

## **Larry Orie Interview Summary**

Interviewee: Larry Orie

Interviewer: R. Joshua Sipe

Interview Date: May 1, 2015

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

Length: 1 audio file, WAV format, 2:01.46

THE INTERVIEWEE: Mr. Larry Orie born in 1946 at Whittaker Memorial in Newport News. He has lived in the Newport News area most of his life. Orie was the first African-American firefighter in Newport News, beginning his long and illustrious career in 1968. Throughout his thirty-three year career in the fire department, Orie accomplished many firsts, most notably becoming the first African-American chief of the Newport News Fire Department in 1991. Orie would serve in this position until his retirement in 2001. Orie still has many memories of his childhood and years in school, in particular, remembering the tight knit nature of the African-American community in Newport News. To this day, Orie continues his life of service to others in the Newport News area through various community groups he is involved in.

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, a quiet and cozy venue. Larry Orie was very excited to participate in the Hampton Roads Oral History Project and it was obvious very early on that he has a very light and kind hearted personality full of laughter. The interview took a life history approach exploring Orie's life from childhood through adulthood, with a large portion of questions pertaining to life in a segregated society and the Orie's journey as a barrier breaker in the Newport News Fire Department. Orie discusses his childhood and the community in which he grew up, in addition to his enjoyable times in high school. Orie reflects that he gained a strong education from both his formal education in school and informal education by the community. Orie also discusses the challenges and opportunities provided due to his role in integrating the fire department.

**Larry Orie—Edited Transcript**

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Interviewer: Joshua Sipe

Interview Date: May 1, 2015

Location: Room 215 Reading Room of the Blechman Reading Room at the Paul and Rosemary Tribble Library at Christopher Newport University in Newport News, Virginia.

Length: 1 audio file, WAV Format, 2:1:45.0

**START OF INTERVIEW**

Joshua Sipe: This is Joshua Sipe. Today is May 1st, 2015. We're interviewing Mr. Larry Orie. This interview is taking place in Room 215 of the Blechman Reading Room at the 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, Mr. Orie.

Larry Orie: Good morning.

JS: I am taking what is called a life history and would like to begin our interview with a few questions about your childhood.

LO: Ok.

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

LO: I was born April the 24th, 1946. I was born right here in what they called Warwick County, then. But, it, later, became a part of Newport News.

JS: Ok. What hospital were you born at?

LO: Whittaker Memorial on 28th Street, in the ten hundred block, in downtown Newport News.

JS: Ok. Who were your parents?

LO: My father was Leroy [0:01:03 Cary?] Orie, and my mother was Ruth Reynolds Orie.

JS: What did your parents--?

LO: I'm sorry. Her name was--. Her last name was Reynolds.

JS: Reynolds?

LO: Un huh.

JS: Ok. That was her maiden name?

LO: That's right.

JS: Who were--. Excuse me. What did you parents do for a living?

LO: My mother was a nurse, and she worked at Whittaker Memorial Hospital along with Dixie Hospital, which was in Hampton. And, she worked at Hampton University, which was Hampton Institute at the time, also in the infirmary. My father was a shipyard employee who drove equipment to dumpsters, and he drove limousines, and station wagons, and training buses, and all those kind of things, for the shipyard.

JS: Did your father or mother ever discuss some of their experiences they had while at work, maybe some of the race relations at the shipyard, and stuff?

LO: Sure. They occasionally talked about situations where they might have been excluded from what was going on because they were African-American, and they were supposed to be working-class people. But, my father, he drove a lot of the officers and officials of the shipyard, so he was around a lot that was going on. But, he was supposed

to maintain his place which was that of him as a driver. My mother, she knew a lot about situations in Newport News and Warwick County. We had to--. She had to--not me at the time--but, she was able to overcome some of the situations because she became friendly with the person who was a--. He was a political figure in the city of Newport News. And, she did some voting rights work. She was also a poll--. She was a register at the polls. And, so, she--Mr. Covington, I believe his name was--she was able to get in on some of the grass roots of Civil Rights workings because of her affiliation with the voting registration.

JS: Ok. Do you remember what all work she did with the voter registration?

LO: Well, she helped. She did things like advertisements. She went door-to-door in neighborhoods, her neighborhood, more or less, to help--I believe his name was Covington, but I'm not sure--but, to help him get elected. And, in that way, he was able to say, "Well, I want some of my people at the polls to watch the registration," and that kind of thing. So, she was able to be hired, you know, in the polls, in order to make sure that things went well when voting day came around, and that kind of thing.

JS: What--? Where in Newport News did you grow up?

LO: I grew up in what they called, at this time, they called it the East End. At that time, it was Warwick County, and there was a railroad track that separated Warwick County from Newport News. In Warwick County, I had to go to Carver, George Washington Carver High School, which was on Jefferson Avenue in the 6000 block. I could look through the trees on the street that I lived on, 38th Street, in the ten hundred block, and see Huntington. But, I couldn't go there because that was Newport News, and I lived in

Warwick. So, I went to Newsome Park School, I went to Carver Elementary School, and I went to Carver High School. But, the area now is basically the same. The ten hundred block of 38th Street is where I lived, and that's still a part of the East End of Newport News, Southeast Community.

JS: Can you tell me about a little what the community was like where you grew up?

LO: It was close knit. It was a community that the people on the street knew about everybody else on the street. They knew who lived in the house, how many people lived in the house. They knew all of their names [laughter]. They--. It's sort of like, what they talked about, the village raising a child. On 38th Street, in the ten hundred block, anywhere up and down that street, I could be chastised for whatever I was doing that wasn't considered to be right. And, by the time I get home, my mother and father knew about it [laughter]. And, so, I could get chastised again for that same thing. But, it was a community that was, like I say, close knit. We were friendly with everybody. We didn't have to lock the doors, you know. We could leave the doors open. At night, I slept in a room that--. I slept with my head in the window. We didn't have air conditioning. I slept with my head in the window that was open; it had a screen on it. But, I wasn't afraid that somebody was gonna try to come in that window. And, it was peaceful. It was just a community that was really--. My grandmother and grandfather lived down the street, on the same street. So, I didn't have problems with not being supervised, even when my mother and father were at work because they both worked nights, so-to-speak. One worked eleven to seven [eleven o'clock to seven o'clock], and the other one worked from four to twelve [four o'clock to twelve o'clock]. So, there for an hour at night, there was

no grown-ups in the house with us. But, we were--. We knew that we were still being supervised because my grandmother was right up the street. And, we'd never know, when the door would open and there she was [laughter]. But, it was a good community. We did everything, like I said, with Warwick County. So, we had to come up this direction, the northern direction, in order to take care of city business, and that kind of thing. It was on Main Street. But they finally consolidated in 1958, to be all of Newport News. But, yes, I loved my community I grew up in. I loved all the people on my street.

JS: Did you have much contact with Newsome Park?

LO: Oh yeah. 38th Street, in the ten hundred block, was three streets off of Newsome Park. Newsome Park, the main streets in Newsome Park, were 41st Street, 48th Street. And, they ran almost the entire length of Newsome Park. And, so, 41st Street was just a little ways over from 38th Street, and I had to go to 41st Street to catch the bus. And, I knew, went to school and knew all of the people in Newsome Park, just about. All of the families in Newsome Park were close knit too, just like we were. And, I interacted with Newsome Park every single day. All of my friends pretty much lived in Newsome Park.

JS: Gotcha. Can you maybe describe some of the interactions that you'd have with your friends and stuff that lived in Newsome Park?

LO: Ok. After school, in the evenings, when we weren't, when I wasn't back for football or some other kind of after school activity, they came to my house to visit sometimes. I went to their house to visit sometimes. Newsome Park was a, was a--. I guess it was a project built during the war [World War II] for families to live in that--and it wasn't considered to be underprivileged families that lived in there--it was just a big apartment-

like project that allowed for lots of homes to be in a small area. And, so, it provided homes for the people who worked at the shipyard and for people who worked elsewhere in the community. And, Newsome Park was a community that had teachers living in Newsome Park, the students living in Newsome Park, and people from the shipyard living in Newsome Park. So, it was a community that had all aspects of the kind of people that lived in Newport News, in the downtown area. It was not considered the Southeast Community at that time, but it was considered the downtown area. And, Newsome Park School was a school that was built right in the midst of that neighborhood. I didn't-- All my Little League Baseball playing was in Newsome Park because that's where lots of kids were, and then you could choose from lots of people to play on your baseball team, Little League football, same thing, Little League basketball. But, my-- I played baseball. I didn't play basketball. And, I played football later [laughter]. But, Newsome Park had--like I said--all of these people from different places: like teachers even lived in Newsome Park, people who worked in the shipyard living in Newsome Park. And, those people provided the coaches and the mentoring, and that kind of thing, for us kids. And, for me, the best place for me to go and be around lots of friends, and to play baseball, was in Newsome Park [laughter] 'cause it was not many people, not enough people in my neighborhood to get a baseball team out of.

JS: Gotcha. Ok. What were race relations like when you were growing up?

