

## **Elwood Hill Interview Summary**

Interviewee: Elwood Hill

Interviewer: R. Joshua Sipe

Interview Date: August 31, 2015

Location: Blechman Reading Room 215-Paul and Rosemary Tribble Library, Christopher Newport University, Newport News, Virginia

Length: 1 audio file, WAV format, 1:23:18.0

THE INTERVIEWEE: Mr. Elwood Hill born in 1948 at Whittaker Memorial Hospital and has lived in the Newport News area most of his life. As a child, Hill lived in the Newsome Park community with his parents and two older sisters until he was seven; then he and his family moved into the home his father purchased across the street in Jefferson Park. Following graduation from Newport News' Carver High School in 1966, Hill attended college at Hampton Institute (later Hampton University), where he played football and was in the ROTC program. After graduating from Hampton in 1970, he joined the United States Army and was stationed overseas in Germany during the Vietnam War. On return to the United States, Hill lived in New York City for a few years before returning to Newport News, where he has lived ever since.

THE INTERVIEWER: R. Joshua Sipe is a Fourth Year History Major at Christopher Newport University working with the Hampton Roads Oral History Project in conjunction with Dr. Laura Puaca as a Ferguson Fellow.

DESCRIPTION OF THE INTERVIEW: The interview was conducted in the Blechman Reading Room of the Paul and Rosemary Tribble Library at Christopher Newport University in Newport News, Virginia. Hill was excited to participate in the Hampton Roads Oral History Project and did so in part as a tribute to his father, Elwood Lee Hill, the only certified African-American master plumber in Newport News. The interview took a life history approach exploring Hill's life from childhood through adulthood, with a large portion of questions pertaining to his time spent living in Newsome Park and the different aspects of that community. In his discussion of Newsome Park, he emphasized the loving and caring role of the community and its part in his development, especially creating a safe and encouraging environment to grow up in. Hill provides vivid memories of his time in school activities and how these, along with his teachers, propelled him to grow in a variety of ways. Hill also describes many of the businesses and entertainment places for African Americans in Newport News. Another aspect that Hill touches upon in the interview is race relations in the army during the Vietnam War.

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### START OF INTERVIEW

Joshua Sipe: This is Joshua Sipe. Today is August 31st, 2015. I am interviewing Mr. Elwood Hill. This interview is taking place in the Blechman Reading Room at Paul and Rosemary Tribble Library at Christopher Newport University in Newport News, Virginia. This interview is being carried out as part of the Hampton Roads Oral History Project at Christopher Newport University. Good morning--. Good afternoon, Mr. Hill.

Elwood Hill: Hi. How are you doing, Joshua?

JS: Doing well, yourself?

EH: Very well.

JS: We like to use what's called a life history approach, so we're going to start with some questions about your childhood and family, before turning to more focused questions about Newsome Park as well as some about Newport News.

EH: Ok.

JS: First off, where and when were you born?

EH: I was born November 17th, 1948 in Newport News, Virginia. And, at the time, it was Whittaker Hospital on 28th and Wickham. I'm not--. No, I can't say that. But, it's

predominantly--. It was a segregated hospital.

JS: Did you have any--? Do you have any siblings?

EH: Yes, I have two sisters. Henri Hill, my older sister, and Judy Hill, my middle sister. I am the baby of the family.

JS: Oh ok. What were your parents' names?

EH: My father's name was Elwood Lee Hill, and my mother's name was Arlene Elizabeth Hill. And, both of them are Newport News natives. They were born and raised in Newport News, and attended Huntington High School at that time.

JS: Ok. What did your parents do for an occupation?

EH: Well, my mother, with the assistance of her father, she went to a two-year business school, in Durham, North Carolina, and got a certificate to be a secretary. And, my father, he went to Hampton University, and he got a--. He majored in plumbing, and he came back out and decided that he wanted to be a master plumber. So, he went through the process to become a master plumber. And, ever since I can remember being alive, he was self-employed, E.L. Hill Plumbing. And, he's a--. He's really the reason I'm here today, because I think some of the history that I have is predicated on the kind of man that he was at that time. So, I want to speak a lot about him, if I can get an opportunity. He was truly an independent soul.

JS: Can you tell me a little bit about what exactly his, what exactly a master plumber is?

EH: A master plumber is a heating, air conditioning, the whole system of plumbing. And, what that means is he's qualified to do, and has a license--or had a license, when he got it--to perform all services and, you know, be technically qualified to do that. And, that's

just a common--not a degree--but a common license that you have to have in order to practice plumbing under your name.

JS: Ok. Where did he service, kind of, his work?

EH: He serviced-- Well, he was interesting. He serviced all of Newport News, particularly the East End area. But, he actually had Caucasian customers because his reputation was that he was a very clean and very diligent person. So, he would be in the Hampton, Victoria Boulevard area. He'd be up in the Denbigh area, but it wasn't called Denbigh at that time. It was like-- It was towards Fort Eustis. He basically serviced the East End community. But, he did have other clients who weren't necessarily in the East End area.

JS: Ok.

EH: And, he grew up in the East End area as well.

JS: Gotcha. One question, how did your parents come to live in Newsome Park?

EH: Well, they got married. And, actually, they didn't have a place to live. I'm interviewing, I'm going to say it: they actually got married and went back home because they didn't have a place to stay. And, when Newsome Park came around, they were already married, and they wanted to be out of their respective houses. So, they ran to Newsome Park. The first place they lived was on 41st Street. I couldn't tell you the-- I know it was maybe in the 800 block or something like that. But, I was actually born in a-- The address was 4225 Marshall Avenue, which was like a cul-de-sac, and it was right next to the rental office and the whole business area of Newsome Park. I stayed there until I was seven. I left there in 1955. I was born in 1948. But, we just moved right across

the street to a place called Jefferson Park [where you owned your own home]. You owned them. You didn't rent them. And, that was my father's dream to own his own home.

JS: Gotcha. Ok. Did the war effort affect your family at all?

EH: Yes, it did. My father, when he got out of Hampton, he actually went to work. He always said it was Patrick Henry. They had a facility there, and it was like the civil service. And they provided whatever work that was directed to the war effort. And, the interesting part of this is-- Again, I say, he was a pioneer. He had his degree. He was very astute in what he did, but he had some conflict on the job. And, he had a child about to be born. And, because of that conflict, he walked off the job and told his wife. He said, "Look, I can't take it. I got to-- I got to do this on my own." But, that's the kind of thinking he had. But, at the same time, he did work for the war effort, and the area was, I mean, was Patrick Henry. That's what they called that area at that time. But, yeah, he did. In fact, he applied from Hampton to be a Tuskegee Airman.

JS: Oh.

EH: Yes. But, he had-- I think he said he had high blood pressure. And, that wouldn't allow him to fly airplanes at the-- Well, [he] couldn't pass the health side of flying airplanes.

JS: Do you know what year they officially moved into Newsome Park?

EH: Well, my-- The official year-- My sister lived there, and she's five years older than I am. And, I'm going to guesstimate. If I was there in '48, they were probably there in '43 or '44.

JS: Ok. Gotcha. So, I know you said that you only lived there until you were seven, but you were right next door. What was it like growing up in Newsome Park, in the Newsome Park area?

