



**LOWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT II**

**INFORMANT: KEN WINGOOD**

**INTERVIEWER: MEHMED ALI**

**DATE: NOVEMBER 27, 2001**

**K=KEN**

**A=ALI**

**Tape I, side A**

A: ...November 27, 2001. And Ken a little bit of background information. Where and when were you born?

K: I was born in Lowell October 27, 1928. (A: Okay) One Waldo Street, the old homestead up in Ayer City.

A: Okay. And where did you go to school at?

K: I started at the West London Street School, a little two-room schoolhouse with Mrs. Hill. And from (--) That was the first and second grade in one room. (A: Wow) And then from there I went to the London Street School with Mrs. Haggerty. (A: Okay) That was the third grade. And from there, my mother really didn't want me to go to the Carter. So she, so I went to the Lincoln School (A: Okay) for the fourth, fifth and sixth grade.

A: And how come your Mom didn't want you to go to the Carter?

K: She just didn't like that neighborhood. (A: Really?) Really. (A: Okay) And everybody in, that's, One Waldo Street is in Ayer City. (A: Yah) And everybody in that neighborhood, all of my friends went to the Butler School. My mother didn't want me to go to the Butler School. So I went to the Charles W. Morey Junior High School.

A: Okay, up in the Highlands?

K: Up in the Highlands. (A: Okay) And like I say, I graduated from there in 1944. And from there I went to Lowell High.

A: Okay. Now how did you get to the Highlands from Ayer City?

K: Walked.

A: Did you walk?

K: Walked, yes. In good weather I had a bike, but those days you got out of school at 11:30 and you came home for lunch, and then you went back to school, and back and forth. So, but you know, it kept us healthy. [Laughs]

A: That's true. That's true. Yah. So describe Ayer City, the neighborhood.

K: Ayer City was a very interesting neighborhood. It was a multi-culture neighborhood.

A: Not one ethnic group predominated, right?

K: Not one ethnic group. Most of the people in the neighborhood were Catholics, (A: Okay) because the Sacred Heart right up the street, but there was one other black family in the neighborhood. And all the rest of them were, like the kid next door to me, his name was Henry Nelson. They called him half Nelson, because he was half. This was during World War II, and he always said he was half Nazi, and half English. You know, that type of neighborhood. It, it was a, it was a mixing pot of all different cultures, and it was very interesting, and a lot of fun growing up there. There was, back in that era there wasn't, there wasn't any prejudice at all you know.

A: Really.

K: I played with them. I played on the football team. I, I fell in love with, I knew the girls in the neighborhood you know, and that's the way, that was the type of neighborhood it was.

A: Yah. What were the different ethnic groups that were living in Ayer City?

K: Well like I said, the [Zavos]. Mr. Zavo came over, he was from Italy and his wife. (A: Okay) And the Marrs next door, Johnny Marr, Irish. His father come over on the boat from Ireland. (A: Okay) And you know, there was, like I said, it was just a complete mixing pot of, of different ethnic groups at that time. And the food was good, because you know, when you were a kid, you're playing with the kids and you know, it's, you just have dinner wherever you were, because there was, you know, that was the way things were then. I still remember Mrs. Finn's, nobody could make American Chop Suey like her. (A: Yah) And the way Mrs. Zavo cooked with a big family, you know, and there was always room for one or two more. So it was, it was a very, very, it was a very nice, it was a good neighborhood.

A: Yah, yah. Now were there many Germans there because of the Harvard Brewery?

K: Yes there was. See at that point in time in my life I didn't distinguish between one group with another group. (A: Sure, sure.) But like I remember the Nelsons living next door. I remember he worked at the Brewery, because I remember every single day coming home at four o'clock with his case, case of beer. And going up there and sneaking a beer. You know, they, everybody in the neighborhood would look forward to ask, for a brother to ask you to help take a lunch up to his father, because you always, you had, you could always sneak a little beer, you know.

A: Really, yah?

K: [Unclear].

A: Yah. What do you remember about the Brewery?

