And when I met Lawrence, they'd tell me, “She's over here in Roanoke over on Rugby Boulevard.”. Man, I took off. I went up there and asked her out on a date. We went - I used to take her to dances with me. I was going to take her to the movies one day. I got to the movie parking over at the old Virginia

Theater and I needed a nickel for the parking meter. I didn't have no change. I said, "Honey, Yvonne, you got a nickel?". "I'm not giving you no money.". I said, "Well, I don't have no change.". "Well, I'm not gonna give you anything." I said, "Well, we're going back home.". (laughing) I took her back home.

0.45.21.5

KT: Oh, did you?

CT: I don't think this could happen to no one but me. (laughing) We dated. I had made up my mind that I was tired of just running around on Saturday doing this. I wanted to settle down. I wanted a family. So I started coming to see her regular. I was working at Bassett and I would leave there and come home, dress, and ride to Roanoke. My daddy was – he'd be sittin' in one chair asleep and I'd be sitting in the other one. (laughing)

KT: How much younger was she than you? Was she younger or older?

CT: Yeah, she was younger. She was 2 ½ years younger. We got married in '56. Our first son was born in '57.

KT: How many children do you have?

CT: Well, I told you we had – or did I tell you?

KT: I think you might've written it but we didn't talk about it.

CT: Well, my brother, Eugene Tinsley, he was – his wife or the girl he was living with, they had 3 children. She just had – in fact, Faye had just had – He was born about a week before I got married and I picked him up at the hospital. I picked her and him up and carried 'em home. 3 weeks later she died. So Yvonne and I took the baby. We had our honeymoon and we took the baby that Monday and we kept him close to 2 years. He was at 19 months old I think. My brother had moved to D.C. He called my father about a month before his death and said, "Daddy, if anything happens to me, would you take my children and raise 'em.". And daddy promised him that he would. So when my brother was killed in Washington _____. He and a friend – actually, his friend, they got to fighting and my brother always fought with fists but this guy was a knife man. He stabbed him. He died. He died really because they didn't treat him. They could've saved his life at the hospital, but back then, they wouldn't do any operating unless they got permission. By the time they contacted daddy, it was 4 or 5 hours later. He bled internally. He had told the police that it was an accident so they didn't charge the guy. We had a baby then. Terry was born. So, we decided since daddy didn't let us be separated, we'd try to get all the kids together. It was 2 boys and 1 girl. Of course, her mother came and got the girl and went back to Buffalo, New York, and we tried to get her but decided it wasn't working. It was too much trouble to go through to try to get her. But anyhow, we took Dino (??) to be with his brother. That's the hardest thing I've ever done in my life. We had to leave him. Oh, Lord. If I had it to do over, I wouldn't do it. I reckon it worked out best 'cause he and his brothers grew up together and I used to call Faye's mother and tell her to let Eve come down so she could meet her brothers and they could spend some time together. So, she used to come down during the summer sometimes when she got a certain age and she stayed with us and I'd take her over and let her get with her brothers. So they had a relationship and a fellowship. Right now, the oldest son, my oldest nephew, he's dead and Dino (??), the one we kept he lived here in Roanoke and worked for the VA. Eve, she's in New York. Bless her heart. Debating whether she wants to live down in this part again 'cause her grandmother who had raised her is dead and she don't have – she's got one son, a son and a daughter and a granddaughter. So, she was talking about coming, moving back here. I told her she needed to come and be closer to her brother. I hope she'll do that.

KT: Did you have one child or did you have - ?

0.49.54.5

CT: Two. 2 sons. Michael was born in '58 and we almost lost him to pneumonia twice. When he was 17, he wanted to quit school. You know how these youngsters go through this stage. So, he and these