LO: Well, Newsome Park was an example, I guess, of some type of segregation, so-to-speak. We, the African-American people, stayed in the area of Newsome Park. And, then, there was another place called Copeland Park that the whites lived generally in, and it

was the end of 48th Street where I told you it was a long street that ran almost the length of Newsome Park. At the end of 48th Street was where Copeland Park was. And, so, generally, there wasn't much intermingling with the people from Copeland Park and the people in Newsome Park. We kind of stayed to ourselves, and the white folks stayed to themselves. So, it was a--. It wasn't a bad situation. It was just a situation that wasn't, you know, wasn't integrated at that time. So, it worked pretty good. All of our schools, of course, were not integrated. We stayed to ourselves. Newport News High was one of the prevalent schools in the Newport News area, but it was an all-white school. Carver, George Washington Carver [High School], was the school I went to; and, it was an all-black school. So, you know, it was a segregated situation. Now, things--I guess, 1964, when I graduated from school--things were beginning to get better. We had a lot of interaction with the white merchants along Warwick Boulevard, along Jefferson Avenue, 'cause the school affronts Jefferson Avenue. But,--. And, they did a lot for us. When we, as a senior, what I'm remembering, as a senior, we went to get ads, and they gave us lots of ads, you know, for our yearbook. So, they supported the--. The white businesses supported us very well, and we supported the white businesses very well because Jefferson Avenue, down in the Southeast Community at that time, the lower end, down towards the water, there was lots of places that we went and patronized. But, they were owned by white businessmen. But, they treated us very well in there. Things got bad later on, you know. When integration started, there was some unrest. Martin Luther King [Jr.] died, and things like that, that brought about some changes. And, the changes were in the form of wanting to be more equal. We did--. I noticed that we did use second-hand books



a lot, you know. In school, we had second-hand books. The books were used by other students first. And, we always speculated they were white students that used them first, and then we got 'em. But, that's generally the way it was. It was a segregated situation. And, it stayed that way until late in the sixties.

JS: You mentioned how when integration occurred--excuse me--there became, began to become, an unrest and tension. Can you maybe describe that a little bit?

LO: Well, I--. What I was alluding to was the fact that when integration began, then a lot--. Some of our things, it seems, were falling by the wayside. Like, for instance, they were gonna close Carver High School. In 1971, they did close it. But, they were talking about it in the late sixties. And, they did finally close it; and, we had to go to more integrated schools, Warwick High School and some of the other ones. But, I was in Vietnam in 1967 and '68. And, of course, Martin Luther King [Jr.] died during that time. And, the unrest was a feeling that Martin Luther King [Jr.] was taken out because he was making strides toward Civil Rights that were big strides. They were good strides in our favor. And, so, it appeared that the unrest came because he was taken out, and they didn't think it was right that he be taken out. So, they started to have problems. Newport News had some problems during that time, too. I went into the fire department in 1968. And, just before I got there, they had had some buildings burned down in the Southeast Community, along Jefferson Avenue--some of those places that I talked to you about, I told you about a few minutes ago. I just missed the riots of '67, in this area. But, in Vietnam, I could watch the news and see things happening and being told that many things were happening. And, it was very discouraging, those things that were happening,

because they were burning cities. And, people were accidentally dying, and that kind of thing. So, it--. The sixties, the late sixties, was a tough time. I think it was a tough time in lots of places, not just here. But, anyway, we survived [laughter].

JS: So, you said you attended Newsome Park Elementary, correct?

LO: Uh huh.

JS: What was it like to attend Newsome Park Elementary School?

LO: Well, Newsome Park, to me, was--. It was like a--[laughter]. It was a warehouse style building [laughter]. It was a--. I think it was a metal building, you know. It had a metal--. It had a concrete foundation and metal. It was a metal building. It was built--. It was sturdy enough. But a--. It was a warm enough place. We had good teachers, teachers who really cared about whether or not you did your homework and whether or not you ran your mouth too much in class, and those kind of things. So, they did impart some strict, tough rules. And, they kept you in your place. Newsome Park was where you met all of these friends that went on through your whole life. That's where I was--. I mean, I lived on 38th Street, in the ten hundred block, but I had to go through the Newsome Park houses, walking, to get to Newsome Park School. And, so, I interacted with a lot of people on the way to school. And, I think it was a real place to get a good education, in my opinion. Those teachers really, really cared. And, they--. We did very well with what he had. Like I said, some of those books looked like somebody else had used them a lot before we got 'em. But, we got out of them what we needed to get out of them. The principal, they were good administrators; and, they kept us in line. And there was no talking back, none of them kind of things that happen in schools today. But, I enjoyed

Newsome Park. I met my wife there [laughter]. I mean, we've been married for forty-seven years. But, we went to all of the schools together. We went to Newsome Park, Carver [Elementary School], and Carver High School. And, I think I got a pretty good, basic education there. Yeah, I think so.

JS: Alright. When did you transition from Newsome Park Elementary to Carver Elementary?

LO: Seventh grade. When you were promoted to the seventh grade, then you had to go to Carver Elementary. Carver Elementary was the seventh grade only, when I was coming through, because the eighth grade you went across the street to the high school.

JS: Oh, ok.

LO: But, that was the transition. At the end of sixth, then you go to Carver Elementary.

JS: Gotcha. What um--? So, you attended George Washington Carver High School.

LO: Uh huh.

JS: What was your experience like there?

LO: It was good. I was--. Now, we had--. Everybody thought they were in a smart class, of course. But, my homeroom was a homeroom that we always thought that we were better. But, the one across the hall said that they were the number one homeroom, and they said we were the number two homeroom. But, anyway, there was about six homerooms, I guess. And, we thought we were, like I said, better. But, they thought they were the best. And, they did--. They produced the valedictorian and the salutatorian that came from that homeroom. But, we were--. Our next list of students was close behind those. But, I played football for Carver for tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grade years. And,

I played a little junior varsity football in the ninth grade. So, I did--. I enjoyed my time there, as a football player. I worked. I was a student who had to work. My mother and father did very well. There were four of us at home. But, you know, I had to work in the summer time and some other time, whenever I could get a job to help. And, I worked most summers. I worked for Nachman's Department Store, which was an old store down in the Southeast Community on Washington Avenue, to buy my clothes for my junior and senior year. I did very well there. I loved working there. And, there was a fellow there named Mr. Buffington. He was very--. He was good--. He was a good mentor. He taught me how to do a lot of things. He taught me how to drive a standard-shift vehicle. He [laughter] I could drive a car, but only an automatic. And, he taught me how to drive a standard-shift vehicle; it was a panel truck. He was a nice guy. He was really, really nice. And, he was a smart guy, too. He knew about different situations even before I told him that--. He made sure nobody bothered me. He made sure that I was able to work the schedule that he wanted me to work. And, he worked me a lot. And, he said, "I just want you to--." He said, "I think you got potential." And, he said, "I want you to be successful, so I'm gonna make sure you work as much as you can this summer so that you can have enough money to get you through the winter." So, during my high school time, I was glad to have somewhere to get money to buy clothes with because, you know, I was wearing some hand-me-downs, prior to that, from rest of the family. You know, I didn't have another person in my house that was the same size as me. I had a brother who was smaller, and two sisters. But, I was getting clothes from other parts of the family--my mother was, anyway. So, but, I was glad when I was able to buy some of my own. I had a

good junior and senior year because of it. I dressed better. I dressed pretty well. And, I had spending money. And, so, I could go on a date if I wanted to [laughter]. But, I enjoyed my high school time. And, even now, I think it was one of the best times of my life because, right now, when we have our class reunions--we had our 50th this past July, last July--and, I really enjoyed it. I really enjoyed seeing all those people, and we had a ball. But, I think it was the best time in my life, probably, yeah.

JS: What was the name of the store you worked at again?

LO: Nachman's.

JS: How do you--?

LO: N-a-c-h-m-a-n-s. Nachman's Department Store, and it was at 32nd and Washington.

JS: You mentioned you played football. What other schools did you play against in football?

LO: We played against Booker T. Washington in Norfolk. We played against Crestwood in Chesapeake. I don't think it's there now. We played against I.C. Norcom which is still there in Portsmouth. We played against Phenix in Hampton. Phenix, now, is an elementary school, was a high school at that time. We played against Huntington, which is a middle school now. It was a high school at that time. And, we played against, let's see, Maggie Walker in Richmond which is still, I think, maybe, a high school and Burley in Charlottesville. We called them the "Burley bears"[laughter]. They were big people. But, yeah, those are some of the teams we played in football. And, we had a big rivalry between Carver, Huntington, and Phenix, the three peninsula schools. We used to go at it. Phenix was on Hampton Institute's campus, at the time. It was a large building that is out

in the front of the school now. It's still there, or there's a building in its place, one or the other. But, later on, they built a school out on LaSalle Avenue. They called it George P. Phenix. They moved off of Hampton Institute's campus. But, it was--. I enjoyed that too, the football. I used to get beat up a little bit. But, I was a pretty good size fellow, even in high school. I was probably six foot and a hundred and eighty-five pounds, something like that, yeah. I was a pretty good size. But, Carver won the state: they called it the V.I.A., Virginia Interscholastic Championship, in 1962. I was a part of the team, but not a starter. I didn't--. So, I didn't get the jacket. And, the rest of the guys got the jacket, the starters. And, but anyway, won a state championship. That's the only one that I was a part of. We used to fight for it. Huntington won a lot of 'em. But, it was good. It was a lot of competition. Now, there could be a little bit, a little bit of danger involved in that because we had such a good rivalry going that, occasionally, someone would act, I call it, stupid. They would act stupid and try to fight somebody, or those kind of things. So, they did that. They did that occasionally, after a game, or either, sometimes, near the very end of the game. During the game, they would get out there and fight a little bit [laughter]. But, that was not--. Generally, you know, the times, back then, were--. You might get in a fight, but now, you know, you don't fight much anymore. People shoot and cut with knives. But, back then, you could get in a fight, you know, and be alright the next day. And, you and that person might even make-up a little bit.

JS: Did you ever play any white schools at all?