K: Like I said, everybody in the neighborhood worked at the Brewery. (A: Okay) And the, the VA, the Veterans of Foreign War Building, that was a hall, caterers. (A: Okay) And when they went out of business the Brewery bought that, and that was like the union hall (A: Okay) where they were meeting. But I can remember out there in the grove behind there watching you know, the parties and things going on. In fact there was (--) I remember one day, one of the things we used to do, the (--) But this time the Poor Farm was up the street where Wang was. (A: Sure, sure) And we'd go up there and steal potatoes. And then across the tracks from my house was Brady's wood, where they used to cut all the wood up into bags. Remember you used to, at that time you could go to the store and buy a bag of wood. (A: Okay) And we'd go over there and get the wood, and go up the grove and fire, and have potatoes. And I remember there was a big party going on at Miller Mc[unclear] Hall, and a fellow come over and took a picture of us all, and you know, in the knickers. I think that picture is still around someplace, but you know how the little knickers with the socks hanging down, with sneakers with holes in them. Of course you got to realize that this was during the depression, (A: Sure) and it (--) My father was a machinist (A: Okay) and he could not get any work at that time. He worked for the WPA. (A: He did?) Yes.

A: Wow. (K: Umhm) Um, tell us some more about your father.

K: My father was born in Bermuda.

A: Oh okay.

K: In 1887, and he came, he came to the United States around 1906. And we bought that house on Waldo, he bought that house on Waldo Street around 1912. I got the exact figures if you want them.

A: So when he came to the US did he come straight to Lowell?

K: No. His name is on the (--) If you go to Ellis Island his name is, I have the documents that said the he came through Ellis Island. And you had to have fifty dollars to get into this country, and he only had thirty. And there was a note that he was going to go to a friend's house on Woodbine Street in Boston. (A: Okay) And that's how they let him in. And my mother came a few years later.

A: Okay.

K: And from there, then he came Lowell later. They first lived on Lincoln Street and then they bought on Waldo Street.

A: Do you have any idea why he came to Lowell from Boston?

K: I think for the job opportunities, because the cartridge (--) [Clears throat] My sister, my sister Cynthia talks about the times when she was going to the London Street School and dad would walk her to school, and he'd keep going because he was working because he was working as a waiter downtown Lowell.

A: Oh really?

K: Yah. Back in that time you know, like Paige's, G.L. Paige's was a very exclusive men's club, and then there was another one on Prescott Street, businessmen's club. So my dad worked at one of those until he did get a job at the Cartridge Shop during World War I.

A: Wow. Okay.

K: And I've also gone, and he, from there he also worked at Heinz Electric when Heinz was here. And that's about the only two jobs that I can place him. But that's, no question that's why he came to Lowell, (A: Okay) because he was, he was a machinist. He, like I say, he came from Bermuda, he and his brother. His brother lived in Boston and they got their [training] at the dock yard in Bermuda. (A: Really) Yah, and I have the certificate saying that he did a good job. And my uncle stayed in Boston because he was a shipwright. So he worked, you know, he worked for the shipyards all his career.

A: Yah, yah. And your Mom was from Bermuda too?

K: My mother is from Bermuda, yes, and she came here. I'm one of, I have seven, I had seven sisters, and I had a brother, which I never knew. He passed away when he was eighteen months old. And my older sister was born in Bermuda. And then, and then my next two sisters were born in Lynn. So my father was going where the machinery, you know, the type of the trade was. And then the rest of them were born here in Lowell.

A: Okay. All right.

K: And all, all of us graduated from Lowell High School.

A: Okay. Great.

K: My father was very active in organizations such as the NAACP. He found the NAACP here in Lowell, because there was mainly problems, okay.

A: What's that?

K: Lews, Phyllis Lew and her sister still live in Boston.

A: Now this article says that your father was the president of the new, newly established NAACP in 1918.

K: Oh boy. Right. It wasn't too successful. They'd had an awful, there wasn't enough interest in it, and it sort of faded out. (A: Okay) And then in, during World War II there was an awful lot of black soldiers from Fort Devens come to Lowell. (A: Okay) And there was an awful lot of problems, (A: Okay) mainly, I remember one of the big things was that if a soldier was arrested and he was black, the Lowell Sun, the local papers at that time would say, "And there was a black soldier arrested." (A: Yah) And we sort of, my father sort of took, the NAACP took offense to it, because when an Irishman was arrested there wasn't an Irishman, you know, and they would just signal him out. And so they as a group [unclear] and they stopped printing things that way, (A: Really) and they just gave the person's name, which is you know, that type of thing.

A: Now why do you think they formed the NAACP back in 1918?

K: The same reason that the NAACP is that today, they're prejudice on job hiring, housing, and things like that, it's ah, that were, were going on at that time. And like I said, like that incident, like I said, there was an awful lot of black, mainly an awful lot of them had to do with police brutality. (A: Really) Yes. Even when I was active in the NAACP in the 40's and 50's, if a young man, a black young man was arrested, you'd usually get a call and you'd just go down the police station with him to make sure that he isn't, that he wasn't, he wasn't abused. And I don't think they were singling out the black community. I think they were just, that's the way the policemen were at that time.