kids were going to work together. They wanted to live in an apartment. I said, "OK. Maybe you can make it. Everybody don't need an education. Maybe you can make it." He and his 2 or 3 friends, they had a little house over here on Norfolk Avenue. They had a coal stove in there. (laughing) He worked at Community Hospital. So all of 'em got laid off but him. He was carrying the load. He said there were rats in there so big, they'd pick up and _____. (laughing) But I told him, I said, "Tell you what, you've got to give up your house key." He didn't want to do that. I said, "You can't live in two places." My house. I told you we were trying to teach him a lesson which we did. After about 3 or 4 months, he called me, "Daddy, can I come home and visit?". I said, "Yeah.". I went and picked him up. He was in the car riding with me and he said, "Daddy, I'm coming back home.". I said, "I don't think so.". I drove on. I said, "If I remember correctly, you asked me if you could leave so you'll have to ask me if you can come back.". He slumped down in his seat. "Daddy, can I come home?". I said, "Yeah. My rules stand. Your momma's rules stand. You get your butt back in school and you do what you're supposed to do.". So he came back and right after, he wanted to join the Army. So his momma says, she came in one day, he was laying in the bed asleep. She went out to work. She says, "When I get back here, you better have a job or you're not going to be laying in my bed.". (laughing) So he went and joined the Army. He had his training in New Jersey and then he went to Fort Benning, Georgia. We had really gotten close during that time and we would write and I called him all the time. I got a call one Monday from – No, I didn't get no call. My next door neighbor, she was home and I was at work and his momma was at work and Terry was married. He was a Marine at Camp Lejeune. Anyhow, she said, "Reverend Tinsley, some service men over here to see you.". I said, "Oh, God. Tell 'em I'll be there in a few minutes.". They said, "Naw, you stay where you are. They're coming to where you are.". I knew something was wrong. But I thought this was my oldest son and the reason I thought it was him – That particular Sunday I had preached down in Montvale, a homecoming. I preached on the family. When I got home, Terry had left me a note – We called him Terry because his momma said we can't have two Carls. He left me a note and it said, "Daddy, I took the battery out of your other car 'cause my battery was bad." And I told Yvonne, "Oh God, that battery is bad too.". And I was worried about him because there was a terrible storm coming up and they had to go through that storm. All night long, I was worried and waiting the next day for a certain time so I could call and find out if he had made it OK. When she told me those service men were there, I just said, "Oh God, I hope he didn't have a wreck." 'cause Sheila was pregnant with our first grandchild and I was just tore up. But they said they're from the Army then I knew something had happened to Mike. And they told me that an MP had killed him that night, Sunday night. I said, "What happened?". They said, "We don't know. We just don't know.". So I called his commander. So I got on the phone and I called him and I said, "I want to know what happened.". He said, "Reverend Tinsley, an MP broke the door down to the barracks and shot him.". I said, "Why?". He said, "I don't know but we're investigating it now.". So, I came home and went and got Yvonne, had to tell her that her son was dead. That's the hardest thing I've ever done in my life. How do you tell a mother that her baby is dead? So she was working at ITT at that time and I went out there and got her. I went by and got her sister first 'cause I told her, "I can't handle it by myself.". Her and her sister, Delores, had grew up like they were twins almost. So anyhow, we got her and we came on home. I got on the phone and I started making some phone calls. So I told the man, I said, "I don't want y'all to do nothing to him until he get here.". They said, "We've got to embalm him.". I said, "I want to know what happened.". The guy said, "Well, he had barricaded himself in his room and he wouldn't open the door and the duty officer couldn't get him to open the door so he calls for the MP.". The MP came and it was 2 what they call MID men, special service men. They're big guys. He was angry when they got there. He jumps out of his jeep 'cause he couldn't find the place for a long time. He rode up there, "Where's he at?". "He's in his room.". He didn't talk to the duty officer and didn't ask nobody no questions. Breaks the door down! _____. When he knocked the door in, he said, "Freeze or else I'll blow you away.". Bam! All in 3 minutes from the