LO: At the time that I was playing, no. We did not. There was no--. There were no white schools in the V.I.A. I guess, at that time, but later on, I think by 1971, things had

changed, yeah. And, I think they played--. They were doing some integration, and--. Maybe in 1970, they played Newport News, or something like that. But, while I was there, it wasn't happening.

JS: What other activities were you involved in during high school?

LO: Well, I tried to be on the track team. I call myself trying to throw the discus and the shot-put. I wasn't very good at either one of 'em, but I did go to practice, and that kind of thing. And, I did sing. I sang in the school choir. I enjoyed that. I was a member of the patrol which, you know, oversaw people in the hallways, and stuff like that. I was a member of the ushers which, when we had auditorium use, I helped to seat people, and that kind of thing. So, I was on two or three other programs while I was there. I, like I said, I did enjoy the choir though. We used to go out some, and perform some with that, the choir and the band together, the choir and the orchestra, I think it was. And, that was good. I liked that. I still sing some, now, at church.

JS: Where would you go perform with the choir and orchestra?

LO: Other schools and, occasionally, we would have, maybe, a Sunday afternoon program at a auditorium. That was considered a concert. We would have a concert. And, we would sing, and the orchestra would play. And, we would do it for--. You know, sometimes, we just had an open concert, you know, invited people to come, and charged a few dollars at the door, I guess [laughter]. But, that was mostly what it was. We--. I don't remember that we were asked to go sing and play for the President, or anything like that. But, we did move around and do it for other schools. And, they invited us, and we invited them, yeah.

JS: Gotcha. Growing up, what all did you do for fun?

LO: Well, bowling: we did a lot of--. We did quite a bit of bowling. We did go from house to house, you know, just sit around and lolly-gag a little bit and watch a little TV, and that kind of thing. Went on a few dates. We went to some dances that--. The YWCA used to have some dances. Doris Miller [Doris Miller Community Center] used to have some dances, and we used to go to them, and take a date, if you had one, you know. And, my mother used to let me drive, so I would take a date to some of those dances. If we weren't playing football that day--well, we played Fridays and Saturdays-- and, if we weren't playing one or the other, like if we were playing Saturday, we might go to a Friday night game that somebody else was playing in the area, or *vice versa*. Or, if we were playing Friday, then we'd go to a Saturday game somebody else was playing. We did that. We--. I loved to go watch the school's basketball team play. So, we did that when football season was over. We, like I said, we loved to bowl. We did a lot of bowling [laughter] and skating, some skating, some roller skating. We had a couple of roller skating places like Craftsman Hall was one of the places on Wickham Avenue that we used to go roller skating. And, but it was, you know, it was not--. We respected our age, at that time. So, we didn't go to clubs try to get in, you know, try to get some other kind of I.D. to get us in and, 'cause I didn't drink, so I didn't go looking for that. So, but, it was simple. It was a very simple time for us. But, we did spend a lot of time at one another's house, you know, lolly-gagging, playing, just having fun.

JS: Gotcha. So, after high school, you briefly attended Norfolk State, correct?

LO: That's correct.



JS: What influenced your decision to attend Norfolk State?

LO: Well, my wife got a--she wasn't my wife then, but she was my girlfriend, and we were, call ourselves serious [laughter]--she got a scholarship to Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee. And, she'll tell you about that--but, and I said, "Well, I need to go get some education, too." So, I said, "Well, I'm working in the shipyard. My daddy got me a job in the shipyard"--my dad and my uncle. And, so, I said, "I'm working in the shipyard let me go on over here and take some classes at Norfolk State and see if can get a little something else done." And, so I was working four to twelve [four o'clock to twelve o'clock], same shift my daddy was on. And, I was trying to go to Norfolk State in the afternoons before shipyard time. And, I went to two, or three, or four classes, not many. But, and, I had signed up for a electricians class. I wanted to, maybe-- not electrical engineering, in the sense of the real engineering, but electrical engineering in electrical technicians type of situation. I figured I could, maybe, I could make some money by working at the shipyard and doing electrical work on the side [laughter]. But, anyway, I received a letter from, we called him Uncle Sam, from the U.S. government, at the time, that said, "You need to come to Richmond and be classified" because I was out of high school, and I wasn't a full-time student. And, at that time, they would look at you very hard for the possibility of draft, if you weren't a full-time student. And, depending on your classification, if you had flat feet, or you couldn't see, or whatever, then that could stop you from going. But, I didn't have those kinds of problems [laughter]. So, when they--. When I received the letter, I still--the letter was telling me to come, I guess, in a couple of weeks from that time that I received it--and, so, I continued to go to

Norfolk State to the classes that I had signed up for. But, I knew that I was going to be classified, and I really realized that I wasn't taking enough courses to be exempt. And, I figured that Uncle Sam might be looking for me. But, anyway, I went on up to Richmond, and they classified me. And, they classified me "1A" which means that I was "Ready-To-Go" anytime they needed me. And, the only thing about it, while I was doing that classification time, I realized that if I let them choose, then they would, could, possibly choose the army or the marines or-- . And, at the time, we all called the army and the marines "ground pounders." They could choose me to be a ground pounder. And, I didn't really want that. So, I say, "Well, if I let them choose, I'll probably be a ground pounder. But, if I choose, I could probably choose the air force or the navy or—". So, I said, "Well, I don't know if they'll pass over me right now," I said, " because I'm classified 1A. I don't have any deficiencies. I am not a full-time student." I said, "Let me go head on and join." So, I went ahead and committed to the air force. And, therefore [laughter], I had to withdraw from Norfolk State. So, I did. I "Withdrew Passing." I was passing all of my courses: I withdrew. But, I went in the service in September of 1964. I did have, I guess I could say, good luck in the service. I didn't have the kind of good luck I wanted. You know, they tell you, when you're being interviewed by the recruiters, that you can choose what you want to do [laughter]. That's not quite so [laughter] 'cause I chose office machine repair. I said, "Well, maybe, I'll choose something where I can work inside winter time, you know, I don't have to be out in the cold. And, I could learn how to repair copy machines and typewriters, electric typewriters, and all those kinds of things, adding machines, and office machines of any type." And, so, that's what I picked.

And, of course, I didn't get that [laughter]. I got to--. I did get to repair something, but forklifts, towing tractors, refueling trucks, fire trucks, all kinds of big rigs. I got to work on that. They did give--. They gave a test while I was in high school. They came to our library one day, and they gave--. I guess it was some type of an aptitude test. And, I sat down in the library, and the librarian said, "Take your time." She said, "This could be good for you, you know, if you ever decide to go military. This could be good for you." I said, "Well, ok." And, so, I took the test. It had a lot about automotives on it, course I was familiar with from tinkering. I was familiar with some automotive. And, they said that--. She said that I did very well in that particular test. So, I'm assuming that that's what they went by when I said I wanted office machine repair. They said, "Well, this guy did pretty good in automotive, we'll go ahead and put him back there." So, they did. They gave me that career field to do, and I did enjoy it after I got into it. Like I said, I didn't want to work outdoors in the winter time. But, I worked in the shop, and it was controlled temperature. So, it wasn't bad. I was stationed in Florida, too, a large part of the time [laughter], so that made it all nice. But, I went into the air force, and I enjoyed the air force. I made rank fairly easily. Three years later, I was a Buck Sergeant in Vietnam. I was a three-striper. And, I was running--. Part of the time, I was running a section that was on the flight line. We were repairing re-fuelers and ground power units, and those kind of things. And, I was overseeing the two other guys that were there with me. And, we had some exciting times, had some combat experience [laughter], too. I didn't really want any, but we had to--. We had to do some combat kinds of stuff. We had to ride shotgun on some things. I was in transportation, and that's what they called it. And they could

get you to do, even though you were a mechanic, you'd qualified to operate weapons. And, so, they made you ride the mail truck from Bien Hoa to Saigon to pick up the mail, and back. And, somebody had to be the shot-gun on the mail truck. So, I did that. And, we carried weapons a lot of the time. But, during the Tet Offensive, we were penned down. That was real stuff, 'cause they were dropping bombs all over the, all around us. But, anyway, I spent a year there. And, then, I came back from Vietnam in 1968, July of 1968, as a matter of fact. And, I spent some time at home looking for a job. I was looking for a job because I really--. I had made up my mind I didn't want to go back to the shipyard. But, they were holding my job, the shipyard. When you--. You know, when you go in the service, when Uncle Sam presses you to go in the service, and you were working for industry or some of the other people that honor that law that says that they have to keep your job 'till you get back. And, so, they kept my job 'till I got back. They put me back on. I didn't get any raises while I was gone [laughter], but I did have a job. So, I was trying to find something else, but I went back to the shipyard for six months. And, I worked for a while. And, then, I did find me another job. I didn't think that I was progressing in the shipyard. I wasn't making any money. I had come home. I had a wife. And, I had a couple of responsibilities. I was living at home with my parents. And, we were both living with my parents. And, I had a TV and a car. So, I needed a little money to pay payments and, of course, to feed us. And, the shipyard just didn't seem to be interested in me doing--. I was, call myself, working hard. I was working really hard. I see some of the guys standing around doing nothing, and I was working all the time. And, I think this was one of the situations where I felt that I was an African-American, and my

supervisor was not. He was a Caucasian male. He was about seventy-- He was about-- No, he wasn't seventy. I guess he was in his late sixties, or maybe just before retirement time. And, I was a [laborer] and I asked him if I could be-- I said, "I--" I said, "Can I get handyman rate?" He said, "Naw, I got enough handymen." And, I said, "Mr."--his name was George Washington--I said, "Mr. Washington, I think I deserve it." I said, "I'm working hard all the time around here, and you got these other guys that are getting handyman rate, they standing around looking at me." And, he said, "Naw, I don't need no more handymen." But, I started looking for another job, even then, because I knew that I was not going to be able to advance under this guy [laughter]. And, I guess one of the things that he--you used to hit a flatter with a hammer, and you usually hit the head of the flatter with a hammer. And, the person that's holding it doesn't feel much of a vibration, if you're doing it right. Well, I guess, one time, he was holding it and, when it was my turn--it was three or four of us standing around with the hammer, you know, to hit--my time to hit, I hit the handle. It jarred him pretty good [laughter]. He didn't like that. Anyway, I think he decided that he wasn't gonna do much for me from that time forward. It just didn't seem that we got along very well. But, anyway, when I told him that I was leaving, he said, "Where are you going?" I said, "I'm going to the Newport News Fire Department." He said, "You are?" I said, "Yeah." He said, "Hmm." He said, "I was just thinking about letting you be a handyman [laughter] and letting you get the handyman rate." I said, "Man, it's too late now." I said, "I'm going away from here." So, and, then his supervisor--Mr. Washington's supervisor--came down. He said, "You leaving, Orie?" I said, "Yes, sir, I am." He said, "Wish I had of known that you had a problem with Mr.