A: Right. Right.

K: And things, like I say, they were things like that that were going on at the time. But then they got together with the Lawrence and Haverhill, and they formed the Merrimack Valley Branch, (A: Okay. Okay) which is still active today.

A: Right. Right. So what church did your family attend when you were growing up?

K: My mother and father were both born in Bermuda, and most Bermudians are Episcopalians.

A: Really? Yah.

K: And the church, the only church was too far away. So we all grew up at the, what, the Matthew's Memorial Primitive Methodist, (A: Okay) Reverend Arthur E. Hiley.

A: Okay. Where was that? In the Highlands?

K: No, that was on Gorham Street, right across the street from the Butler School, right aside of the fire station. (A: Okay) It was torn down several years ago, and they built a smaller one now out in North, East Chelmsford. (A: Okay) But at that time that was the big, that was the big Methodist Church in the area.

A: Okay. All right.

K: Primitive Methodist. And like I say, I attended, that's where I attended.

A: Yah, what do you remember about that church?

K: It was a nice church. Reverend, I was there before Reverend Hiley. (A: Okay) Reverend Matthew's I think his name was, was there, but it was a very friendly, loving church. And Reverend Hiley was a very prominent Minister in the, in this city. And all I can remember is just you know, going to Sunday School there, and learning, learning the bible and then going upstairs to church service, and listening to all the fire and (--) I should say I'm not a Christian anymore, but you know, but that time all the fire and brimstone, the hollering, the screaming, you know.

A: And Reverend Hiley was into that?

K: Oh yes. Oh yah. He always had to raise his voice, and [bangs on something]. I don't know why, but it seemed to make, maybe it could be to wake the people up in the congregation. But I stayed at the, I stayed at the St. Paul's Methodist until I got married, and from then I went down (--) I stayed at Matthew's Memorial Primitive Methodist until I got married, and then I went to St. Paul's Methodist.

A: Okay.

K: Okay, because my wife didn't, my wife went to the First United Baptist Church (A: Okay). And I didn't particularly care for the Baptist that much. So we went to the, we attended St. Paul's Methodist.

A: Yah. Now tell me about your wife's family, were they from Lowell, from a long time?

K: No. [Coughs] Excuse me. My wife's father, stepfather, Harrison Pierce, (A: Okay) was in the service and stationed at Fort Devens at the end of the war.

A: At the end of World War II?

K: At the end of World War II. And he brought his wife, and his daughter, and my wife here to Lowell. And he liked it. He liked it and he stayed. Like I say, he's still here in Lowell.

A: Is his?

K: Yah, he lives, he's living at Chelmsford Crossing Assisted Living there, 86 years old. (A: Wow. Wow) And he, he worked at the VA. (A: Okay) And he retired from the Veteran's VA. So he's been here, he's been here all these years.

A: Yah, that's great.

K: And my mother was a domestic. (A: Okay) Okay. My mother, my mother used to work for the McQuade's, [Stickerman] McQuade's. (A: Sure) And she helped raise all those kids. (A: Wow) And from, I remember that and then I remember she used to work for Mrs. Clap. You know that, on Nesmith Street, that big brick house on the left hand side when you're coming into Lowell, multi, multi floors, and then the top of it is wood? (A: Yes) That was the Clap's. My mother worked there. (A: Okay) And he owned a garage down on Middlesex Street. (A: Okay) And she worked there. Those are the only two places I know that she worked, because prior to that I, that's before my time.

A: Yah, yah. Do you know your grandparents at all from the island?

K: I met my mother's father. In 1949 I went to Bermuda and I met my father, my grand, yes, I went. He was in his 90's at that time, on his third wife.

A: He had outlived them, or he divorced them?

K: Outlived. Outlived them all. (A: Wow) Yah, well I've been doing a lot and have quite a bit of interest in the family tree.

A: Have you gone far back with your genealogy?

K: I've gone back to like his father. Bermuda was, Bermuda was a funny island because there were slaves and there were free black people down there. (A: There was?) Yes. (A: Okay) And from the stories I'm hearing, my grand, my grandfather's father bought his wife.

A: To free her?

K: Bought her to marry her.

A: Oh okay.

K: And I have a book about this thick at home about the registry of all the, from all the churches in Bermuda. And some of them you'll see at the back, on the "S", you know a [unclear] and then who they were owned by. Or if you go into the marriage part of it they'll say, "S, with permission of Mrs. So and so to marry." You know, so there was (--)

A: Wow. So "S" meaning slave?