time he got out of the jeep. So he was charged with murder which was the right charge and I didn't expect them to convict him of murder. I thought maybe they'd convict him of manslaughter. I was really angry when I found out he was the top MP on the base. Anyhow, they were going to have a trial in November. So I went down, me and a friend, a lawyer friend of mine for a 4 ½ day trial. On the 5th day which was on a Friday, this judge which, as far as I'm concerned, wasn't a judge, was just somebody sittin' up there. Said, "Well, the defense is closed and we're going to give it to the jury." He said, "Well, its 12 o'clock. We're going to lunch and then we're coming back." So we got up and we went out because we wanted to get lunch and get back. Before we could get to our cars, the jury which was made up of 5 enlisted men and 1 Sargent Major who had 35 years service. They had said, "We don't need no time." Don't you know they didn't find him guilty of nothing. He broke every rule, every regulation that the Army had but they couldn't find him guilty because if they had, the commander on the base, his career would've been shot. So he had hand picked the jury so that they would not find him guilty. So in order to hang somebody, he went after Mike's duty officer and Mike's commanding officer and he broke those two. Killed their career. I'm gonna tell you something and its true. When I went there, I had a 32 pistol in my back pocket, about that small. I had made up my mind if they didn't find him guilty, I was going to kill him in the courtroom. And I would have but the Lord moved me out of there. I know if he hadn't – If we had stayed there for the verdict, I planned to shoot him. There was no doubt in my mind I was going to kill him. I was hurting, honey, I was hurting. God knows I was hurting. When I got back, I was so depressed I couldn't find nobody. We got back, the place was closed. I mean it was dark, wasn't a light on in the place. And I finally found a Lieutenant and he said, "Reverend Tinsley, if it had been my son, I would've killed that SOB." I said, "Well, I would have if I had been there." I just – He tried to give me all the support he could. He kept saying, "I don't know how you can take it." I came back home. I tell you, I was in a deep depression. I didn't think I was ever going to preach again to tell you the truth. I was just so out of it. All I could think about was trying to find him then I could kill him. I had to wrestle with that for about a year before I could really forgive him like I'm supposed to. Like a Christian's supposed to. But, we're human. I had to deal with that and Yvonne had to deal with it. But, somehow, we made it thought. I think one of the things that really helped us, my oldest son's wife was pregnant. Sheila was pregnant with her first child. 7 months later, my grandson was born. Me and Yvonne drove down to Camp Lejeune with her mother and Terry went on and picked the baby up and brought him over and put him in his mother's arms. And I saw that look on her face. (pause) I think that's when the healing started. We had gotten her an apartment right across the street. He had to go to Okinawa for a year. So when they moved from Lejeune, we found an apartment over here. Everyday I would get him. Me and Yvonne we took him really for the first 5 years of his life. He was our balm. He was our balm I tell you the truth. The Lord taketh away but the Lord also giveth. And he gave us, we call him trouble and then Carl III came on board and he and I were just like that.

1.01.14.5

KT: Grandpa's boy, huh.

CT: He would be with me. If I was in a meeting, he would be there. When somebody would come in to interview me on television, he'd would just sit there, he wouldn't move. He was with me and he always called me Carl. He never called me nothing else but Carl.

KT: Really?

CT: Both of my grandsons, that's all they ever called me. Yvonne would say, "That's your granddaddy." "That's Carl." That's the first name they could say. Yvonne said, "They thing you're their playmate."

KT: How old are they now?

CT: My oldest grandson is 29. My youngest will be 24 in June.

KT: They still call you Carl?

CT: Still call me Carl. Now my great-grandson, Davante (??), which is Deanthony's (??) son, he calls me Papa. See I tried to get the rest of 'em to call me Papa but they wouldn't.

KT: Wouldn't do it.

CT: Tried to pay 'em. (chuckling)

KT: Now let me kinda back up just a little bit.

CT: My involvement in the community, we need to talk about that.

KT: Well, involvement in the community, absolutely, and specifically, kinda backing up a little bit with Gainsboro. 'Cause you lived there for a while.

CT: I worked in Gainsboro the whole time. That was our community really. I was the third person that moved in this neighborhood, on this street, Lakeview and Springhill. Lower Northwest Roanoke was where we hung out, YMCA. But I got involved in Scouting when I was working 2 jobs. One of the guys - one that used to be the life insurance company right there on Gainsboro, right beside Claytor's Clinic.