EH: Well, it was fun. It was lots of people, just like you, young. And everybody, even the families--. It was a lot of family orientation. [And] young people, because that's what the workforce was requiring. And, it was--. It was everything. I mean, it was nice. My parents, they really--. They really were impressed with the facility. The facility, to them, was fantastic: shower, kitchen, sink, and everything that they wanted. They were indeed happy with it. I think what they did to bring them in--the government to bring them in--they provided them with something that a lot of young people didn't have at that time as far as house and the facilities. And, plus, it was brand new. And, I did bring a picture of my father and us. This what Newsome Park looked like. But, this is a picture of he and my sisters, in Newsome Park, when he was a young man. And, that's what Newsome Park looked like, what you see there.

JS: Can you maybe describe, a little bit more, about, kind of, what you remember the houses, kind of, looking like, and some of the amenities that they had in them? You mentioned showers--.

EH: Well, I'm a kid. But, it was--. I think it was a two-bedroom which--. You know, they didn't have two bedrooms. They had heat. I mean, they had a coal--. It was coal bin. And, I guess they provided heat to that big stove. Stove, they had in the middle of the place. And, we had heat. And, I remember, growing up, they just opened the windows up for the summer time. The kitchen, which was--. You got to understand, a lot of (0:10:17.1) were outdoor toilets. This was the turn of century, coming out of the war, not quite even out of

the war. So, these amenities were--even they sound simple now--a kitchen sink, two. I think they had two. One, whatever, and a stove that worked. And, I know, from my grandparents, they worked off a wooden stove. So this was electric, or gas, or whatever. I wouldn't know the details of which one it is 'cause, you know, I wasn't that proficient. But, yeah, it was--. And a shower. It was something they really liked. So, I guess, the simple things that we have now were the things that were afforded, and they really appreciated. So, the bedrooms, yeah, and the kitchen and the bathrooms. I mean, a bathroom, in itself, was a good thing. So, I guess that's the answer to your question.

JS: Gotcha. What was, kind of, the mood for you and your family from living in Newsome Park to living in Jefferson Park, in your house there?

EH: Well, it was a thing where, it was hope. And, honestly, the whole Newsome Park life--. Well, you were associated with people like--. I know you've heard articles, but Miss [Katherine] Johnson, she was a Goble. She's the one that helped NASA. She lived next door to us, ok. And, you had--. You had people who were striving to be something. And, like I said, my father had gone to Hampton. And, you could see pockets of people that were educated, and even wanted to be educated. The shipyard did bring people in. And, my father--as you see, he didn't take advantage of the shipyard--but, it was an environment where people were educated. Some were educated, some weren't quite educated. But, that wasn't even a thought process then. They were people. But, you had doctors who were living there, lawyers that were living there, professors in colleges living there because this was a beautiful place to live. So, leaving Newsome Park to Jefferson Park, was my father saying, "I got an opportunity now to have my own." And, that's what renting--. Renting, renting, at time, you could see all the aspirations. I would

dare say most of the people in that, in that cul-de-sac, 4225 Marshall Avenue, all of them found, in the next ten years, they were moving to Aberdeen in Hampton, which was a area where they had houses. So, it was hope. But, the transition was still a neighborhood of African Americans. And, so it was--. It was what it was. And, again, I had no ill feelings about being in Newsome Park. I thought Newsome Park was the best thing I could have--at six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve, you know--until things start coming in from the outside for you to see that things weren't quite right. And, again, Newport News didn't really--. I didn't see it. I didn't really see an overt reaction to African Africans, negative or violently. But, we start seeing it on the TV when we finally got a TV. So, yeah, we--. The transition was beautiful, and it was not a real big change. It was just the fact that my father, now, owned the house or was about [to and] was paying a mortgage to own a house. And, he had difficulty, I'm talking, he had difficulty getting the monies to purchase the house. The banking, at that time, wasn't really just giving money to African Americans. And, he had some issues that he got into a conversation with someone that worked for the North Carolina Mutual Insurance Company which, then, is an African-American institution. It's been there for umpteen years. I don't know if it's still there now. But, through that avenue, he got a--. He borrowed money from them in order to put enough money down to acquire his home. So, like I said, this thing was a network of achievers and a lot of support from the black community that--. I mean, that's all you knew. I mean, you know, we went to barbershops, we went to grocery stores, we went to clothing stores. It was African American. You know, we went to our little drive-ins or our little restaurants. It was African Americans. So, as a child, you just thought you were enjoying yourself, having a great time.



JS: Gotcha.

EH: Un huh.

JS: Can you describe some of the things that, as you were growing up, kind of, in the Newsome Park, Newsome Park area, you'd do for fun?

EH: Oh, we--. Well, one of the--. One thing I'll always remember: my parents were really--. They were sticklers for coming home when the streetlights came on because it was nighttime, and I wanted to be out there because we were playing games like "Old Red Devil." We'd play--in other words--any kind of game that we could run and hide and somebody--. "Hide-And-Go-Seek," if you want to call it. Actually, we'd play a little "Spin the Bottle" when I got older. But, those are the kind of things we had. Let's see, we had Newsome Park School, which was right in the middle of it. And, it had swings and stuff like that. And, actually, I played Little League Baseball for the Warwick Trojans when I was a young guy. And the activities, again--. The activities where you go outside--well, you'd do your chores--you go outside and you hang out with your buddies as long as you can. And, if some of your buddies had to come home early, then you hung out with the ones that could stay out later. In my case, I was the one that had to--one of the ones that had to--come in earlier. Ok.

JS: Gotcha. Kind of building off that, what were some of the things that you and your family did, kind of, as leisure activities?

EH: My father would take us on--get us in the car--and we'd ride. We'd ride to, let's say, Bayshore Beach, which was an African-American beach that we thought was heaven.

We'd go see our grandparents. My grandmother lived on 23rd Street. We'd go ride to the

interior of Yorktown or country. My father would take me swimming--just he and I--to Bayshore. We would have picnics. I mean, excuse me, not picnics, cookouts. And, it was--. Honestly, I didn't know. I was well-kept in the black life, and it was a good life.

JS: I guess, kind of--. When you were at Bayshore, did you have any interaction--. What were kind of--. Did you have any interaction because I, if I'm correct, there was an all--.

EH: Buckroe.

JS: Buckroe Beach right next to it.

EH: Yeah, yeah.

JS: Did you have any interactions with [whites]--?

EH: Interactions? No. No. And, it's almost, you knew--. You knew where you weren't wanted. But, you were having so much fun where you were, why would you want to bring yourself harm, knowing that you're at Bayshore, you're on a roller coaster, you're on a little love boat, you're on a, what, hobby horse. I mean, so--. You knew it was there, but it wasn't for me, and again, I'm saying, we had some more enterprising people. But, for me, it was like, "I'm where I need to be to have a good time, to enjoy myself." But, we--. We were well aware of where to go and where not to go. You could almost sense some of those things. But, it wasn't paramount. When they say, "Let's go to the beach," it was about Bayshore and big fun.

JS: Gotcha.

EH: Church too, I mean, that's what I'm going to say. Church was a very strong element in my family, as far as going to church and hearing the word of God every Sunday in Sunday school. Those kind of things were--. And, they developed friendships throughout

the area. But, that was another--. I'm falling back on what some of the things, activities, church was. Church was good.