Washington.” He said, “I’d have fixed it,” he said, “‘cause I look out here, sometimes, and I see a whole lot of people standing around.” He said, “But, I don’t see you standing around.” I said, “Well, naw, I call myself trying to work.” I said, “It makes the time go by faster” [laughter]. He said, “Yeah, I know.” He said, “Well, good luck. If I can do anything for you, let me know.” And, I went down and applied for the fire department, and I was able to get a job. I became the first African-American firefighter for the city of Newport News. Yep, so, that began my fire career.

JS: What interested you in becoming a firefighter?

LO: Well, you remember when I told you, a little while back, that I worked on a lot of trucks, and towing tractors, and re-fuelers. And, fire trucks was one of the ones I worked on for the military. I worked on some of their fire trucks. And, I learned a lot about how to operate them, how to drive them, how to put brakes on them, and how to work on them mechanically, how to pump water from them. And, so, I said, “Well, maybe I need to use that knowledge that I already have. Maybe, I can find some way.” And, I thought about. I said, “Well, the fire department may be the way to do that.” So, when I started looking, I looked at some other places. I looked at the police department, I looked--. And, I really think that I probably could’ve gotten a job in the police department, too. My uncle, Solomon Travis, was a--. He was a--what I called, some people say--“big-wheel.” I called him a “little-wheel” in the shipyard [laughter]. He was a little wheel in the shipyard. But, he always had his hands in community stuff. He always wanted to know about what was going on in the community. And, he always kept abreast of police, fire, and those kind of things, because he had put some of his folks, some of his close relatives, in the police

department years ago. He had gotten them to go over there and apply. He had used a little bit of his influence to help them get in. And, he was telling me, "You ought to try police and fire and see what you can do." And, I kept thinking about that. But, I hadn't made a decision, until my mailman who worked downtown Southeast Community post office on 26th Street and West Avenue--. He came--. He lived two doors from me. He came by my house one evening, and I just gotten--. It was--. Actually, it was my day off. And, I had just gotten through washing my car. He said, "Mr. Orie." I said, "Yes, sir." He said, "I called you 'Mr.' because I think you might be able to handle this, that I'm getting ready to ask you to do." I said, "What are you getting ready to ask me to do, Mr. Wilson" [laughter]. He said, "At the fire department, I talked to one of the Battalion Chiefs today, and he said the fire department is hiring. And, they are interested in hiring a minority." And, I said, "Oh, yeah?" He said, "Yeah." And, then, I started thinking about what my uncle said, my uncle Solomon Travis. I thought--. So, I was thinking about what he said. Then, I thought about what Mr. Wilson said. And, I say--. He said, "You ought to give it a shot, man." I said, "Ok. I think I will." So, I did. I went over there, and I took the little, the test. And, the test, to me, was easy. But, anyway--. When I finished it, the guy--the Chief's name was Kegley--he said, "You did good on the test." He said, "You think you'll like the fire department?" I said, "Yeah, I think I could." I said--. He said, "Yeah, you did good on the test." He said, "Now, you gotta take the physical and, then, you gotta have a background check." He said, "How's your background?" I said, "Background is fine." I said, "I've never been arrested. Never had any problems. I had a speeding ticket, one, but--." I said, "That's all I know of." He said, "Ok." He said, "But, why should I hire

you?" I said, "Well," I said, "you would be able to take advantage of something that some people come here to get a job don't want and don't have." He said, "What is that?" I said, "I can probably drive and operate that fire truck right there as good as anybody you got already," I said, "because of my experience as a mechanic for the military." I said, "I been driving and operating them for, and repairing them, for four years, three years nine months." He said, "Oh, yeah?" He said, "Alright. I'm gonna give you a shot"[laughter]. And, that's kind of how he said it, "I'm gonna give you a shot." So, I went away with the idea that I would probably become a firefighter that day. And, I went on back to the shipyard and finished working out the week, until--. I was waiting to hear something from them. And, that was in the beginning of September, I think it was. And, by the 21st of September, I was beginning to get a little anxious because I hadn't heard from him. But, I said, "He told me he was going to hire me." I said, "That joker is not gonna hire me." So, I called him. I said, asked the lady, "If I could speak to Chief Kegley?" She said, "Yes, sir. Who can I tell him is calling?" And, told her my name. And, she said, "Ok." So, he answered the phone. I figured, he probably, after he heard my name, he probably wouldn't answer the phone [laughter]. But, he did. He picked up the phone. He said, "Mr. Orié." I said, "Yes, sir." He said, "I'm gonna hire you." He said, "We're waiting for the last pieces of your information to come back." He said, "But, if everything comes out the way we think it's gonna come out now," he said, "on October the 16<sup>th</sup>, you'll be coming to work." I said, "Oh, yeah" [laughter]. I was surprised because I didn't think--. They didn't have any other African Americans in the fire department. I didn't think they were gonna take me on. But, he did. He took me on. He said, "You come on in on October the



16th.” And, I came to work that day. And, of course, they put me in uniform, and all of that. He said, “Now,” he said, “it might be a little bit tough for you.” He said, “They might pick at you some,” he said, “but, that’s the way they do everybody.” He said, “They’ll try to see how good you are and how strong of character you are, so,” he said, “I want you to hang in there.” He said, “And if it get to where you can’t handle it, you come see me before you do anything else.” I said, “Ok.” And, I went to work for a guy who I thought was one of the greatest Battalion Chiefs I had ever met, or ever seen, or ever heard of. He had already told his people on shift. He said, “We not gonna have any problems.” He said, “If you do, you gonna have to deal with me.” And, nobody wanted to deal with him [laughter]. So, we didn’t have any--. We had a few problems, but they were not--. They were not, really, the doings of the guys on the shift that I worked on. We began to get along very well. Sometimes, when they brought in a person who didn’t belong in the crew, just to fill in, we might have some problems with them. When they transferred a guy in, at first, I’d have some problems with him, or something like that. But, it didn’t last long because he wasn’t gonna let it last long. He was a very good personnel-managing person. And, he was a very good, good man. So, I began my thirty-two and a half year career in the fire department. Yep. I loved the fire department. I enjoyed working in the fire department.

JS: What was the Battalion Chief’s name?

LO: Richard Pruitt. P-r-u-i-t-t. We use to call him--. When we were talking about him, we used to call him “Richard Earl.” But, when we were talking to him, we called him “Chief Pruitt,” of course [laughter]. Yep.

JS: Excuse me. You mentioned how you faced some issues when other people that weren't in your kind of crew came in. What were some of those issues or problems you faced?

LO: Well, there was a--. The shift that relieved us--. I was on "B Shift," and there was "A Shift." And, they had some, few folks that weren't interested in me being there. One used to--. He would not speak to you in the morning when they came in. And, I would come in the back door. And, he, usually, used to sit on the side of the pump with his coffee every morning. And, when I started coming through there, he started moving, or he would be doing something else. And, then--so, I said, "Well, let me sit on the side of the pump with my coffee in the mornings, see what he does." And, I was sitting there in the morning. He came through the door, and he went around the back of the pump to keep from coming past me and me making him speak, because I always made him speak to me. I spoke to him, and--. But, he didn't--. He didn't care. He said I really didn't have a place there. It wasn't a place for me. I found my keys in the refrigerator freezer in ice, a chunk of ice [laughter]. You know, if you leave your keys around, you know, most of the time you don't have to worry about them, you know, they'll still be where you left them. But, this particular time, I couldn't find mine. Anyway, somebody said, "Look in the freezer." And, I looked in the freezer, and they had taken a glass of water and put the keys in it and put them in the refrigerator. So, it was frozen in a chunk of ice. I lost more at the time. You know, that was a time when we used to wear the afro. And, we used to have the pick, the afro pick. And, I lost more of those things. I think, if they slid out of your pocket--'cause usually they were a little long. They had a little long handle--if they