KT: OK:

CT: And upstairs. He talked to me one day. He said, "You ought to get involved in Scouting." 'Cause my brother-in-law, he was involved. He worked with the Housing Authority, I mean at the Lincoln Terrace. They had just built that. I'd help him some. He said, "You should get involved." I said, "I don't have time." He said, "Tinsley, let me tell you, all these people around here, none of them have time. I don't have time." So I got involved in Scouting. When I joined Pilgrim Baptist Church, I got a Scout troop together. I worked in Scouting for about 12 years. I also worked in Sandlot Football, baseball. Because when we moved up to this area, I wanted my kids to get involved. So I had to get involved to get them involved. I was serving on the board at Southwest Community Development Fund that just started when urban renewal started. This is before they started tearing down anything. I served on the Southwest Board. Tom Morris was our first director and Sam Hale, he's the director now and still there. Done a lot. It was 3 agencies, BIA, CIE and CORD. We were CORD in this community. And our job was to try to create and rebuild jobs, businesses and this kind of thing. But in the meantime, they're tearing down all these houses. What really upset me was the fact they tore out the best houses first.

KT: Really?

1.04.57.4

CT: I mean houses that would still be standing and be modern because the people wanted – They got _____ OK, we're gonna take this property. We're gonna tear all this out and we're gonna rebuild and you can move back if you want to. That was the story they told. Well, the people who had the best houses and the best connections, they sold theirs and they took their houses first. When the program changed after Johnson, then the program changed – Nixon I think it was. It took a turn so they quit. And we had a lot of people out there still living in shacks and, believe it or not, a lot of 'em still have outhouses out on the other end of where the Coca Cola plant is now. I was trying to sell some real estate then and a lot of people wanted to buy. "They're gonna take my house." I said, "No, you better wait 'til you get the money before you really make – because you won't have enough money unless the Housing Authority does take your house." It was 7 years later that they took this guy's house. He wanted to buy a house. He went and bought one but I wouldn't sell it to him because I knew that the Housing Authority was changing. They were doing different things and I didn't think – In fact, they had no – Not the idea really to rebuild back in the community. That's when we called that business, across from Gainsboro Road all the way over up to 5th Street. That was the city plan. But we got behind them and started pushing that they start building and they started building over right off of Madison Avenue back in that area. Now, I got involved in Gainsboro Neighborhood Development Corporation. Percy Keeling was our president and George Heller was the director. You need to talk to George Heller and you'll get a lot of history. We started rehabbing houses. We got money from the

city. The City Block Grant Fund and we were doing a great job really. But, during that time, it was also drugs, there were a lot of drugs out there. Hooper was the police chief. They didn't care if the drugs stayed in the black community. Fairfax used to be an open drive. People would drive through there, stop their car, you know. And we had rehabbed two houses up there. We went in there thinking it was going to cost \$20,000 and we wound up spending about \$60,000. Had to tear it all the way down to the frame. And we couldn't sell 'em. Nobody would buy. Nobody wanted to buy where you have drugs – drugs were rampaging during that time. So the Housing Authority took those houses. When Percy got sick, I became president. Over on Madison Avenue, there are townhouses.

KT: Mm mm.

CT: That was the project we wanted to do and I wanted to see it through. When we started that project, I had got a commitment from the bank for the money and then the bank went under. Which one was that? Sovereign. Remember when Sovereign went under?

KT: Mm mm.

1.08.12.7

CT: So I had to go to another bank. I went to Nations Bank. They agreed to let me have the money but to piece-meal it. So it took us a good while to build that. And it cost us probably \$800,000 more. I finally sold the last house in '9-. The end of '90s when I sold the last house. But it was a beautiful community. That's the one thing that I'm proud of. We built those townhouses. I almost did it single-handed because I had – Margaret Tecker (??) was the director. I had several people serve on the board but they were afraid. They were older people and they didn't want to get sued. I can understand. And they finally started dropping off and really, me and Margaret were running the whole game. I kept people advised and I got to meet a lot of people and learn a lot about that. When we finished, I said, "Well, I want the community to get involved. The people that bought those houses, you should be involved now with what else goes on over here." In the meantime, we had rehabbed about 60, close to 70-some houses up through that area. I feel we did a wonderful job. But the Housing Authority sat on a lot of that land when they could've/should've been money provided to the Block Grant to redevelop it like it was supposed to be. But the city has different plans. We just found out later – we found out years ago that the city had plans that didn't include that. They had what they called that 20 year plan all the way up to 5th Street. It didn't include – In fact, their plan was to get rid of all the property between there and 5th Street. I started working with another group when Ms. Davis and her sister, Betha (??) when First Baptist Church got built. We were working, trying to make sure we maintained that area. And certainly the church was taken care of. That was one of the promises that was made. We, Percy, when we were with Gainsboro Development, Percy Keeling and Reverend Wright was involved at that time, we had to do a study. The city gave us \$105,000 to do a feasibility study about Henry Street to come up with a plan for it. We got a group out of Atlanta, Georgia, to come here and to do a study and to make plans. We presented the plans to the city and they set it aside 'cause they didn't need for it to be developed like we wanted it. It was business and restaurants. It was going to be restored really, pretty much like it was. But they didn't mean for that to happen. So they put it on the side and they said, at that time, Taylor had become Mayor, "We're gonna give this to Mayor Taylor. That's going to be his project." Well, that killed it right there 'cause there was nothing ever done and now we're still fighting about the Social Security Building and the Higher Education Building. I don't think it bothers as much as taking the other land and using it. We wanted to maintain some identity to Henry Street rather than just say, "You've got a bridge that represents Henry Street by the Dumas Hotel." I've seen a lot of change here and, you know what, it would've been nice if it would've been all for the good rather than sometimes for selfish reasons.