JS: Gotcha. What church did you go to?

EH: Well, at first it was Ivy. I mean, no--. It was Macedonia Baptist Church, was on Ivy Avenue. I think it was intersecting at 12th Street, yeah. And, my grandfather--who was named Granville Johnson--he was a deacon there. And, far as I could ever remember, we went to that church. My father, being a plumber, many times, he would service them when they had problems because, you know, their plumbing would sometimes go out. In fact, one story, a friend of mine--or a friend that went to the church--he always tells the story when he sees me, he say, "I remember when your father--when we lost heat in the winter--your father went under the church to keep the heat going," whatever he did. And, he said, "And, he did it for the whole service." And, this impressed that young man so much that every time he sees me--his name was Arthur Price--but every time he sees me he brings that up, "Your father did this." So, it was--. It was--. I lived a very, I would say, sheltered [life], and I had a hero.

JS: Do you remember any other, any of the other churches that were, kind of, located in and around Newsome Park?

EH: Yeah. Yeah. Zion Bap--. Oh, Newsome Park? Well, let me see. Jefferson Park. First Baptist Jefferson Park was on 42<sup>nd</sup> Street, yeah, 42<sup>nd</sup> Street [and] Jefferson. Jefferson and 42<sup>nd</sup>. Ah, I think it was--. Now, see, you got to understand that I going to give a name that I can remember, but it might not be it. But, New Grafton was somewhere down on Roanoke Avenue. I think. And, I know I used to go to a--. My father used to take us to Sunday school in a place--I couldn't even tell you the name of it--it was on the corner of

Chestnut. Not the corner, but it was on Chestnut and 48th. But, it was like a center, and they had Sunday school there. Now, I don't know about church there, but they had Sunday school there. And, he would walk us from the 600 block to the 1200 block to go to Sunday school every Sunday. What other churches? Right off the top of my head, no. But, from the area that I did go to church, there was Zion Baptist on 20th Street, yeah, 20<sup>th</sup> Street, in the block, and intersected at Ivy Avenue. And, then, they had what they called First Church, was on 23rd and Jefferson. Then, they had, I think, Second Baptist on 30th Street. And, then they had another church, I can't [recall]. Second Baptist, maybe, another Second Baptist on Chestnut Avenue. Those are the ones that, well, I guess, I remember most.

JS: Do you remember the churches being heavily involved in the communities at all?

EH: Helping those who need help. I didn't see a lot of activist effort. But, it was always a place to help people. But, not--. We didn't see a whole lot of what you saw with Atlanta and the other places where they were like--. I didn't see a lot of that. But, there were some organizations that came to life when things started happening.

JS: I was wondering if you could, maybe, talk a little bit about the community dynamics in Newsome Park and in the adjacent, kind of, Newsome Park area?

EH: Ok. The dynamics, and you mean by what was going on or what, you know? Help me.

JS: Kind of like the relationships between people, the people that lived there. You, kind of, talked about there's doctors and lawyers.

EH: Well, there was all kinds people, and there were people who--. In fact, they were people who, we would say, pretty much, were going to be there because of the economic

situation. But, the dynamics of people interacting--. My best friends were whoever was nice and kind, and, you know, didn't try nothing to cause a lot of trouble, even though we found ourselves making some trouble. But, the dynamics were--. It wasn't really a class situation because you already were under [segregation]--. And, like I say, it wasn't something that you just, you know, you just had beating you over the head. You lived where you lived, and you survived in that environment. But, the people within it--. Yeah, you would hear things like, "Yeah, they--. He's selling moonshine here, or, you know, he's doing this." But, I mean, that's--. Like I said, the dynamics were we had all kinds of people there and how you reacted to them becomes based on how you felt. And, if you were a "holy roller," then you had a guy who had a beer garden, you're going to be, kind of, against him. But, in my case, being a young man, I wanted to know how did he get that business? How did he actually get a business, to have a beer garden, in Jefferson Park, and that kind of thing. So, there were all kinds of people and very interesting people. But, I didn't see a whole lot of put down. I just saw a whole lot of, "They're different. And, I don't want you--." Let's say, like my mother and father, when they said, "Come in," they would say something like, "You come in because we care about you. Now, if they can stay out all night, then somebody is not really caring about them like they should." And, that's part of the biggest dynamics I got out of it. But, my sister told me yesterday, you know, "Your mother would tell you things, and you just do just what you wanted to do." But, that's just me. But, it was a diverse community as far as people and their economic level. But, anybody that was aspiring, trying: it was encouraged.

JS: Can you, maybe, talk a little bit about, you mentioned, kind of, the black businesses that existed in there.

EH: Ok.

JS: Can you maybe talk about, a little bit, about those?

EH: Ok. Let me--. Okay, again--. I'm thinking. There was 25th Street. 25th Street--they called it "2-5-and-J"--25th Street had everything you wanted on it. One--. And, I know, if somebody's listening, they'd probably say, "Right!" First thing came to mind, was Atlantic Hot Dog Stand. That was on 25th Street, on the other side of Jefferson Avenue, when they had some of the greatest hot dogs that I have ever had in my life. And, they had them on white bread. It was a little thin bun. But then, they had--. What is it when they service the veterans? I mean, the war effort. What they call it? "OS--." Anyway, they had--. Let me just go further. They had barbershops. They had (Huggins? 0:27:34.2) Barbecue, which my father would frequent a lot. My father got me working with him at nine years old, as a plumber. So, one of my--. My salary was he would feed me. And, he would take me to (Huggins? 0:27:46.4). They had (B's Grill? 0:27:47.6). They had the Pool Hall. They had the doctor's offices. Doctor, I think, Downing. The law offices. I, see--. Again, I'm not specific. But, that particular strip was the heartbeat of black Newport News, ok. And, then, they had--. I can remember (JB's Diner? 0:28:11.8), which was on Jefferson Avenue, was not too far from me. And, I went to a concert the other day and--. Not the other day. But, Smokey Robinson was there. It was here, at Christopher Newport. He said the third engagement he had in his beginning of his career was at (JB's Diner? 0:28:33.9). And, that was a business that we were just really amazed at how he brought that kind of talent in. But, it was talent that--. We didn't know Smokey Robinson was going to be Smokey Robinson. We didn't know Otis Redding was going to be Otis Redding. We didn't know Sam and Dave--. We didn't know that these people would be

what they are now. But, we knew that they were very entertaining, and it was music. It was beautiful music. You had (Rogers Cleaners? 0:29:03.6). I mean--. I mean, everything was kind of like full-service. If you were black, you could find a black place to take care of you. Banks, they had a black bank. Ridley (0:29:14.5). I don't wanna, you know, name them. My daddy always talked about it. But, the President was named Ridley. It was right--Crown Savings, I think--it was right on the corner of, I might be wrong, 25th and Jefferson, or 24th and Jefferson. But, they had banks. They had insurance companies. I told you about North Carolina Mutual. Grocery stores. In Newsome Park, they had a grocery store. I can remember the name of the butcher or the man who cut all the meat. His name was Mr. (Milo? Marlow? 0:29:47.2) I remember him. And, we had a barbershop, (Younger's? 0:29:53.4) Barbershop. We had a drugstore which had soda fountains and, you know, thus--. The whole American dream, but it was black; and, I didn't know any better, ok. I mean, I say. I didn't know any better. I enjoyed where I was. But, the businesses were--. Anything I needed, I could be serviced. Now, we did occasionally go to Washington Avenue, ok, to go to Grants. Grants had some great hot dogs too, and people would go to shop, they called it "over town" at that time, and it was on Washington Avenue. And, they'd go to young men's shop. They'd go to different [stores], Nachman's. They'd go to Leggetts. And, mostly, my shopping was, pretty much, the little men's store, or something like that, on Washington Avenue. But, a lot of the stuff that I got actually came from on the other side, on the Jefferson Avenue side, of Newport News. But, the businesses served us: plumbing--. My father being a plumber, he had electricians. He had--. I mean, you can name it. He needed something done, it's--. [snaps fingers] In fact, he built his house with the help of the other craftsmen that he had, and