K: Slave, yes.

A: Wow. So have you been able to trace your family back to Africa?

K: No.

A: I know the records must be pretty ah (--)

K: Yes. Like I said, this book I have goes back to 1820, 1823, and that's as far back as I got. An

A: Well that's good.

K: And I was, my mother's maiden name was Manders. (A: Okay) And last October there was a big family reunion of the Manders' side of the family in Bermuda, and I couldn't make it because I had other commitments, but it's that the family is getting interested in looking, trying to find out what happened. I'm having an awful lot of different stories about where, you know, how the family that far back.

A: That's good, good, keep it up. Now tell me about your father's machine shop and his business?

K: My father, like I said, was a tool and die maker for Heinz Electric (A: Okay) at the time. And he built a two, three car garage on the property up on Waldo Street.

A: He did.

K: And he started buying machinery. My father was a very frugal man. Most people in that type of business, if they had to make a shaft they'd go down to the you know, the steel mill and buy a piece of steel. My father would go down the junkyard and buy a piece, and buy it for the weight you know, rather than for the quality. And during the war we did an awful lot of work for Heinz Electric. (A: You did? Wow) Yes. That's where I learned to become a machinist. (A: Okay) To the point that when, when I graduated from high school and I got drafted, when I got out of the service I went to work at the Watertown Arsenal as a machinist.

A: At the Watertown Arsenal?

K: Yes. (A: Okay) During the war, during the war my father worked at the Watertown Arsenal as a machinist, and we were still doing work for Heinz Electric.

A: Okay. What kind of work would you do for Heinz Electric?

K: At the, production type work. I remember there was a brass plug that the Navy uses in their communications' system. And they were, and we would rough them out. We'd get the castings and we'd make, do the first, first operation on them. And then from there then they would go to Heinz Electric, you know, then they'd go for the finished, for finished product.

A: Yah. Now they made electric motors, right?

K: The little motors that sat on your windshield, your defroster, yes. Yes, that type of thing.

A: And did they make other things as well.

K: They, these were the, during the war they're making things like these jacks for the, telephone jacks, you know, for the, for the Navy. I know that was one product they made. (A: Okay) It's very, very interesting. In 1965 I went to work at General Radio. And one of the toolmakers there was Joe Place. And he worked with my father. And his father was my father's boss at Heinz Electric.

A: Oh really, yah.

K: It's a small world. But we did an awful lot of work for them. We did work for Sullivan Brothers, the Printers. (A: You did?) Yah. And at that time F.S. Payne Elevator was here in Lowell.

A: Were they? Yah?

K: On Jackson Street.

A: Really. Okay.

K: And that office covered from here all the way to the Canadian border. (A: Okay) And they would bring in their, we'd do, we did an awful lot of work for them. And usually it was night type of work. They would take a, they'd take an elevator apart and they'd bring the shaft down. There was one out and we'd have to replace the shaft by the morning. So they'd stop in the morning to pick it up, and continue on up to (--) And they, you know, they did, I remember like Rockefeller had a home up there, way up there in the boonies, and the elevator didn't, you know, they went up to fix it and we fixed the shaft, and up there, and all the mills around. At the time also, A& P Corrugated Box Company came to Lowell. (A: Okay) And they decided, they designed a machine they thought would, would improve production. And they gave my father the contract to build

it. And we built the machine. And it was built to fold the boxes automatically, (A: Right) and it was a total disaster. (A: Really) I remember they, I remember they took it, they took it back with them and I don't think they ever got it into the plant, that's how bad it was. (A: Really) It was just a, it was just the design.

A: The design wasn't good.

K: But he, mainly we did things like that. He was a general machinist and for the companies around we did, we did work for them. And like White Electric also on Jackson Street. The electric motors, we did an, make an awful lot shafts for them, (A: Okay) and things like that.

A: Wow. So now he had a tough time during the Depression though you said huh?

K: Oh he didn't start this, he didn't start, he didn't start this machine shop till I'm going to say around 1939, or 40.

A: Oh okay. So just before the war.

K: Just before the war, but during the Depression like I said, he worked, he worked for the WPA.

A: Do you know what he did for the WPA?

K: All I can tell you is that I remember that I guess he used to go into the brooks and streams and clean them out, and things like that. I remember him bringing home an old musket that was, that he found in the river.

A: Really? Yah.