slid out of your pocket, then they'd put them in the trash can. I think that's what they were doing with them. But, I lost more of those things. And, I--. Little stuff--. They might salt your bed, you know, we, 'cause we slept overnight at the firehouse, always. They still do that. But, somebody go in and salt your bed, make it back up like it was. And, then, when you get in there, and slide in there, that salt--. That's irritating, boy. Had to go take a shower and had to clean your bed up. And, things like that. There were things that you could tell people didn't care a whole lot for you. They'd move your shoes, you know, when you put your boots on, and go. When you come back, if they got back first, they'd move your shoes. And, just things to harass you a little bit, to let you know that they didn't care all that much about you. I have sit down to eat, and my wife used to bring me a plate of food a lot of the time because, at the beginning, I didn't think anybody was interested in, you know, cooking for me or me eating with them. But, anyway, they'd--. She'd bring me a plate. I'd sit down at the table. There might be two or three other people at the table. But, at first, they would get up and move [laughter]. But, the shift that I was on, that didn't last very long at all because Chief Pruitt wasn't gonna have it. And so they started--. They did better. But, the other shift, you went on a function with them, training session, or something like that, they wouldn't eat with you [laughter]. But, it--. You know, it--. It's just that I had been raised in the church. And, my mother was a church-goer. And, she was an official in the church, you know. And, so, she--. And, my daddy did, too, even though he wasn't a church-going guy. But, he always said, "Treat people like you want to be treated." So, that always worked for me. And, so, I made do. I didn't get upset. I didn't dislike anybody. My only fear was that if they disliked me enough, if I

went into a burning building, would they help me? Would they come get me? Would they watch my back? Would they do those things? And, the guys on Chief Pruitt's shift, I found out that they would. They wouldn't leave me alone 'cause two or three of them, you know, they were always there saying, "You ok?" "Yeah, I'm ok." [replied Orie]. So, one of the guys that I befriended at that time, in 1968, him and I are the best of friends, right now. Him and I went into business together, paint contractors, building houses. And, he's just--. He's another one of my brothers [laughter]. But, his name was Clifford Bryan, C.J. Bryan, B-r-y-a-n. He was a--. He was one of the people that they thought I would--. They said you'd probably have the most trouble with him because he's from the hills of Georgia. Nicest guy I ever met in my life. One of the nicest I ever met. He is sweet as he can be, right now. He's a good guy. But, anyway, I had some trying times then. I had some trying times later, when I became an officer. Commanding--. When you start taking command of folks that, you know, that don't know much about you and you don't know much about them, 'cause when you get promoted, they usually put you with a new group [laughter]. So, I had some times, later on, that were a little tough. But, my early years in the fire department was responding to fires. And, I was--. They kept me in the Southeast Community, and a lot of the places I went, I knew the people. You know, I knew some of the people that lived around there, or passing by, or whatever. And, they said, "Orie, oh, you're on the fire truck, now." I said, "Yeah [laughter]. That's me." And, so, I enjoyed that. And, I enjoyed the firefighting work, yep.

JS: What were some of your experiences like on call with the fire department, when you first began to join?

LO: That's a--. That's a part that's a --. You don't want to see anybody have any misfortune. But, fighting fire makes you a close-knit family. And, so, if they see you work, and they see you eager to do your job, then that makes it easier for you to be accepted. And, I did. I worked hard. And, I got to be a person that they wanted to be with them, you know, around, and those kind of things. I enjoyed the early part. I enjoyed responding and people saying, "Hmm, there's a black guy on that fire truck now [laughter]. He hadn't been there before." And, you know, that somebody said that--my grandfather used to say--he used to see the fire truck pass by--and he'd say, "One of these days, there's gonna be on there a black man on that fire truck riding by." And, he never did see it. But, I mean, that was years and years ago. That was probably--. I was, probably, a little teeny fellow at the time. But, he had no idea it would be me. And, I--. I stayed by myself for a couple of years, two years. I think it was two years. Nineteen-seventy, I think, they hired another African-American firefighter. And, but, they hired a couple in between there, and he didn't--. They didn't stay. They weren't as, I guess, able to put up with the situations, as I was. I was able to put up with the situations. I guess my military helped me do some of that too 'cause they'd pick at you in the military some too [laughter]. But, we had one fellow join, and he didn't like--. He didn't like the names that they called him. And so, he couldn't handle it, so he moved on. But, I think his problem was that he played with them a little bit. He played and allowed them to call him some names. And, then, when they called him some other names he didn't want them to call him that. I didn't play that way. I showed you respect; you show me respect. And, of course, I would tell them real quick, "I don't play with the name thing." I said, "You call

me my name, and I'll call you your name. And, that's all we need to deal with." I said, "We don't need to play about that." But, he couldn't handle it, so he left. And, it took them two years to get somebody else. They got a fellow named [1:03:58 Hedgepeth?] next, I think it was. But, the fire department provided me with a great, great deal of experience in being a man, too. I mean, the military allowed me to have a great deal of experience in being a man, also. And, I think, that's what made it easier, the fact that, if you acted like a man, they'd treat you like a man. If you act like something else, then they'll treat you like something else. But, the fire department was--. The community enjoyed, I think, seeing the first black man riding on the fire truck. I think they felt comfortable that there was a change going on and something was happening to this community. And, they kept me in the Southeast Community where all those people could see me, too [laughter]. But, later on, I did have some more problems. And, I think it was because I was transferred. I got promoted to lieutenant, six years later, after I had been in the department six years.

JS: So, 1974?

LO: Yeah. I got promoted to lieutenant in 1974. And, I was transferred to another station. I was transferred to a place that was a small house that only had like four people in it. And, I was--. They had a captain and a lieutenant. And, they had two firefighters. And, I was the second in command. And, the fellow that--. While the captain was there, no problem. You know, everything went real smooth. All four of us was there. All three of us were there, at least. And, things were smooth. The captain used to take off on what we called a four-day break. And, he used to always leave word for us to do certain things. He

left inspections for us to do which means we had to go to the businesses and inspect them to see if they were doing well with their extinguishers, and all those kind of things. And, when he left us to do that, then it meant that I had to go, and I was in charge. And, the fellow who was riding with me was--. He had some seniority. He had lots of time, and he didn't appear as though he wanted to take orders, particularly from me, because I only had six years. And, he had probably twelve years, or something like that. But, he didn't--. To me, he didn't appear to be wanting to be an officer either, so there was nothing I could do about that. I mean, if he didn't want to be an officer, that's his business. I wanted to be an officer. I wanted all the responsibility that I could get. I wanted all the money that went with it [laughter]. So, the days that we had to go out on inspection, he always gave me a little back talk. And, I--. Usually, I kind of pushed it away and went on trying to keep things under control. But, he got under my skin a little bit that day. And, so, I had to put him in his place. I even--. I did something else. I sat him down. I had the less experienced firefighter drive that day [laughter], had him, with more experience, to sit in the back. And, he would have to let the, lay the hose or anything like that, if we had a fire call. And, he didn't really like that. He asked for a transfer, after that. And, everyone wanted to know why he was asking for a transfer. He had been to that station for a long time. And, but anyway, I finally told the chief that--the battalion chief who was in charge of our group--I told him that I couldn't take it anymore that day. So, I made a change. And, of course, I was talking to Pruitt, Chief Pruitt. He listened intently, and he said, "I don't blame you." He said, "I'd have done the same thing." So, nothing changed about it. Chief Pruitt left things the way they were. And, then, he had a talk with this young

person. And, he straightened it all out. And, things got better at that station. As a matter of fact, it got to a point where I didn't want to leave there. And, at the same time, I was at that station, it was a good place to be, if you were in school. And, I was in Thomas Nelson, then. I was going after a Fire Science degree, a two-years Associate's degree in Fire Science. And, I wanted to stay there, but I wanted things to be going alright while I was there. I didn't want to be, you know, tense the whole time, 'cause I was doing a lot of studying and doing a lot of things that would, I thought, was gonna help me later on.

And, we finally made--. We finally got to a good place, this particular person and I. We got to a place where we could--. And, he worked for me, again, later as a captain. And, I was a battalion chief later on. And, he worked for me again, and him and I got along great. Everything went well. He became very respectful. But, in February, 1976, I got promoted to captain, two years later. Yeah, I was surprised. I was--. You compete with everybody in the department, all of the people that's eligible to be captain in the department. And, I was able to compete with them. And, I had a very good score, and I had a very good interview. And, so, they were promoting two or three captains. And, I was one of them. Then, I had another trying kind of time [laughter], 'cause we--. At this time, they took me from the Southeast Community and put me in Denbigh. And, the fire station in Denbigh, behind the courthouse, was a very busy place. The station where I was before, as a lieutenant, was not a real busy place. The busiest station was on Wickham Avenue. And, I wasn't there. I responded with them to the house fires, but I wasn't there. So, our station was a little slower. But, the Denbigh station was jumping [laughter]. I mean, it was jumping because we had the interstate, we had Warwick