KT: You just mentioned the Dumas?

CT: The Dumas Hotel.

KT: Do you remember any of the entertainers who came to the Dumas?

1.12.18.3

CT: Oh God, yes. We used to have, before they tore down – did the Dry Dock, the old auditorium on Wells Avenue, that's where they used to have all the dances. James Brown, Count Basie, _____, all the big bands. The only place they could stay was at the Dumas. That was a classy place. Its the only place blacks had to stay. Of course, going to the dance down on Wells Avenue, it was always, when I walked in there, 'cause when I was in the service, I hitchhiked from Norfolk. We had _____ up some planes and I was in Norfolk. So I get up here and go to the dances and concerts. And we danced. There wasn't no concert, we danced. At those dances, our folks was dressed up and it looked like a flower garden. And all of the white folks was up in the balcony. They had the police over there trying to keep them from coming down. So they'd come down and get mixed in with that. (laughing) You couldn't stay still with that music. It was beautiful. And then Joe _____ built a place up on Wells Avenue and that's where they started having it. But all of the performers that come in here, the only place they had to stay was the Dumas. Count Basie and – I got to see a lot of 'em. Silas Green's show used to come here. That was something else. It was wonderful. They used to have that at the Virginia Theater and sometimes out in tents but that was beautiful.

KT: Did you see James Brown?

CT: Oh God, yes.

KT: Did ya?

CT: Let me tell ya. As far as I'm concerned, James Brown and I are the same age. He had the best band of any singing group in the land. When you walked in with the James Brown band was going, your feet would automatically start moving. (laughing)

KT: Couldn't sit still.

CT: Couldn't stand still. Those feet would start moving. (laughing) When he first started out – The first time I think he came to Roanoke, I was here. James Brown. And he was a showman. I agree, he was the hardest working man in show business. He put on a show that wouldn't wait. Yes indeed. Lionel Hampton. It was good to see him too. Those guys were young. B.B. King and Fats Domino. All those guys used to come through here.

KT: I had no idea.

CT: Oh yes. Roanoke was a famous place for entertainment especially on our side. Fats Domino. We went to see Fats and he had his feet up and there was a hole in the bottom of his shoe. (laughing) That's the entertainment part. Yes. My wife and I, when I was dating her, I took her to some of the events down on Wells Avenue.

1.15.33.7

KT: You said your community service, community work -

CT: Well, I've been involved in the NAACP, Southwest Community Development Fund, CORD, which is our oldest community organization - How many others? - A couple of 'em I can't remember now. And the Y. I always supported the YMCA. I was hoping and it has been my dream and Percy's dream and a lot of people's dream here in Roanoke that we were going to build a Y for the black people. We had the land and we had a lot of money. Just never got off the ground. When Taylor started, they started talking about putting the Ys together. So they took our money and our land and we got nothing from it. That thing broke Percy's heart. So Percy Keeling was one of the most outstanding guys in the community because he ran the Y. The old Y used to be this big building right on Gainsboro. Upstairs, I got a picture of me hanging out the window doing an interview with one of the guys from Roanoke Times. But those are the organizations, Southwest, CORD, NAACP, SCOC, all of the civil rights organizations plus I was a Mason and trying to preach and pastor churches and work. I had a handful.