those were electricians, plumbers. They named the whole thing. So, you saw business, and you saw business because that's who catered to you at the time. Crescents. Crescents, on 23rd Street, was a restaurant. It was a nice place to take your girl if you--. Yeah, I remember that, Crescents. And Jefferson Theatre. Now, the movies--. Jefferson Theatre, Dixie Theatre, Moton Theatre were most of the places we went to the theatre. But, somewhere in integration time, they opened up The Palace for us to go, so we would be able to go. But, I think that was one of the first times I had any incentive to really integrate. And, we had--. Let me see, where are we? I had a thought process but I missed it. But, yeah, that movie thing, 'cause I guess we thought maybe we were going to get the best movies or the most current movies. But, that thing, as a youth, [coughs] excuse me, did get me kind of interested. And, then they had--. Again, I go back to (0:32:31.6) and Jefferson. Jefferson Theatre also had shows, night shows, live night shows. And, people like Pigmeat Markham would be there. Moms Mabley would be there. Redd Foxx would be there. I mean just, again, I'm running around here in Newport News enjoying myself, realizing that this was a mecca. I mean, as far as I'm concerned, even right now, it was a mecca. It was a strange place to be in the South and be exposed to so much that was--. I think Newport News or Newsome Park--Newport News, really--is not a rural place. But, it's small, and it was the whole thing happened--Newsome Park happened--because of the rural people. But, Newport News, was--. I guess, being a port city, and having the shipyard, they could supply income to people. It had its own entity, yeah. And, I left Newsome Park. I left Newport News when I went in the military. But, when I came back, I said, "I'm getting out of Newport News." I went to New York City, and I came back less than three years later. And, I love Newport News to this day, and that's not Newsome



Park. Newport News is ok with me. The weather, the water, the temperament. You know, anyway.

JS: Gotcha. I see you attended Newsome Park Elementary.

EH: Yeah.

JS: And, I'm just curious about your experiences there. Can you, maybe, speak on your, kind of, experiences at Newsome Park?

EH: Well, you know, I knew every teacher I had. And, every teacher told me, "You can be the best you can be." I knew the first grade teachers and the second grade--. I mean, I knew them by name. Even right now, I know their names. And, they cared about you. They encouraged you, and they, for me, they--. It was--. It was like a family. And, then, they had a great cafeteria. I knew--. And, they have a janitor named Mr. Walker, and he was like the man of the school. And, it was--. Again, Newsome Park was a dream. A healthy place to learn where--. And, you had teachers who wanted to teach. Yep, I mean, yeah, really.

JS: When you say you knew all your teachers, did you know them prior to going to school?

EH: I knew their names, I mean, right now, I knew their names. Miss Diggs, Miss Williams, Miss Collins, Miss--(Lewis? 0:35:13.0) something. Miss, she was a mean little lady too--I'll skip her. Miss Crawley and Miss King. And, this lady--that I'm missing her name--she was so--. Wow, how could I forget her name? But, she was so intense on you learning, she would go to details--Miss Haynes, yeah, Miss Haynes. I remember 'cause they were vivid people in my life. They really--. You go--. You leave--. If you left school, you had them on your mind because, one, they could talk to your parents, and they could

discipline you right there. And, they didn't mind disciplining you 'cause they wanted you to learn something. They wanted you to be better. This was the opportunity. And, a lot of them came from different places, so I think they saw the potential in this area.

JS: What kind of activities were you involved in while you were in while you--.

EH: In high school or?

JS: Or, were you involved in any activities at Newsome Park?

EH: Yeah. At Newsome Park? Well, Newsome Park was an elementary school, and whatever they had going, I would be in it, but I couldn't put no name on it, you know. If they had a play, I'd be in the play. If they, you know--. But, Newsome [Park, and] elementary schools, at that time, I think they had a Christmas play, maybe an Easter something, you know. I'd get my one word, again, I'd be a sheep, or dog, or whatever they needed you to be. But, that was pretty much what I can remember as far as the activities. They weren't any things like high school [where] you had these different clubs and stuff like that. But, when I did get to high school, I was in the band. I was in the orchestra. I was on the football team. I wanted to know foreign languages. Thespian. Everything, if it was--not everything, but a lot of things I didn't mind; I wanted to get into because it was learning and interesting.

JS: And, where'd you go to high school at?

EH: George Washington Carver High School.

JS: And, can you talk about, kind of, maybe, your experiences in some of those activities such as band or football?

EH: Ok. I was a Thespian. That's what they called us. And, I had a part in the play. And, you know, what it taught you was to project, to recognize. And, I ain't project. I guess I

ain't project. I don't know if I'm projecting well or not on this thing [the microphone]. But, it gave you a sense of "pay attention to what you're doing." It gave you fear because you're out there in front of the stage and people looking at you and you can't even see them. You're trying to remember your lines. But, it was another--not painful--but, it was a growing thing. And, the band--. Ok. Newsome Park, we did have a band. My mother and my father wanted me to play an instrument. So, they--. This is the story. They rented a clarinet. And I don't know why they rented a clarinet but they rented one. And, I played the clarinet from the fourth grade to the eleventh grade in high school. And, I didn't play football in high school, until my last year, my senior year. And, that's because I grew from being 5'8" and 130, 180 pounds, or something like that, to 6'3" and 190. And, then, I had a chance to play football. So, I played football that year. But, again, the band--. The band was challenging. We had to, you know--. Well, you learned about Mozart, you learned about Tchaikovsky, you learned about Booker T. [Booker T. Jones of the band called Booker T. and the MGs], you learned about James Brown. I mean, the band is music, and music is nothing but exposing you to what's real. So, that was--. And, from the band, somehow, I got into the orchestra. And, that made me even more because now you're dealing with the classics, ok. So, I have a little bit of reference when I'm in a conversation: I can mention Chopin, I can mention Bach, Beethoven 'cause I actually played some of their music. But, high school was a ball. It really--. Now, I will consider myself somewhat of a nerd because I was, kind of, put in classes with kids who were moving. I mean, these--. Most of the kids that were--in that little group--they went on to college, and they became what they became. And I said none--others didn't--but I'm just saying, I considered myself a nerd. When I started playing football, I got caught up with

not being such a nerd because now you popular and so things had to be evened out. Okay. But, activity-wise, yes, we had activities. And, everything that I--. In fact, I became a logistics--I'm jumping--but I became a logistics manager for BSF in 19--. Lord, well, anyway--to make a long story short--I would travel to Brazil. I traveled to Mexico. And, that little Spanish that I took in my class--. Those little words of conjugating the verbs, all those things came into play as far as being able to communicate to somebody in a foreign language. So, I'm telling you, man, I have nothing but great things for the life I've lived, and Newsome Park is the core of what I am, and where I am, and who I am. Yeah, that was kind of prophetic. Go ahead, Elwood [laughter].