Boulevard, Jefferson Avenue. We had high-speed accidents, and we had low-speed accidents. We had responded with the medic units to people with heart attacks. We had about 900 and some streets in Denbigh that were individual name streets. Now, downtown, it's easier to respond because it's streets and avenues, and you can figure out the block numbers easily, starting with Jefferson Avenue, 600 block, 700 block, like that. But, individual names like Saunders [Road], and Beechmont Drive, and all those things--. There's a lot of different names, and it was about 900 streets, individual names up there. And, so, it was hard to learn that district. But, see you had to do a lot of studying of the district. I was doing a lot of studying with Thomas Nelson. I was, had six, seven people, then. And, I'd only had four--. It was only four of us at the other station. It was seven, including myself, and I was in charge of all of them up here. The captain was in charge there. I was just number two man. So, as a captain, my responsibility kind of doubled [laughter]. And, anyway, and I had seven people to deal with and everybody's problems. They always felt that their problems was more important than anybody else's [laughter]. So, they wanted your undivided attention. And, it was just a lot more to do. And, like I said, the fires were car fires, and apartment fires, and highway accidents on Interstate 64, and Jefferson, and Warwick, and all the businesses 'cause the businesses were running from downtown uptown. So, it just got to be a real, real situation. And, I went to this one person's, one lady's home. She had a fire in the kitchen, and I was standing out there supervising. The guys was running telling me stuff, and I was telling them what to do and could run back in the house. She was standing outside with me. She was a Caucasian lady. She said --. I had one other African-American firefighter, by that time, with me. He

was there with me. And, he went in the house and came back out a couple of times. And, when they had finished, they came and told me, they say, "Captain, we ready now, you can take the report now, if you want to, 'cause we got it out. And, here's what--" and gave me all the information. So, the lady, she goes to one of the other firefighters, one of the Caucasian males, and she says, "I want to know how things are now." And, they said, "You need to go talk to that guy." And, she looked at me, and she turned back. She said, "No, I want you to tell me how things are going now, how things are inside now." They said, "Ma'am, you need to talk to that guy right there." And, she said, "Why do I need to talk to him?" They said, "Because he's the captain." She said, "He's the captain and not you all?" or "Not you?" [laughter]. They said, "Yeah." She said, "Hmm, what is this coming to, what is this world coming to, or what is--?" Something like that. And, I didn't make anything out of it. I didn't make a fuss. I just waited for her to come over, and, then, I went over the report with her, and went over everything. And, I said--. I got ready to leave, I said, "Thank you, Ma'am." She said, "Ok." So, I think, she was better by the time we left. And, I was okay because that wasn't the first time I had been rejected. And, I--. You know, I had been rejected two or three times [laughter]. So, some kind of situations like--. I'll just go off on a tangent right here, just one time. I was on my way to Florida to visit my sister who was down there. She stayed--. She was--. Her husband was stationed down there when I was stationed down there. And, so, I'm out of the service now. I decided I'd go back down there, ride back down there, and see how they were doing--me and wife. And, I stopped in a place in South Carolina. And, I had a new car. I pulled up to the pump. And, the guy came running out. He said, "What you need?" I said,

“Can you fill it up?” He said, “Okay.” And, it was a brand new Exxon service station. And, I said, “Where’s the restroom?” [He said,] “We don’t have no restrooms.” I said, “Wait a minute.” I said, “This place is brand new.” I said, “And, you don’t have any restrooms?” He said, “We don’t have no restrooms.” I said, “Okay.” I said, “Take that out. That’s good. I’m gonna pay you for what you put in there.” I said, “I don’t want any more of your gas, you know, ‘cause this brand new Exxon service station doesn’t have any restrooms.” And, I know better than that, yeah. But, I said, “Okay. It’s alright.” So, I paid him the two or three dollars it was. And, we got in the car and went on somewhere else. And, I always used Exxon. But [laughter], after I left there, I went and found some other kind of gasoline. And, I didn’t do that anymore. But, that’s one of the situations. But, I had a couple of situations similar to that. And, I had one situation when I was in the military. I went home with this guy who lived in Jacksonville. He was a Caucasian guy. I liked him a lot. He was a nice guy. He said, “Y’all c’mon go home with me.” I said, “Man, are you sure about that?” He said, “Yeah.” I said, “Okay.” So, we got in the car with him, and nice--. He had a new car, nice car. So, we rode to Jacksonville from Homestead, Florida. We stopped at this place, just before we getting into Jacksonville. I said, “You ever been here before.” He said, “Yeah, I been here before.” He said, “We get some breakfast in here.” I said, “Okay.” So, we went in there, and we all sit in at the counter. And, we all ordered. She took all of our orders but--. It was me and another guy named--. His name was Harold. But, he--. Him and I were African American, and the other two were Caucasians. And, we all sit together, you know, kind of one in between. And, two meals came out for the two Caucasian guys. We sat there for a little while,

figuring ours would be up next. It didn't come [laughter]. And, I was sitting there. And, I said, "Mine didn't come yet." He said, "I know it," 'cause he--. He wasn't really eating a whole lot because he was waiting for us to get ours, too. So, he was just piddling with it. And, pretty soon, he said, "I'm gonna ask her." So, he called her over. And, he said, "Ma'am." He said, "You didn't bring the other two meals out." She said, "They're not coming out." He said, "Why is that?" She said, "We don't serve no niggers in here" [laughter]. And, he took his plate, and the other guy took his too, and turned it upside down on the counter. And, we got up and walked out. That was the only other real situation that I--in the military--that really upset me. That one upset me more than the Exxon service station deal did. But, I couldn't--. I wasn't mad at these guys with me. They were great guys. But, I was kind of mad at the time, I guess, and mad at the situation. In the fire department, I know, my brother had had a situation where he was on the medic unit. There was only two of 'em on the medic unit. And, the medic unit had pulled up at a home. And, they got their stuff and they started in. This man, whose wife was ill, he said, "You can go in." He said, "But, you can't." He was talking to my brother. And, the guy, that he was saying, "You can go in" and "You can't," well, my brother had seniority on him. He said--. He looked at my brother, and my brother said, "Go ahead. You go in, go in there and check her out and see what the deal is. We don't want to leave her, if she's, you know, having a heart attack or may be about to." But, she wasn't. She wasn't having a heart attack. She was having some pains. She was having real pains. But, they thought it was something maybe related to gallbladder, or something like that. But, anyway, he said--. He came back to the door, and he said, "You need to

look at her,” ‘cause he was the most experienced of the two in that group. And, the man said, “You, you--. I told you, you can go in, but you can’t.” So, my brother said, “Alright, c’mon.” He said, “We’re out of here” [laughter]. When he said, “We’re out of here.” The man said, “Oh, wait a minute. Okay, you can go in too.” So, he went on in. Then, they carried her to the hospital. She made out just fine. But, I mean, that’s--. What else can you do, when they say, you know, you can go in and you can’t? You’re the one that’s got the knowledge of the situation, and you’re the one that starts the IVs, and all that stuff. So, you got to do it, or you got to leave [laughter], one or the other. I mean, you’re wasting your time. But, anyway, that’s, you know--. The city grew quite a bit, during that time. It grew to a point where things were beginning to change, and we could see ‘em.

JS: What were--. In the fire department, you talked about--. You kind of touched on race relations, a little bit. But, when you first began, how were race relations, and how did they progress over time as you were in?

LO: Well, when I first went in, actually, there were no race relations because I was the first minority--African American--there. But, they had--. What--. There was race relations. There was race relations between the fire people and the citizens. And, they seem to treat most of the citizens very professionally. They did a good job, I think, especially the ones that were in the Southeast Community ‘cause they were--. Often times, when they got to situations, there was lots of people standing around, and there were--. They were mostly minority people. And, the people who were responding were not minority people. And, so, they--. You know, it’s sort of a “we-them” kind of situation that they were facing. But, they did a pretty good job, I think, of facing those folks, facing

those situations, and doing something about 'em. They took a lot of people to the hospital, of course. And, some of those situations were dangerous situations where, you know. But, you know, the police department responded to 'em, and the police department, I think, were doing pretty good on race relations because they were a little bit ahead of the fire department. They had already had a lot more minorities than the fire department had, for a while, since I was the first, in '68. But, I think, they had had some minorities since the late fifties or early sixties. So, it--. But, the fire department did realize that they needed to treat the people that they were responding to very well, if they could, you know, unless something stopped them from doing that. Plus, they realized that they needed to make a change. They needed to come into the [laughter] twentieth century, at the time. They needed to start having some faces that looked similar to the people they were responding to. So, that's why they went out and--. They went out and started to beat the bushes to find some people that they could hire. Chief Kegley, I think, did a good job of trying to push the department forward. When he realized that he needed to push the department forward, I think, he did good at it. He was a progressive. I think he was probably a little bit ahead of the time, yeah, yep.

JS: You quickly advanced in leadership positions within the fire department. What do you think attributed to this?

LO: Well, I think that I was very well accepted. I think that they began to learn some respect for me, and I respected them. And, I started at the bottom, trying to learn everything that I could learn about the fire department, about personnel management, and those kind of things. And, I did. I was able to gain some experience. I was going to

school at Thomas Nelson, so, I think, they could see that I was trying to be progressive. I was trying to get some background. And, I did have some background already when I came with a little bit of experience. And, I think, because I was so detailed in my efforts to get promoted--because I studied all the time. I studied either one, either Thomas Nelson or fire department--I was doing that all the time. And, I also tried to impart some of my knowledge to the people who I was supervising because everyday we were supposed to have some training; and, I tried to have some everyday. And, I tried to give them ideas about personnel management, and other things, so that they could qualify themselves to be officers. So, I guess, I gained-- I gained some respect. And, I covered some ground, too. And, I think, also that most of what they were trying to get at was they wanted to advance a minority person up the scale. They wanted to advance them up the scale. Now, I-- I did. I made captain in 1976, and, then, in 1981, I made battalion chief which I stayed a battalion chief 'till 1989. Well, actually, I stayed a battalion chief 'till 1990 which means that I had about almost ten years of experience on the street supervising people. So, a lot of the places that I responded to--even when I got to be battalion chief and covered the whole uptown part of the city from Mercury Boulevard to Denbigh--I knew a lot of the people that I was responding to. And, when I drove up, sometimes, they greeted me real quick and we started talking, and that kind of thing. So, I quickly became a known item, kind of, this whole district. And, when they sent me downtown to work in the Southeast Community, I really knew all those people, for sure. So, it was just that I became a city-wide known commodity. And, they thought it was a good person to have in the fire department and running the fire department. So, in 1990, I

got promoted to deputy chief which means that I was in charge of all the firefighting operations for the city, the whole city. And, I did the same thing in that position. I tried to learn all I could learn about that, plus personnel management. Personnel is-- Now, it's getting to be the thing that holds everything together [laughter] because you almost need to be a lawyer to be a department head in the city because of all of the changes and the things that are happening in management. But, I think that I became a known commodity is the reason that I was able to move up. And, I was accepted and I was respected, I guess.