KT: Busy guy.

CT: Yes, Lord. Well, I had more energy then. I don't have that energy today, I'll tell you.

KT: I guess now we'll close the interview but is there anything that we didn't cover that you'd like to share? That you can think of?

1.17.29.5

CT: When I first came to Roanoke and I got married, I served on a biracial committee when they started integrating the schools. One of the things – white people from across the community – I can't remember everybody's name now, myself, Taylor, Avine Smith (??) and Dr. Law (??) and a few others who served on those committees. We met downtown at the cafeteria then. I believe it was S&W and worked on the plan and keep things at a stable place. In 1965, I got a call from – Well I actually got a – Brewer (??) called me, a guy I worked with – the Kiwanis Club wanted some black to speak with 'em about this integration. He wouldn't do it so he asked me if I would do it. I said, "Yeah, I'll do it." Anyhow, they invited me out to the Oasis which was a segregated restaurant at that time. We went in the back room and there were about 45 white gentlemen and they fed me steak and potatoes and tea. So after I ate, I got up and they were eager to hear what I had to say. I got up and I looked at 'em and I said, "OK. I want y'all to turn black." (laughing) They looked at me funny. I said, "I want you to turn black 'cause you're not going to know what I'm talking about unless you walk in my shoes. I want you to look from my point of view. And I know why you're upset. I know what's upsetting you now. You don't want the school desegregated because your forefathers and your grandfathers have taken advantage of our women down through the years." I said, "Look at me. I should be black, nappy hair, maybe big lips, African descent. I'm not. I could be one of y'all's brothers. Who knows? But you're afraid that your little white daughters and the little black boys want to get together. I've got news for you. What goes around comes around. That's gonna happen."

KT: How did they take to your speech?

1.19.41.6

CT: You know what? You could hear a pin fall for 45 minutes. I actually laid it out on the line. I said, "Now, if you had to lie to your children and many of 'em have found out that you lied and they look down on you for that because you told them that black people were inferior. They were lazy. They were this and that. Now, they've found out going to school with 'em, that's not so. They're humans just like they are. And you can't stop people from getting together when they start liking each other. They're gonna be alright. Its us I'm worried about. We were not exposed to this. We didn't expect this but its coming. So, we have to make sure that we can work together. Make sure that everybody has an equal opportunity. We can't stop what's going on now. Its gonna happen." Well, they must've enjoyed it because they got the women and I had to speak to the women's group. They didn't appreciate it as much I don't think as much as the men.

KT: I was going to say, did you tone it down for the women at all?

CT: I did. I did tone it down. I really did. I really did. I didn't speak to them on the same level as I did the men. Because you know how mommas are about their daughters.

KT: OK, well, I guess we're gonna close for now.

CT: If you thought we could put everything in that tape that I've been through and been involved in this community, you'd have to have about a dozen, maybe a hundred tapes.

KT: We got an overview.

CT: Yeah, this is just an overview of what my life has been like. But I have been a staunch person for justice. I really have. During the time when Hooper was Chief of Police, a lot of things happened under his watch that was wrong. It was totally wrong. And one incident happened when the Kroger's used to be over here on 19th Street. There was a black man that stole a bottle of wine. He was running. The police – An off-duty policeman shot him in the back and they didn't want to do anything about it. So I had the Justice Department come in here and work with the police department. And they ended up firing the guy because he really had no business doing what he did. Chief Hooper hated me with all his power. I feel sorry for him really 'cause he wanted to run the police department like the Nazis were

running the gestapo. Take no prisoners. When you shoot, you shoot to kill. Nobody can talk. A lot of policemen told me and not all policemen are bad. I want to make that plain. There are some good policemen on that force but you can't be a good police and be there with a couple of bad apples in the bucket because there's a code. You don't talk about each others profession, especially people that are working with you. But a lot of 'em off the record told me that he was something else. They couldn't even talk to him. They couldn't get to him. He needed to go. He finally – He had cancer and died. I wanted once to go to his funeral and I said, “No. He might get up.”. (laughing)