K: Yah, you know. Of course he spent all of his time trying to get the rust off it, you know, and different things like that, yes.

A: Now you said you did some work for the Sullivan Brothers. Did you know Joe Sullivan?

K: I didn't know them that well. Like I said, I was only a young kid at the time, you know. (A: Sure.) And, but he, but he was, we did an awful, we did quite a bit of work for him and his. In fact we made a special die for him. I remember, because he was, when he got the contract to make the tickets for the racetrack, we did some work on the equipment for that.

A: Okay. So what years would that have been? During the war? Right before?

K: I would say, I would say right after the war.

A: Right after, okay.

K: Right after the war.

A: Now tell us about (--)

K: Yah, that's, that's another very interesting thing about how ethnic groups here in Lowell (--). My father was a good machinist, and he had a good reputation. And one day Joe Sullivan came up to him and he said, "Harold, he said, I'm not going to give you anymore business. There's a fine young Irishman that just opened a machine shop and I got to give him all of my work." And that was the end of, that was the end of the Sullivan Brothers' work. (A: Wow) You know, and no matter how good the work was, it was just that you know, you had to, you had to take care of your (--). [Chuckles] Oh yah!

A: What did your father think about that?

K: I never heard any comments about that. My father you know, my father said you know, "You got to do what you have to do." You know, he wasn't (--). I never saw my father get, I very rarely saw my father get mad. My father was the type, my father never laid a hand on me. That's the type of man he was. He figured he could talk to you and reason with you rather than beat the living daylights out of you, (A: Yah) you know, for communication.

A: Now what did you do during the war? You said you were drafted?

K: Oh I was, I didn't graduate from high school until 1947.

A: Oh okay.

K: Okay. So, but during the war I went to school and I worked when I got around to it. Like I said, I played in a football, I played in football, and things like that.

A: Did you play for Lowell High?

K: Yah, I got my letter playing football for Lowell High. (A: Oh wow) But other, when I got home then I could squeeze in working in the machine shop in the summertime. Like I say, that's where, that's where I learned my trade.

A: So now who was the coach of the football team way back when? Do you recall?

K: Mr. Corcoran. (A: Okay) You know, that was when we were in good physical shape, but (--). When I graduated in '47 Ray Riddick was taking over.

A: Ah, okay.

K: So I just, just prior, pre-Ray Riddick. And Ed. Pollack, remember?

A: No, I never heard of him.

K: He played pro football and he took over when they canned Corcoran. So, and then he was Ray Riddick's assistant. (A: Oh okay) You know, Assistant Coach.

A: Yah. Now how come they got rid of Corcoran?

K: We never won a game. (A: Never?) We won one game [unclear], because one of the guys was too old on the team. He was, Corcoran was more of a physical (--). When I went out for the football team, for the first three hours the first day, all we did was run. So we were in excellent physical condition, but he didn't know that much about football.

A: Well if you had come up a couple of years later you would have been a football star with Ray Riddick, right?

K: Something like that, yes. But you know I was thinking about that the other day. You know everybody talks about you know, the good old days. And I [unclear] these football players now you know, and the kind of the money they're making, I never was that good. You know? I mean, so you can do all the D & D and fantasize. I played baseball. I played football. I was very active in the YMCA. I was good, but I wasn't that good. So if I, if I had played under, if I had played under Riddick, you know, I'd still be in the same place I am today. [Both laugh]

A: I see. I see. Now you were talking about the Poor Farm. Do you remember when they closed the Poor Farm? Were you still living around Ayer City?

K: No, I wasn't. Like I said, Ayer City was a nice neighborhood. When I was sixteen years old my father bought me a shotgun, and we formed the Ayer City Rod and Gun Club. (A: Oh really? Yah?) Oh yah, and we used to go hunting up in that Poor Farm area, you know, with all those fields that they used to plow and things like that.

A: Sure. Sure.

K: And we had our own skeet gun. We used to take it up there and shoot skeet, you know. I had a gun, but most of the other older fellows, had dogs and things like that for hunting. Like I said, we were just active in a whole lot of things like that, you know.

A: Now how would you access the City Farm area? Would you go behind the Brewery, or go up Chelmsford Street?

K: Up the railroad tracks.

A: Up the railroad tracks, okay.