JS: When you mentioned you joined the football team, kind of, what was that experience like, and what other teams did you play and such?

EH: Ok. Well, I went out for JV [Junior Varsity] in the tenth grade, and I made JV. But, I didn't want to be a bench-warmer, so it didn't work out too good. So, I just said, "Hey, this ain't the path." But, when I came out in my senior year, like I said, I had size. Now, we always played--in Newsome Park--you played football. You played football, period. You played football and baseball. Baseball was probably the biggest sport growing up, as far as us, because we didn't really have facilities to do too much else. You didn't have real basketball courts, *per se*. We made our basketball ring. But, when I became a football player, it was--. It was a tremendous transition 'cause, now, I was popular. And I ain't know what that was like, you know. You see what I'm saying? But, it was beautiful because by having all this background on me--being smaller, being not so popular, well, the word was 'hip' then. It was--. I became--. I crossed the line then. But, I remember what it was like to not be so popular, to not be, you know. So, it was good. It was good.

But, football helped me to go Hampton University on scholarship. But, again, all of the band, the Spanish Club, and the Thespians, and the Future Teachers of America, these kind of things, they just helped me grow. I don't know if I answered your question now, but--.

JS: A little bit. What, when you played in games, and stuff, what were some teams that you played against?

EH: Ok. It was the VIA, the Virginia Interscholastic Association. This means you playing all-black teams. You played Huntington in Newport News, you played Phenix which was in Hampton, you played Maggie Walker which was in Richmond, you played Armstrong which is in Richmond, you played Booker T. that was in Norfolk, you played Norcom which was in Portsmouth, you played Crestwood which was in Chesapeake. And, before I really got to playing, they played teams in Suffolk. And, actually, the team did go to Charlottesville, one year. They had a high school named Burley. The team went to Burley High School--because they were a good team--and played. So, we traveled extensively because we had to play black schools, but that was fun, too!

JS: What was, probably, one of your most memorable experiences when playing football?

EH: We beat the state champions, 19--. I didn't play but one year. But, what happened is we had a good team, but we lost some games. And, we just lost some games. We really got beat by Huntington, extremely bad, which is our rival. And, that was heartbreaking. But, we went to Maggie Walker, and Maggie Walker, at the time, was undefeated. And, we went to Maggie Walker, in Richmond, and played them. And, we beat them. And, man, people, kids were asking for my chin-strap, or they wanted to touch--. You know what I mean? It was like--. It was, probably, for me, especially, by me playing one year. It

was like a crowning moment to beat this--. And, they were the eventual state champions, but we actually beat them that year. They had a great team. They had a great team, but we managed to beat them. So, that was a high, a very, a big highlight.

JS: While you were at Carver, did you have any teachers that really stood out to you?

EH: Yeah. Miss Douglas was my math teacher. And, I was kind of sloppy, you know. I mean, I had the thought process, but I couldn't--. I didn't really put it down on paper, because when I put it down, I erased it and, you know. And, she really helped me see what math was, and this--. I think I took Algebra from her, and that's really when she put a whole lot of logical thinking in my head. To me, she was my--. She was the strongest teacher that got through to me. Now, there was great teachers, but she got through. And, Miss Douglas--she lives out here on Shoe Lane. Not Shoe Lane, but the other road crossing. She lives right around the corner here, Yeah she was extremely influential in my critical thinking. I would say that because I started being neater, and I started understanding the math process.

JS: So, Carver and Newsome Park were both segregated schools.

EH: Uh huh.

JS: Do you remember how they compared to white schools, or?

EH: Well, you know, I couldn't tell you other than we got books that were all written up on, and binders were, you know, loose. And, we were always told that, you know, "You always got the hand-me-downs." And, you could see where they were hand-me-downs. But, as far as comparing what got poured into our brains, I don't--. I couldn't tell you 'cause, honestly, when I finally hit the workforce with seriousness--. I mean, as far as--. Again, going back to critical thinking--I ain't talking about how much I knew about

Rembrandt--I'm talking about critical thinking. I felt like, I mean, after the stuff you got to go through, I was just as strong as anybody else out here. So, to answer that question, yeah. We had inferior equipment, or we didn't have the best or what they had. But, them teachers, man, if you wanted it, you got it. If you didn't want it, then, you know, that's like anything. That's like here at Christopher Newport: if you don't want to get it, you ain't got to get it. Again, I was kind of sheltered with--. I knew things were going on, 'cause in the '60s, you saw it on the news. And, actually, you saw things and you could tell, rubbing shoulders, you reading the papers--. And, you got a new--. You got a *Journal and Guide* [local African-American newspaper] that tells you that, ok, "Boom, boom." Then you got a *Daily Press*, *Times Herald*, and all these white kids are all-world. And, we knew we were tough, but we'd never get that kind of press. Leroy Keyes--who was, probably, one of the most phenomenal athletes to come out of here--he, probably, opened up a few barriers because he went.-- He went to Purdue, and he became a star athlete. Actually, he was the second to the Heisman trophy in his senior year behind O.J. Simpson. So, you know--. But as far as what we got, we got a lot internally. We didn't get--. We didn't get the--. Well, we got it from the family and the community. But, you didn't get national acclaim. And, you could see that in Virginia, Virginia Tech, you know, [African-American] kids weren't going [there]. In my time, kids weren't going there. Leroy Keyes should have gone to a University of Virginia or--. But, you had kids--might not have been as strong, or as talented--but they were some kind of--. So, a whole lot of kids were close to them, and they wouldn't even get a look. So, you kind of, saw that. And, like I say, with the television and what's going on in Alabama, Mississippi, and the water hoses, and kids trying to go down to Alabama, and

they get, "You ain't coming here" and the Little Rock Nine, and all these things start--.

You seeing them. I mean, this is probably the biggest thing that happened to America, to actually see it. I mean, everybody see it. You know, people knew it. But, again, I was being exposed as well. I was learning as that process went on.

JS: I know you mentioned your sheltered past, besides, like, what you saw, kind of, coming in through the media. But, did you have any interaction, at all, with white students?

EH: Yeah, yeah, yeah. We lived in a--. In Jefferson Park, we had to go to the A&P, which was on Jefferson Avenue. We had to go through these woods. And, we'd go through those woods, and the little white boys had B-B guns. And, man, they'd be shooting us, shooting at us. And, we had B-B guns too. And, we'd be shooting back. And, one day we were calling each other names, and we got up on a hill. And, we confronted each other. And, my side of the story is, "I whipped his tail." His side of the story was, "My leg [the other boy's leg] hit a piece of glass, and it started bleeding. And, I had to go home." You know, but--. Yeah, that was--. That was one of the times--I remember as a youngster--that I had direction confrontation, had a chance to exercise who's the toughest. And, I had some more. I had another one, but I don't need to tell that one. But, anyway, yeah.