KT: Wouldn't want that. (laughing)

CT: I've cultivated some good relationships downtown now. One of my greatest achievements I think is the fact that I was a Jesse Jackson Delegate in 1984 and 1988. When Jesse decided to run for president, I was serving on – I didn't tell you what political party – I served on the Democratic Party and I served as chairman during the year that Douglas was elected but I was vice-chairman for a number of years. Chip Woodrow and Vick Thomas and all those, we were all Democrats working together. So, at that time we were having a mass meeting. And whoever had the most people out for the candidate, we'd get the delegates. So Chip had asked me, “Carl, how many you think you can get out of there?”. I said, “Chip, you know I'm full cuff (??). If I get 10 I'll be lucky.”. I got on the phone. I had people get on the phone and I was calling people everywhere. That Saturday, about 125 showed up.

KT: Oh, wow.

CT: We took the majority of the delegates. I went to Richmond to the State Convention and was elected delegate from here to the National. Myself, John Edwards and – I don't know whether Chip went or not. Anyhow, it was quite an experience. Oh, my God, was it an experience.

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KT: And what year was that?

CT: 1984. 1984, good year.

KT: Well, you certainly -

CT: I was there when he made that speech that Friday. I'm gonna tell you honey, if I never go to another or see another one, there will never be another one like that. I've never seen such jubilant – It was almost like it was a church service. When he got up and spoke. He had a text – I've got a copy of it somewhere now and that's why he just moved to the side. I was in the back. It looked like a shadow moving across the stage and just got in him. And when he got through, everybody was jumping up and down. People were crying, white and black. I mean, you wouldn't believe. It was something else. If they had had an election that night, he'd have got elected. (laughing)

KT: I think that one thing is for certain, you have had a very industrious life and definitely worked for what you believe in. I think that definitely comes through.

CT: In 1988, I got a chance to go to Atlanta when they had the convention there and that was another place that – Oh, nothing like it. If you ever have a chance to go to a national, Democrat – I don't know how the Republicans conventions but I know how Democrats are. (laughing)

KT: We'll just guess about the Republicans.

CT: Its really something to behold. The people you meet. When I went to California, I was in San Francisco in '84, I got off the plane with my wife. I had never been to California before. I didn't know nobody. Somebody says, “Carl.” (laughing) It was this guy, Joe Calloway, I believe his name is. He used to live here in Roanoke but he's been out there for several years.

KT: Oh, wow.

CT: He picked me and my wife up and showed us around. The next day we had time and I got a chance to meet Willie Brown. He was the state chair – What was his position? - He was in charge of Senate in the State House. They had a party out there that was 3 blocks long. And there were so many people there, it was just like a sea of people. You were moving like this. And they had food and music

from every nationality. It was on the docks. You just walked from one place to the other. Food, all kinds. When we first got there, we didn't buy nothing, food for the first 3 days 'cause everywhere we went they had these nick-nacks, you know, you're eating all the time so you weren't hungry. So I told my wife, I said, "Listen. I want some steak and eggs." That's when I found out the San Francisco is cold. We got out there that day. It was hot, God, it was hot. They were having a heat wave really. The man said, "We ain't had this kind of weather in I don't know when." We checked into this hotel, no air conditioning. I'm raising hell. "You mean you have no air conditioning!"

KT: And it was hot.

CT: Yeah. But that night, Oh God, they had a shaft in the bathroom. If you opened the door, that air coming through there that night, we liked to froze. That room got cold. The next morning I'm looking out the window and downstairs, people got on their fur coats and leather jackets. This was in July, whenever the National Convention was. Summer months. And the lady had told me before I left here, she said, "Reverend, carry winter clothes. Don't carry no summer clothes. You won't need 'em." And we went across the bridge, the Golden Gate Bridge, Joe took us across there. We went up in the mountains. It was raining. We come out of the rain, through the clouds and on up the mountain and the sun was shining as beautiful as you've ever seen. That's quite a treat. You're driving down here and all at once, you go through the clouds, the rain stops and the sun is shining.

KT: If you don't like the weather, just drive up the mountain.

CT: Drive up to the mountain.

KT: Well, I'm going to stop this for now and thank you very much.