K: That, those railroad tracks belong to New York, New Haven and Hartford. They weren't B&M. (A: Okay) And you set your watch 11:00, every night the freight would go by. And all you do was walk up the tracks and there was, there's the little swimming holes there. The Red Bridge, from Hales Brook, that's the old swimming hole. (A: Okay) And then right aside of that was the Poor Farm. (A: Okay) And then they had all of their fields there where they planted potatoes. Like I said, the potatoes were very good. [Laughs]

A: Yah. Did you have names for different parts of the neighborhood? You were talking about the swimming holes. I remember somebody else told me about the Captain's was one of the names of the swimming holes up there.

K: Oh no. We used to go to the Red, Red Bridge. At one point that bridge was red. So over the railroad tracks.

A: Okay.

K: And that was the Red Bridge. Then we used to go, then I guess Hale's Brook, and then further out was the [Eck] where we used to go swimming. That was another little stream right there. (A: Okay) That's about, no, no big names. And Ayer City was unique because you had to cross the bridge to get to it.

A: No matter where?

K: Oh Lincoln Street, there was two bridges on Lincoln Street, one over Hale's Brook, and one over the railroad tracks. (A: Okay) And the same thing on Plain Street. So that was the orders of Ayer City. And so we always [had wars] with the guys on you know, other neighborhoods. So very, very close knit little group of guys. Gang type thing, but we didn't, if we were into any sort of, any sort of physical thing we didn't, we didn't have to take gangs to solve our problems.

A: Right. Right. Now you were working with your father during the war, and then you went into the service?

K: I, I didn't go into the service until 1951.

A: '51, (K: Yes) during Korea?

K: I was, I went to Korea.

A: You went to Korea.

K: Oh yah, I was in Korea.

A: Tell us about that experience.

K: I had left, I had moved out of One Waldo Street and I was living in Boston, and I was going to Wentworth Institute. (A: Oh okay) [Coughs] Excuse me.

A: Were you married at the time?

K: No. (A: Okay) And I got my draft notice and I couldn't get deferred. So I dropped out of school and in January '51 I got drafted into the service.

A: Okay.

K: And I was, it was interesting because at that time I had to have my birth certificate. And when I went down to city hall to get my birth certificate they wanted to know what I was, because Dr. Lawlor never put on my birth certificate that I was black. So I could have been anything I wanted, you know. And but I was, and of course I told them I was black. (A: Yah) And I was in an all-black outfit.

A: You were?

K: Yes. (A: Okay) And that was an experience in itself, you know, because most, most of the fellows that I was with were from New York City, or Philadelphia. And I learned an awful lot. Like I said, I was a naïve country young man, you know, and (--)

A: Even though you grew up in a city.

K: Yes, but (--). From there we went to, I was stationed at Fort [Bragg], Carolina and my first experience in the South.

A: Oooh.

K: To the point that, and the stories I heard I never left the base.

A: You never did.

K: No. And like I said, there was people from New York. I remember there was one young man, I come up naïve in formation. This is in 1952 now. Oh I'm sorry, 1951. And he, he come out and his eyes were beautiful glassy, you know, so nice and glassy, you know. And he was [makes sniffing sounds], you know, sniffing. And I said to the fellow aside of me, I said, "Oh." I don't want to mention the guy's name. I said, "Oh, he's got a cold." He said, "Right!" I didn't know the difference, you know, this fellow was an addict.

A: No kidding.

K: Yah. I remembered also at that time, Saturday morning in the service was inspection. Like I said, we were an all-black outfit and we'd get up and we'd clean that place up. And around 11:00 they would come in and inspect it. And then you could get passes to

go to town. And back at the end of the barracks where the door opened, they had all, quite a few of the guys out there smoking joints. (A: Really) They're smoking cigarettes out there, you know, dumbbell. And it's a, like I say, that was another experience.

A: So were there big differences between, now was there blacks from the south in that group as well?

K: Most of them were as far down as Philadelphia.

A: Okay, so not (--)

K: I was in a small, just a little small (--). We were, we were sent to Fort [Brag], North Carolina because the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne were stationed there. And at that time the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne was, they were planning some sort of a jump in Korea. And this all-black outfit I was in was going to be a reserved outfit that we were going to be, well we'd be in reserve. So if they had bogged on any place down the line they'd send this reserve outfit in. (A: Okay) But that was scrapped. (A: Really) And they moved us, this all-black outfit down to Fort Worth, Texas. (A: Okay) And now in Fort Worth, Texas, actually this fellow that had the drug problem, they decided that they found out at this time that Afro-Americans are good fighters (A: Really) in Korea. They found out these black outfits over in Korea were really raising a whole lot of hell. And so they decided to integrate them. (A: Really?) Yes.

A: And why? What was the purpose of integration now?