JS: Gotcha. Did you face any barriers along the way? I know that you talked about a few problems. Did you face any barriers?

LO: Well-- Well, no. Well, yeah. I mean, it's not really considered a barrier. It's a situation where you walk a fence line. And, you can fall off on one side and be chewed up by the city council. Or, you could fall off on the other side and be chewed up by the fire personnel because if things don't go the way they think they ought to, then they have to find somebody to blame. And, a lot of times, budgets, city council, and managers, and city managers, and all those things, they can determine what happens to the little person. So, when they say, "I need some of the money back from your budget," then that means somebody in the department may not get a raise, or they may not get some new uniforms, or they may not get something that they need that they think they need. And, they got to blame somebody for that. So, the barrier can be how you deal with this "no" to these people, when it's time for them to get a raise and they're all clamoring for-- I mean, everybody's bread cost the same amount, you know. So, if you're going to give some



people a raise and not others, if you can't give them all a raise then it's hard deciding to give some and not give others. So, that creates a barrier for you. It makes people not listen when you're telling them exactly what happened. They don't want to hear that. They don't want to hear that. Then, if you fall off on the other direction and fight council or fight the city manager on it, then they can chew you up [laughter]. That becomes a barrier, too, because they don't want to hear that. They want you to do exactly what they want you to do because you work for them. And, stress--. It creates a--. I call it a stress barrier [laughter], 'cause stress can eat you alive. I've been there, too. Stress can make it a very difficult situation for you to be in charge of whatever it is you're in charge of. But, yeah, there are barriers. There are personnel barriers, promotion time. Everybody wants to be promoted, of course. Everybody doesn't do the same job on a promotional exam. Everybody doesn't do the same job in a promotional interview. But, everybody wants to be promoted [laughter]. So, when you have to tell this person, "Yes, you did enough to be promoted" and this person, "No, you did not do enough to be promoted," then that puts you on that fence again. And, so, that's another barrier to an effective operation. But, barriers--not really someone saying "No, you can't do that," or "no, you shouldn't do that," or "no, I'm not going to let you do that." Those are--. I only had one or two of those, and they were because of stuff that wouldn't keep me awake at night, yeah. They were minor things. But, one of the city managers, he wanted me to--. He almost wanted to run the fire department. He wanted to tell me what we were going to do, when we were going to do it. And, of course, I told him, "That's not the way it's going to be." I said, "I'm in charge of the fire department, and I answer to the city manager, not the assistant

city manager.” He was the assistant city manager. But, he was kind of overseeing my, overshadowing my department. But, I could--. I could go directly to the city manager. And, I said, “I’m going to run the fire department, not you.” So, that created a little barrier between me and him [laughter]. He didn’t like that. So, he tried, you know, on several occasions, to get back at me. But, he wasn’t able to get under my skin.

JS: In 1991, you became the first African-American fire chief in Newport News. How did this promotion come about?

LO: We--. I competed with two other--. There were two other candidates. In 1990, there was three of us vying for the chief’s position. I wasn’t chosen at that time. I was chosen to be--. The city manager chose Mr. Clarence Hilling as the chief and me as the deputy chief. The deputy chief, meaning that I was in charge of operations. And, that’s when I became the deputy chief. But, within a year, the city caught themselves downsizing. Now, I don’t know whether they were downsizing in the fire department because of the situation moneywise or because of the situation otherwise that had to do with personnel. But, they downsized, and they put some people out of work who were kind of high up. They were like an assistant chief- and battalion chief-level people. They took the jobs from two of them. And, the chief that I was telling you about, Clarence Hilling, who was my chief, and I was a deputy at the time, he decided that he would take retirement because he was eligible and because he thought that that would give them another position, to save one of those jobs. I wasn’t in a position to--. I couldn’t retire yet. I had-- . I think I had about twenty-two years in then, and I wasn’t able to. But, he had had some time with the city, in another department. So, he was able to take the retirement. And, he

took it. He was at the age and the time. So, he took the retirement, and he did save one of the jobs. But, the manager, at that time, said that--. He said, "Y'all had done"--me and Clarence had done a good job, in 1990, on the examinations and the situations that they gave us, and everything. And, he said, "Clarence has retired." He said, "So, I'm going to not do another cycle of promotional examinations." He said, "I'm gonna make you the chief." And, so, he was able to do that since it had only been a year. So, he chose me as the chief, and I stayed for ten years. I stayed ten years.

JS: What were some of your goals as fire chief of Newport News?

LO: Well, I had several. One of them was to start a technical rescue team to--. We had a technical rescue team in the area, but we didn't have one in Newport News. And, I wanted--. I thought we needed one in our place too. So, I started a technical rescue team. One of the other ones was--and, this wasn't my goal, but it was the goal of the city manager's office--was to have every firefighter be an emergency medical technician, so that they could do both jobs. So, we had to do that. We were able to get all of the people cross-trained and able to get them to do firefighter medic jobs. The other one was, I thought, that the fire department needed to mirror the community a little bit better. I had been thinking about it a long time, and we had had--. One of our chiefs did a pretty good job, I think, of hiring minorities, and that was Chief Walls. But, things were changing some more, and I guess, the city population then was probably about thirty-eight percent African American. And, I wanted the fire department to kind of reflect that. Maybe not on the exact same numbers, but at least, you know, twenty percent, or something like that. I wanted to get closer to that number. So, I was trying to--. I was trying to make

those numbers go higher, and I was trying to get quality people at the same time. And, the group that we were working with--. We worked with all of the fire departments around here: York County, Hampton, Virginia Beach, Norfolk. And, we did training academies. And, the chiefs in that group, including myself--. But, I disagreed with them when they said that they wanted to just go out and find people who already had EMT [Emergency Medical Training] because I knew that if we did that, if we went out and found people that just had EMT already, that we would probably eliminate a large number of the majorities. I mean, the minorities, excuse me, because the majority of the people they were getting were white. And, it was possibly because they were going through the volunteer organizations and getting the EMT certifications. And, it's been a known fact that the African Americans, or blacks, did not do a lot of the volunteering. So, they weren't getting a lot of the EMT classes, and that kind of thing. And, I talked to personnel. And, I had a lady in personnel. Her name was Caroline. Let's see, what was Caroline's name [surname]? But, anyway, she told me that the only way that I could see a large number of these minorities that weren't in this group of already EMT-qualified people, was to interview everybody. I had to interview all of them: the EMT people and the people that weren't. And, I think we had about 300 people there [laughter] at one time. And, I said, "I have to interview all of them?" She said, "That's the only way you can get to all of them is interview all of them." She said, "Because you can't--. If ya'll--. If the group that's trying to get, one's EMT-qualified already--." She said, "You got this group over here that's EMT-qualified. How you gonna look at that group, unless you look at all of 'em?" I said, "Well, ok." I said, "Let me look at all of 'em then." So, I set

up some interview processes when they came to do their practice training. They came and had a practice training day. And, they had, excuse me. They had about five or six. They had even more than that. But, they had two or three this week, and they had two or three the next week. And, they had two or three week after that. And, this was gonna go on for a month and a half or six weeks. We were gonna be processing people through. So, I pulled up a little trailer. We had a fire prevention trailer. I pulled up a little trailer. And, I gave 'em ten minutes each [laughter]. So, when they finished outside, they came to me. And the one's that weren't ready to be outside yet, they were in there with me. So, I did ten minutes each, and I got through the whole 300. And, I pulled--. I was able to pull because there was a lot of quality people in that bunch. They just didn't have EMT already. So, I was able to--. I was able to pull some numbers out of there. And, I got some good minorities, as well, as the ones that were already EMT-qualified. So, I was able--. I was trying to raise those numbers, and I was able to make some headway. I made some headway. And, it turned out pretty good for me then. But I don't know where things are now, since I left, because I think the population changed. The population had shifted some more. I think it's probably about forty-six percent [laughter] African American now, versus other. But, anyway--. My other--. One of my other goals was to make sure that breathing, self-contained breathing apparatus was upgraded. And, I was able to do that. That took money. Got some money from the state to do that with. But, I was able to accomplish quite a few of the things that I was able to, wanted to get done. I wanted to make some repairs to some of the stations, too, that had leaking roofs, and that kind of thing. And, I was able to get some of that done, too. I got some roofs replaced. I got some

stations replaced. I got old Station One replaced. I got Station Five--it was in the Fort Eustis area--we got that one on the books to be replaced. Did some design work, and that kind of thing. Got a training--. We were--. One of my goals was to get a training burn building done. We got a burn building done up there where Station Five is. So, I accomplished some of things that I wanted to get accomplished.

JS: What do you view as your greatest accomplishment in this position?

LO: Well, I think--. I have to say that my greatest accomplishment with the fire department was to make sure that the door to the fire department was open to minorities and stayed open to minorities. I think that I was glad that I was able to be the first one to get in there, and to stay in there, and the first one to be promoted at each level, all the way up to the chief. So, I think I did something--. I know that I was standing on the shoulders of people who had gone before me, and I was hoping that my shoulders would be left for somebody to stand on, too. And, I think it happened.

JS: Kind of going off of that, what is it like for you to have been the first African-American firefighter, first African-American lieutenant, so forth and so on, all the way up to chief?