That was kind of--. That area behind Jefferson Park was woods and then the white area. And, that was a, kind of like a, "no man's land." And, we would go through there. And we'd be out there playing in the woods. We'd get raided, and we'd raid them back, you know.

JS: Is that where Copeland Park was?



EH: Not Copeland Park. It's the--. The same place is there now. It's before you get to Briarfield. It's really--. You can see it better on Marshall Avenue. Now, it's totally integrated. But, it's right across the street from Heritage and Achievable Dream. That area was all white. And, between Newsome Park and Jefferson Park--there was a wooded area. And, in that wooded area, at that age, we were going--. We were going through there. And, that was, like I said, that was their land and our land because, you know, we all used it. And, that's when I had conflict in that area, yeah.

JS: Gotcha. Going back, kind of, when you were in high school, what were things that you and friends would go do on the weekends, and stuff, as activities and such?

EH: Well, we had that (0:52:13.2). Like I said, I considered us kind of nerdy. We put together a club called the Quo Vadis. And, we had a--. What we did, we got our little matching blazers. And, we put money together, and we had this little club. We'd have--. We sponsored dances at the Y.M.C.A., the Phillis Wheatley Y.M.C.A. on Wickham, or Roanoke, or something. And, we'd go to--. Well, like I said, if we could get into JB's, we'd go to JB's. And house parties were big, back then, or lawn parties. We'd go there. We'd go to--. Where there was a party, we'd like to go because you'd see the girls. Your high schools had dances. Sporting events, I mean, that was just a given, you know, football, basketball, track. We'd do that. Again, cookouts--. But, those are the kind of things that we did. And, again, I was with some guys--I can remember--when we'd be talking, as we got older, we just talked about what we going to do. We'd be out there talking two or three hours. And, this is when I could stay out a little later. It would be talking about what we wanted to do. I had friends--a one friend, he was, like you said, he might have been a little more economically-disadvantaged than I was, but he wanted to

be a doctor. And, he became a doctor. And, we talked, and we--. We just, you know, it's just--. Like I said, it's, it's--. As we got older, --. And, we discussed the things that we started learning about. And, I guess, one of things was, "I'm going to be the best I can be to make things different." That was one of them. And, we got mad sometimes and wanted to do something else. But, that was one of them. We had a lot--. Again, man, I couldn't beat it. I couldn't beat it. And, there was opportunities to go to integrate in high school. But, it wasn't, it wasn't--. I mean, why would you? Why would you want to leave this comfort zone, this area that you feel good in to go over there to fight. And, now, maybe, that's why, I'm saying, I was sheltered enough to I say, "Hey, it's alright. I ain't got to--. I'm not going to--. I don't want to go."

JS: Gotcha. So, did you have any friends that were, kind of, decided to go do that?

EH: One guy--he went to Huntington--he went to Newport News. His name was Eric, Eric Burden. He went there, and he was very successful. And then, the younger kids, you know, because it was coming--. '66 is when I came out of high school. So, there wasn't a press for '66. But, integration was going to end sometime in the next five, six years. I guess the thought process was, "Let's slip a few talented in to make it work." And, I guess, that's what was happening. JoJo Bethea--I remember him--he was an athlete. And, probably, some intellects, as well. But, I didn't know. But, yeah, people did--. Some people--. And, nobody had any bad feelings about that. It's just that your choice is your choice. I didn't want to go. Ain't nobody asked me either [laughter].

JS: What was the name of the club that you started again?

EH: It was called Quo Vadis. V-a-d-i-s. Q-u-o V-a-d-i-s.

JS: I guess--. I know you mentioned several times that you thought you were, kind of, sheltered.

EH: Uh huh.

JS: But, were there any instances where you dealt with, kind of, segregated facilities or the integration process?

EH: Yeah, the bus. The bus was supposed to be segregated, the Newsome Park bus going down [downtown]. But, I never had no conflict. I sat where I wanted to sit because it was going into the black area. And, it wasn't too many--. And, see, again, you had that--. I'm at a crux when people were fighting. And, again, I'm naive, but I'm knowing at the same time.--myself, I'm saying—"I don't want to be fighting." But, I was, at the same time, knowing that I could step up in certain areas. So, the bus, itself, was supposed to be segregated up to the point where if a white man got on the bus, then you had to give up your seat if he would have wanted your seat. But, that ain't never happened. And, again, like I say, when I'm running about 6'3", 190 [pounds], ain't too many nobody going to make me get out of my seat. And, it was just that time. And, again, I--. At one time in my life, I mean, I think, I was younger, but I did ask my momma. I said, "Momma"--and, I think, it was from what I was seeing--I said, "Momma, why don't white folks like black people?" And, she couldn't tell me. She said, "Son, I don't know." She said, "But, you know, this is something that you [are] going to have to deal with." And, I did. I mean, when I say I'm naïve, I'm naïve; but I knew what was going on. And, as I got older, I got more physical knowing that--. I mean, not physical with people. But, I was knowing what my capabilities were. It was like, "I know I can hurt somebody. I know I could." But, it

wasn't like I wanted to, but I would--. I would rear up to situations that I saw that weren't fair, ok. But, I didn't really do nothing.

JS: Can you, maybe, speak of, or give an example of, the time when you, kind of, trying to, you didn't have to act, but you brought yourself--?

EH: Well, one time the Ku Klux Klan--. We were playing ball at the Armory, yeah. And, the Ku Klux Klan came right down West Ave, whatever the street was. And, we were there. And, I was--. We were--. We were, 'cause a bunch of kids were playing ball. We said, "Man, we ought to go over there and bust 'em in the head." You know, but, it ain't make no sense 'cause what was going to happen to us? It was going to be bad news. Your momma didn't want to hear it. You didn't wanna go home and your momma will tell you, "Boy, you crazy?" So, that's--. When I saw the Ku Klux Klan, for the first time in Newport News, walking down the street in their stuff, yeah, I was angry. And, I woofed a little bit. But, no, I ain't do nothing. I ain't do nothing.

JS: Do you remember any demonstrations going on in Newport News?

EH: They had an organization called B.U.C. [Black Unity Congress] And, this was while I was in college. And, they were--. Everybody was pretty much--. And, let's say, the struggle was Martin Luther King [Jr.], the Black Panthers, and Huey Newton, Bobby Seale, Eldridge Cleaver, Martin Luther, John, my man--. It was just a plethora of ideas. H. Rap Brown. Stokely Carmichael. Hugh--. Well, anyway. These things were going on. And, in Newport News, they had an organization. They called it B.U.C. And, I'm trying to think of the name, but B.U.C. started with Black United, something--. But, I was--. I went to several meetings and listened. And, I just--. I just listened. I think I supported, maybe some, with economics. But, I didn't really get deep into the movement. I didn't.

JS: Gotcha. So, after Carver, you attended Hampton University.

EH: Uh huh.

JS: Correct?

EH: Uh huh.

JS: What influenced you to attend Hampton?

EH: Football scholarship.

JS: Ok. Did you play--? How--? What years were you enrolled at Hampton?

EH: '66 to 1970.

JS: Did you play on the football team all four years?

EH: Uh huh.

JS: What was your experience like at Hampton?