K: Because they were, at that time they said that six out of ten men in the foxhole are not firing their rifle. They were trying to get deeper into a foxhole. And they found out that they, that there was, that the black soldiers weren't doing that. They were up there protecting their butt so to speak. And that's why, that's the reason they gave us. You know, because at that point in time there was an awful lot of black soldiers coming back from Korea that would make the service their career. (A: Okay) And but getting back to this young man who was a drug addict, they found him. One day they were breaking up the outfit, they were integrating it, and there was a bunch of the black soldiers were going to Japan, to Korea, and a bunch of them were going to Germany. I was a draftee. I was drafted for two years. And this, like I said, and another nice thing about the army is Wingood is down the bottom of the list, and took this group, and this group, and by the time they got to W Y X and Z there's not much left for us. So I missed the call, except this young man (--). The CID walked in one day and opened his footlocker and there was some bags of marijuana with the syringe and needle.

A: What was he doing? Heroin?

K: Heroin, oh yah. And they took him off the list, because he had volunteered to go to Korea, because he figured the stuff over there was so easy to get. And they put me on the

list. I was the next on the list. So they called me and said, “You’re going to Korea” you know, and so fine. But that’s how, that’s how I got on, on the list to Korea.

A: Now when you went into the service was this the first time that you had been around lots and lots of black people?

K: No. Um, when my, most of my sisters, when they became of age moved out of Lowell and moved into Boston.

A: Okay.

K: And when I was going to high school there wasn’t (--) When I was going to high school you could draw a circle around Lowell, a thirty-mile circle, and taking Cambridge and Boston out, and I knew every black girl in that circle, you know.

A: Umhm. Umhm.

K: And so I was very active in the NAACP Youth Group, and that was another reason. But I used to go to Boston weekends and hang a little, stay with my sister, and I had all of my black friends in Boston that I used to hang out with.

A: Okay.

K: So I (--)

A: So you really had to go to Boston to have that sense of community in a way?

K: Yes. And the sense of you know, being able to look at a young lady and say, “Would you like to go to the movies?” You know, and not feel that you’re overstepping your, you know, the ethnic line, you know. So.

A: Did you ever ask another person out from Lowell?

K: Oh, being black in Lowell was a very interesting experience, because back in those days at the Morey School, Morey School was so, the Jews were here, the Catholics were here, and the Protestants were here.

A: At the Highlands?

K: At the Highland School. (A: Okay) And neither one of them liked each other, and I was the only black kid there.

A: Okay. So I learned right away you know, to stay, stay neutral. And that worked out fantastic, because I was very friendly with the Jews, all my Jewish friends. And I used to go to Saint Margaret’s Friday night to the dances. (A: Really) And being black, and very shy, I knew all the priests, and they all called me Ken. And I would stand there very

shy and the girls would come up and ask me to dance, you know? (A: Really. Okay) Yah. And being a Protestant I used to play at the (--) But I was buddy, buddy with the Protestants. I played you know, in the basketball league, the YMCA church league, and I played softball in the softball league. So I just think that I had the best of all the worlds because I was neutral. So, and I remember, I remember graduation, when I graduated from high school, you know how you go out afterwards? (A: Yah) I had no problem getting a date, you know. (A: Okay) I just felt that I prefer, I prefer to try and stay in my own ethnic circle you know, at the time.

A: Yah. Yah. Now when you say Catholics in the Highlands, was it predominantly Irish?

K: Not really.

A: No? Okay. Was there French Canadians, and ?

K: Now let's see. There's ah, now I'm thinking about it, Beatrice O'Connor, Janet Murray, I guess there were an awful lot of Irish out there, yah.

A: Okay. Okay.

K: Yup. Like I said, it was, I just, I just, that was just an interesting [unclear]. I think my mother and father raised me to be you know, "Love thy neighbor" type of thing.

A: Yah, yah.

K: And so we, I never really, they never taught us how to hate. (A: Umhm. Umhm) And it's even, now my sisters are starting to pass, they're starting to leave me now, but whatever it is, an occasion, the whole family is still together, you know. And it's, my nieces and nephews now are the same way, it's all one big happy family. And that's what, that's one of the things, the foundation that my mother and father laid for this whole family. And you get to the point that I, we'd have a party and we invite other people in, in Boston, and they say, "How can this family get along so well together?" Because that's the way my father and mother raised us, you know.

A: So when you went to Boston where did you guys hang out down there?

K: I went to Roxbury, [Unclear], [Unclear] Theater on Sunday afternoon.