LO: Well, I--. To me, it was an honor for me to have done that. When I went into the fire department, I wasn't thinking about any of those things. The first time, when I applied, I was just thinking about getting a job that had some security, and some benefits, and one that I thought I could stay there until retirement time. But, I see that--. And, another thing that I really tried to do while I was in the fire department as a captain, as a lieutenant captain, battalion chief, I still went to some of the schools and read to the kids. I'd be in

uniform. I'd sit there. I'd show them my gear, let them put it on, if they wanted to. And, I'd read a story to them. I wanted to mentor, some way, some of those kids to let them know that they can do whatever they wanted to, too. They could be a fire chief, if they want to be. They could be a president, if they want to be. I think I got that accomplished, and I'm still doing some of that even right now. Even next Wednesday, I'll be doing some reading to some kids. But, I think it's important for people, young people--young people who don't know much about what we call "the struggle." They don't know much the struggle. They don't know much about Martin Luther King [Jr.], except what they heard, and that kind of thing--but it's important for them to know that they can be whatever they want to be. And, they can try for something that sounds bigger, but it really isn't. And, I think that that is what I wanted to, the message I wanted to send to the community that, "Here you are. Here we are. You can do whatever you need to do, too." Yeah. Like I said, I still--. I'm a part--. I'm a member of the One Hundred Black Men. And, we still doing mentoring work, scholarships, those kind of things. And I think my job was to let people know that they could--. They could get where they wanted to get to. Once I became chief, I still did it. I went to schools. I did public education work. I did fire prevention week and those things just to let them see, you know, see me in a uniform. See me, know that I'm in charge of the department, and they can be in charge of the department, too.

JS: You had a long career in the fire department, thirty-two and a half years.

What is your most, or are some of your most, memorable experiences as a firefighter, member of the department?

LO: Well, my retirement was one of my most memorable, and not because I was retiring, but because of what they did. They threw me a really big party [laughter]. They did. They threw a big party, and they had all kinds of people there. They had people, City department heads, the mayor, the manager, the police chief. They had all kinds of things they presented to me. They had big-- They had pictures. And, they gave me a fire hydrant [laughter]. So, that was one of the most memorable things. It made me feel like they were really sad that I was leaving, but that I had done something while I was there. And, I really enjoyed that. I was a fireman of the year in 1972, yeah. It was just surprising that, in that short a turnaround, that somebody would think that I was the firefighter of the year. And, it was nice. I think the American Legion was who picked me for that (1:48:46.4). I can't remember exactly now. I can see the picture in the paper, but-- [laughter]. But, it was an honor to be chosen that quickly to be firefighter of the year. But, I was always willing to spend my time. And, we used to do projects at Newmarket South, which was a little small shopping center. We used to put the aerial truck up and come down a rope, and stuff like that. And, I used to do it. I'd volunteer time to be over there during fire prevention week to do that. But, I had some times that was close to my heart. But, they-- I wouldn't consider them so much memorable. They were tragedies. You learn. I learned a lot doing those things. I learned a lot about people, about people's feelings. I enjoyed-- I was chosen for the Victoria Adams Award by the state, for my help with minority advancement, and that kind of thing. I had some really, really good, good times, some good feeling times about the fire department. I'm surprised to say that. I mean, a lot of people might be surprised to hear me say it. But, I liked the city manager



that I worked for, Ed Maroney. I really did. I respected him. And, I liked him. A lot of people didn't, but I did. I really did think a lot of Ed Maroney. And, it's just--. He made me feel good a lot [laughter], you know, 'cause he, even to the point where he says, "I'm not ready to retire yet, and you can't retire yet either." I said, "Why is that?" He said, "You got to stay long as I stay"[laughter]. He said, "'Cause I don't want to make somebody else chief of the fire department." I said, "Naw, I can't stay that long," I said, "'cause you're not planning on leaving anytime soon." But, I did. I had some good feeling times in the fire department. I really did. But, my retirement was, to me, something special because, I mean, they just did everything I could think of [laughter]. I had the big bash--biggest bash I'd ever seen for a department head. I loved the fire department, and I love it right now. I don't miss everything we were doing, now. But, I do miss a lot of the people. And, we grew a lot of people in the fire department because now we have the chief in Hampton. He used to be in the Newport News Fire Department. The chief in Williamsburg, he used to be in the Newport News Fire Department. There's a chief in--. I'm trying to think of where. We got two other places that guys that used to be in our fire department are chiefs there now, yeah. So, we've helped to groom people for other places, too.

JS: Gotcha. Well, I just want to wrap up the interview by asking a few more questions about the Civil Rights Movement in this area.

LO: Ok.

JS: I guess one--'cause we're running a little short on time--what do you view as the most important aspect of the Civil Rights Movement?

LO: The most of important aspect of the Civil Rights, excuse me. Well, I guess, the fact that we're able to vote. And, it seems like only now people have been really, really urgent to get out there and vote. For years, after we, the Civil Rights Act [1965] and voting, and all that became important, people had a mediocre attitude, "I'll go vote, I guess, today," or "I'm not gonna vote today. My vote won't make any difference anyway." But, the fact that people pushed so hard to get us an opportunity to vote. Every time there was something to vote for, I'd go. Every time, I mean, no matter how big or little it is, I go and vote because people suffered for us to have the right to do that. And, I think it's important that we do that, but I'm not sure everybody thinks it's important. Civil Rights Movement, in this area, was not as profound as it was in Alabama or places like that. But, it still--. It still was a progression that you could see. It was something that you could see being pushed on. The biggest thing, I guess, that happened around here, during the Civil Rights Movement, was the riots they had downtown. And, they burned some buildings up. But, we didn't have a lot of people coming in here saying that, you know, "We need to get out and vote." We didn't have a lot of rallies that said, you know, "Let's go--. Let's march on downtown and go vote," and that kind of thing. But, you could see--. You could still see the progression happening. You could see the people that thought that voting became important. And, people started to do it more, and more, and more. In that way, we were able to get some officers done. We able to get like a mayor. We voted in a minority mayor. And, so, some things--. Some things did happen, even though they wasn't as pronounced as they was in Selma, Alabama, Mississippi, and all those places. But, it was still a Civil Rights Movement here.

JS: What do you regard as the unfinished legacies of the Civil Rights Movement, or are there any?

LO: Unfinished legacies--. Well, I think, that we've become complacent a little bit now. Things that we pushed to get, they've peaked. And, now they're sliding down on the other side. I know that there are some things that didn't stay the same way they used to be. We got some things better, and now some of those things are sliding back into worse situations. But, I don't know. I look at the Congress, and the legislature, and the executive branch, and all of those things. And, I think that we made some strides outside that went up the scale, got better on the scale. But, it seems to me like they are having a harder time there than outside of there. I think they need to look at the movement again [laughter] because they're not getting anything accomplished, to me. To me, they're having trouble getting anything accomplished at the federal level. So, I don't know. I think we did better for quite a while. And, now, I don't think we're doing as good. That's just my opinion.

JS: What do you think are the most pressing problems that African Americans face in America today?

LO: Well, I think, we do have some definite problems with our, with the young people. I think that they don't seem to--. They do not seem to feel their self-worth, maybe. Life is not as important as it used to be to our young people. And, I'm not sure if it's the deterioration of the home, or what it is. I'm not sure exactly what it is. I think we were talking about I could go down the street and people in my neighborhood could tell me to do something, and if I didn't do it, they could chew me out. And, then, by the time I got

home, my mother would be ready to chew me out again. You can't do that now. People don't feel the same way about that. So, our kids, once they get out of earshot and eyesight of their mothers and fathers, or their parents, then they are able to get away with a lot more than they could get away with before. And, I think it's having some effect on how they treat people, people in general. I think that the home life has deteriorated, and we gonna have some really big problems with our young people. We still have some good young people, sure. I'm not saying that. But, I'm saying that some of them are not having enough supervision, or they're not having enough mentoring, or they're not having enough something that allows them to not feel the same way about somebody else's life, or how they want to be treated, and how they would treat somebody else. I think that's gonna be one of the big problems. And, having something for the kids to do is going to be something that we need to really look at seriously because they have some unoccupied minds that are running rampant with the stuff that we don't want it to run rampant with. They need a lot more. And, we need--. We do need--. Our economy is not good enough to produce something for everybody to be able to do. So, everybody doesn't have a job. And some people have harder times than other people. And, that's reflected in what happens in the community.

JS: Alright. Well, is there anything else that you'd like to contribute or something that you feel I have missed, or anything like that, or any final thoughts?

LO: No. I don't think we've missed anything. I think we've talked about just about everything we could talk about. I'll just, maybe, elaborate, a little bit more, on, I guess, the home training is--. Schools are not prepared to raise children, and they shouldn't have

to raise children. Children should be raised by their parents. But, we do have--. We do have children having children. So, we have some shortcomings in that respect because children trying to raise children and not knowing exactly how to do that is bad. I mean, we didn't have a book to go by when we were raising kids, either. But, you know what's right and wrong. And, if you'll stay with them and give them enough time, and preach the right and wrong to 'em, seems like they would be able to do better. But, I'm afraid for our children nowadays. We're still working with them. My son, my wife, and my church, we're still having after-school programs. We're still trying to corral a few of 'em and point 'em in the right direction. But, it seems to get harder every year, yep, harder every year. But, I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you. And, I hope I may be able to help in some way.

JS: Thank you, again, so much. We really appreciate it from Hampton Roads Oral History Project. And, with that, this concludes our interview with Mr. Larry Orie. Thank you again for your participation, Sir.

LO: Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW

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