EH: It was like a brand new world of ideas and thoughts. You had the New York. You had the--. You had the south. You had the west. You had D.C., New York. We had Philadelphia. You had Atlanta. You had Alabama. You had Birmingham. You had California. You had--. We had so many different people--from different regions--that had different approaches to doing things. And, again, being a ball player, it was--. I was taking the popular route because I liked the girls. I mean, it was--. Being a football player--. But, there was so much going on. Yeah, and you had your chance to--. You didn't have to go back home to momma, now. You were in your dorm, and you listening to somebody from Oakland talking about Eldridge Cleaver and what they, how they serve--. And, you're even hearing about Elijah Muhammed, you hearing about the Muslims and how they service their community, how they clean it up, and how the people are on point. You just--. You get so much exposure from people just like you and young

as you, just like you. I mean, we had a 50th Reunion this past summer. And, man, it was like. It's like you--. You know, a lot of people die, of course, and they got a lot of partners that weren't there anymore. But, the mere fact that we came back-- and even though people I didn't even really hang out with--the mere fact that we were at Hampton together between 1966 to 1970, and we knew we all went through some of the similar experiences. I might not have said two words to some of them. But, at that point in time, it was just like we just relished that camaraderie that we were there. And, and we remember this, and we remember--. And, we did. We--. And, it was almost like we came--. I got a second time, a turn to get to know somebody else that, as a youth, I didn't take the time to learn about. But, Hampton was just like a--. It was like a--. I tell you, it's like a stone. I mean, it was a foundation that--. I mean, right now, I'm talking people fifty years ago, no forty-five--. Fifty years, we still talking, if they alive, and we--. I mean, I went to Hampton with one of the basketball and M.E.A.C. tournament. They went to Dayton. I had a friend who I played ball with, at Dayton, and man, I told my wife, I said, "Girl, let's get in the car, we going." She said, "Where are we going?" I said, "We're going to follow Hampton." I said, "And, we're going to Dayton, 'cause that's the first game. My boy is there, Jimmy Shell. And, I wanna hook up with him. I haven't seen him in twenty years. But, I'm going to find him and hook up with him." Got there, called him, came and got me, went to Cincinnati, had a ball. I mean, its just like--. It's like a root that you can't let go. So, when I went there, I was--. I was, kind of, I guess, mesmerized, because I'm from Newport News, and I--. Look, at that time, Newport News was not a--. If you said Newport News, you know what they'd say? "Where is that?" But, if you said New York, if you said D.C., if you said Atlanta, if you say Chicago, everybody knew

where they were. But, Newport News, “Where is that?” I’m right here in Hampton. I’m right next to Hampton, ok. So, I’m getting hit with what I consider people who were living the big city life or even the farmers, man. I mean, they had a different life. They dealt with nature. They were close to the earth. And, they had something to bring. So, I got hit, man. I got a cultural hit, but it wasn’t what--. It was boom! It was like, “Oh, you’re hit.” I hit. I had a friend. I was a little bit of a--. And I know I’m talking a lot. But, I had a--. I liked to have fun. And, I used to drink a little juice. And, I had--. My roommate was a “holy roller,” sanctified in the blood of Jesus, lamb of God. At seventeen, eighteen years old, he was preaching. And, I came in there one day drunk as Cootie Brown. And, man, he came, he saw me. He started praying for me. He put a cloth over me. I mean, these are the kind of exposures that I had at Hampton. Anything that could come from these kids, it was happening. And, I was sucking it up, sucking it up. So, I really enjoyed Hampton. I enjoyed--. Now, my wife told me, “You enjoy everything.”

JS: What was it like, kind of, being an athlete at the time, and what was that experience like, kind of, as a (1:6:20.5)?

EH: It was like a celebrity. And, you--. Again, that’s the same thing. You got your schools. You’re going to Florida A&M. You’re going to Morehouse. You’re going to Tuskegee. You--. So, you’re traveling. You’re getting exposure right there traveling. You’re popular. Girls like you. You get special--. When I say special, we had a--. Hampton had a big cafeteria and a small cafeteria. And, the athletes ate in the small cafeteria. And, it was almost like that was a mecca for people who wanted to get to know you. I mean, you almost--. You could like pick low-hanging fruit, not that--. I’m really a

nice guy. But, you had--. You could see where popularity made people interested in you, ok. I took somewhat advantage of it. I was, basically, a good ole Christian boy. I tried to do right. But, it was something. You were popular. All of a sudden, you're the man. And, I happen to be a pretty good athlete so, you know. So, my name would get in the paper every once and a while. It was like--. I was a freshman, you know what I mean? And, so, it was like, "This guy is good," you know what I mean? So, I had, what, fame? Yeah, so, yeah. And, that's why I tell people, maybe that's what happened. I wish I had gone more into the same arena that I did in high school, the Thespians, the band. I mean, in other words, keep that exposure level that I had in high school in college. But, I tended to lean towards that athletic, popular side which ain't do too bad. But, I wish I had, kind of, I don't know, a little more.

JS: After finishing Hampton, what did you do from there?

EH: United States Army. I was R.O.T.C. So, when I finished Hampton, I went into the United States Army. I went to Fort Knox, Kentucky. I was a lieutenant in a armor basic course. I passed the course, and I got stationed at Fort Riley, Kansas. Stayed at Fort Riley, and this was during the Vietnam Era. Fort Riley, Kansas. I stayed there the whole time. I went to re-forging. They had a re-forging exercise on Fort Riley 'cause I was in tanks. And, tanks, they were re-forging them to Germany to exercise the military strength that the United States could bring to that area 'cause, you know, the Cold War, and all that kind of stuff. So, that was--. That's what I did straight out of college.

JS: Gotcha. What were race relations like in the army during your time?

EH: It was, or--. I was a lieutenant. I was the only lieutenant on the yard. And, I'm talking battalion, a battalion. And, I was the only tanker. When I say race relations--. I



knew I was in the army. I knew I had to submit. I had, you know--. And, this, again, is coming from Hampton being famed and then coming to the army and being disciplined. That was a transition. But, it was a transition I was willing to accept 'cause they told you, in so many words, "If you can't accept it, then you can go to jail." So, essentially, there were things--. There were things going on, yeah. I was the only lieutenant. I could tell that, you know, especially--. Again, this is the world, now. This ain't Newport News. This ain't Hampton. This is the world. You know, I come in--not knowing anything--a lieutenant. There were some issues. There were some incidents that they let me know that, you know, "You're not necessarily wanted." In the officer's club, one night, I was, you know--. The officer's club is--. What is it? It's a blended situation, and I got on there one day, and I played all black music. And, one captain--I was a lieutenant--the captain saw that I had done it 'cause all they heard was [black music]. I mean, I had about fifty quarters, and I was playing--captain came up to me and said, you know, "Why you do that?" I said, "Cause I want to hear it," you know. He was looking at me like, "Do you know where you are?" I said, "Yeah, I know where I am." I mean, I was--. I was arrogant, but respectful because I know that rank is rank. You don't care what--. And, yeah, it was issues. And, you could tell by you being the only one there. You're the only one there. You know something won't--. It won't gravy to be there. I mean, when I say gravy, it wasn't something that they saw either. But, again, my--. I'll say two things. My stature and my personality allowed me to persevere. And, I made some good relationships in the military. And, I had some incidents. Yeah, I had some incidents.

JS: Would you want to give any more of those incidents, or not?

EH: One day, I was in Fort Knox. Again, you, kind of--. You're an officer, but you're a minority in the officer rank. And, I had a buddy that was a private. And, I, you know, so I saw--. We got together. We got a little wine. We were walking through the--. It was like a field or something. And, the next thing I know, I saw MP [Military Police] cars, MPs and everybody coming at us. You know, I mean, like, "Up against the wall." And, the only things--. I mean, we--. That's all we were doing was having a little wine or something. But, when I let them know I was a lieutenant--because I was in civies [civilian attire] then--when I pulled out my stuff, they said, "Ok, sir. This is--. We going to warn you because this is not acceptable," and all this kind of stuff. But, I think if I wasn't an officer, I would have been in the stockade for a minute or two until somebody came to get me. That's the kind of thing that I saw more of when you didn't have your uniform on. When you had your uniform on, there was a certain amount of respect that's automatically given to you. But, again, my personality didn't necessarily want you to respect me because I was an officer. I wanted to be respected because I was capable of performing the duties to help my men be successful in combat and outside of combat. I mean, I was just--. 'Cause I was blessed not to go to Vietnam. It was there, but I just didn't go.

JS: What did you do after you finished in the army?

EH: When I finished in the army, I went to Las Vegas. I just--. I mean, when I left, I--. When I got out, I had some money in my hand, I said, "I'm going west." And, I went to Las Vegas. I came back half broke, came back home to Newport News and, about a month later--. I had sent some money home to my father, about \$500.00 [earlier and] said, "When I get home, you know, you use that to"--. So, about a month later, after I was

here, my daddy said, “Well, son, your \$500.00 is up. You got to find you a job or go somewhere.” So, the next thing I did, I got an interview with Texaco Oil Company in New York City. So, I got a job in New York City, in Manhattan, as an internal auditor because I majored in accounting at Hampton. And, I got a job there. And, I stayed there about three years, three years, yeah. Maybe two and a half.

JS: I guess, as we, kind of, wrap up the interview, I’m just going to turn back to a few questions about Newsome Park and the Newsome Park area. I guess, first was what is one of your fondest memories, or your fondest memory, of growing up in Newsome Park?

EH: Growing up around people that I still have great love for. I mean, maybe it’s after fact of your question. But, I can see somebody from Newsome Park--we be going to a lot of funerals now--I can see somebody from Newsome Park and it’s just love. It’s just--. It was a community that had a lot of love in it. And, maybe during the time, that was so--. It was just around me so much. That was the joy of it. I mean, Little League--. If you played Little League Baseball, people there encouraged you. If you played Little League Football, people there encouraged you. You’re in the choir, or you’re in the orchestra, or you’re in the band--. I mean, it was things--. When you say the most--. It was just the love people had for each other. Yeah, you had fights and beef. I mean, you had that going on. But, essentially, it was like you were in it together. It was a community. I saw one kid that, definitely, he was economically-challenged. And, I was working in New York. And, we were walking--. I was walking down 42nd Street, and I saw him. His name--we called him Lovey Dove. I saw him, man, we just--. We just turned--. We just went to hugging and, just the love. It’s a love thing was going on in Newsome Park. Everybody knew

everybody, knew of each other. And, I mean, yeah, you always got things. But, it was just, basically, you just happy to be from Newsome Park. Most people really take much pride that they were in Newsome Park. And, in my case, I mean, I was in Newsome Park for seven years. But, I moved across the street. But, you know, technically, I got out of Newsome Park. But, the whole Newsome Park experience was still with me the whole time. It's a bunch of--. We see each other, and it's admiration. It's happiness. Now, I hope that answered your question. But, it--. It was the most--. It was the most--. I had so much peace and joy. I didn't have a care in the world. I can remember smelling grass and thinking that was nice. You know, I mean, that's--. That's the kind of things that were turning me on, out there in the--. Smelling the buttercups or something like that. That's crazy, but it was. And, like I said, people that you see from Newsome Park, it's a joy to see them.

JS: I guess, you, kind of, answered my next question as well, so, I'll skip that. Is there anything else that you'd like to add or that I might have missed? I know you wanted to talk about your father.

EH: Yeah.

JS: Is there anything that you'd like to add on that or comment about?

EH: Well, my father--. I thought I brought this thing with me. Maybe, I didn't. But again, he was the main reason I wanted to do this, and I had his obituary. And, he was a founder. He was on the Newport News Planning Commission. He was head of the PTA at Carver High School for many years. He was a--. They had a health clinic that was established. He was one of the founding people for that health clinic. He was honored for that. He was a--. Guy was a pioneer. I mean--. And I guess, what I'm presenting you is [how] his

upbringing in Newsome Park was a roadmap to what I wanted to be, be like. I mean, he wanted--. We talked about it, he said, "Son, I don't know if you want to be [a plumber]."--. 'Cause we were--. I worked with him, from nine to fifteen [years of age]. And, he said--. I told him, I said, "Man, what you think about me and you going into business?" And, he looked at me and he said, "Son, I'd have you down here digging ditches and stuff. You don't have no love for this." He said, "Ain't no sense in you doing something to carry on when you really don't have a love for it." He loved it. My daddy loved--. He'd get on a job, and he wasn't the kind of guy that would let it go. He would finish it, and make it work. Very seldom, he had to come back. But, he would take the due diligence to get that thing right. And, I saw it. I mean, I didn't want to be like that, but I saw it, and it rubbed off. And, again, if I had his obituary--. I mean, I gave you some of the things he--. But, he was just a--. He was a light, man. And, he had the opposite relationship with his father. His father didn't spend any time with him. But, he told me, he said, "Hey, I had you guys, I'm going to be the best father I can be." And my momma wasn't too bad either. But she was kind of shy. She wasn't an outgoing person. But, yeah, wish I thought I had that obituary with me, man. But, evidently I didn't--. It must be a reason why I don't have it. But, that's, essentially, one of the reasons why I came here because I wanted to talk about him.

JS: Gotcha.

EH: Uh huh.

JS: You're more than welcome, if there is anything else you want to say.

EH: Anything else I want to say? Ok. The Newsome Park [Elementary] School was a place, again, I'm reiterating, was a place where you felt encouraged and you felt like you

had--. You could be whatever you wanted to be. The Carver experience was an extension of that. The Hampton experience was there. I don't think I fully took advantage of it. But, in America, today, there's a lot of stuff going on. And, I'm not going to be foolish enough to say that I'm right and you're wrong 'cause, again, like I said, a lot of times, you really see something but you don't know the complete details of it. And, again, this is why, when I look at Newsome Park--. Yeah, there's a lot of stuff going on. But, the benefit of the doubt, the love transcended all of it 'cause, right now, I mean, I can see small time gangsters and the same love is for them as the dentist, Dr. [James] Watkins. I mean, I know you know about him. He's a dentist. I mean, same love. So, I love Newsome Park. That's all I got to say.

JS: Well, thank you, again, Mr. Hill, for coming and doing this. And, that wraps up our interview with Mr. Elwood Hill.

EH: Ok.

END OF INTERVIEW

Transcribed by Dr. Natalie S. Robertson (360 VIRTUAL ASSISTANCE), August 13, 2015.

Edited by Joshua Sipe, February 2, 2016

Edited by Laura Puaca, March 31, 2016

Edited by Elwood Hill, May 31, 2016