A: Okay, any good places to go dancing and clubbing?

K: I was too young for that.

A: You were. Okay.

K: Yes. I'm seventeen, eighteen years old. Take the (--) Couldn't even drive. Took the train in. (A: Okay) And my father was the same way. My father belonged to the Professional Businessmen's Club in Boston, another black organization. (A: Okay) And Saturday, I worked Saturday morning in the machine shop, and we'd both get dressed up. And sometimes I'd get a ride into Boston, [unclear] see up going into the club, you know.

A: Okay.

K: So it's, and it was, like I said, it was a nice social event. At that time they were opening up the schools on Saturday night, the gyms, and you went and played basketball. Getting the kids off the street type of thing. (A: Sure. Sure) And this young man that I was very friendly with, and his sister too, Terry Elliot, he loved to play basketball. So Saturday and Friday night we were out playing basketball, doing guy things you know, things like that rather than nightclubbing. And I don't think I, I really wasn't into the alcohol either at that time, you know.

A: So you were in Texas and you got the word you were going to Korea.

K: Right.

A: How did you feel?

K: You know, I'm a conformist you know. You're going to do this, so you do it, you know. And it was a good experience. Like I said, I was only, I was drafted and the 4<sup>th</sup> of July I crossed the International Dateline. So I had two 4<sup>th</sup> of July's, okay. And that January I was getting discharged. So I was, I wasn't over there that long. (A: Okay) You know, December 20, Christmas I was on my way home, you know.

A: Okay. Okay. So what did you do when you went there?

K: Again, the Wingood, they (--) I went, when I was in the service I went to school in Fort Mosk, Kentucky for Armored Recognizance. (A: Okay) And the worst MOS you can have in the service. And but they didn't care about what your MOS was. They took the first group from A to F in this infantry outfit. From F [unclear], and by the time they got down to the W's, I ended up in an anti-aircraft outfit. (A: Okay) 15 AAA. So you know, and that was, we had the, they had the guns right up on the front line, but you weren't going out into you know, you weren't, we were just firing then. So it was, it was a little, nice little trip over there, you know. We got shot at and things like that, but you know, [unclear] coming in, things like that, but it was (--)

A: Andy hairy moments?

K: No. No, I can't say that I had any. I, like I said, I had been, I was, there were people being killed around me, you know, when there was water attacks and things like that, but no, no really hairy moments. But I met an awful lot of interesting people. There was, I met, we were stationed one time with the Ethiopians had an outfit over there.

A: Really. Okay. And what was the inter (--)

**Side A ends**  
**Side B begins**

A: You were talking about the Ethiopians in Korea.

K: Yah, and like I said, they didn't like candy. They didn't like American candy. You know how our SGI's, how we got our care package every day. So when they got theirs they'd give it all to me, because they didn't, they didn't eat those type of things, you know, (A: Okay) like that. And they were vicious fighting men. (A: They were) When they would have to go out on patrol they'd leave their guns behind, [chuckles] just take their knife. (A: Really?) Really. And the Korean [unclear] are scared to death of them. So they didn't make (--). And it was interesting, the aid, their aid station, the doctor was a German who fought in World War II as a doctor. (A: Really) And I guess that was enough for him, but that's, he was their doctor over there. There was an awful lot of (--). Like I said, I had a good time over there. We'd be out on the road, and we'd go down to the British section, into their teahouse and have a cup of tea with them, you know. (A: Really) The Turks were there, the Columbians were there, and there was all sorts of, it was the United Nations (A: Sure) and I had a good time. I think you can have a good time anyplace. If you're raised right you can have a good time anyplace you are. Not a good time, enjoy yourself, you know? (A: Yah) You know what I mean.

A: Now you came home December 15<sup>th</sup>, '53?

K: When I got (--). When I got (--). Yes, January. But after I took basic training I came home and got married (A: Okay) June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1951 I got married.

A: Okay. Where did you meet your wife at?

K: Like I said, at the train station. Most, most, most, most black people would go to Boston on the weekends. (A: Yah) And one day my dad and I were down the Lowell Depot getting ready to get on the train to Boston. My wife was fourteen years old. I was seventeen at the time. (A: Yah) And her and her mom and dad were going into Boston to visit people. And that's the first time I met her. (A: Okay) You know (--)

A: Was your father friendly with her parents?

K: I think my father felt the same way I did. At that point in time my mother-in-law and my father started a little social club. (A: Okay) And now I'm like seventeen, eighteen years old, and we had an awful lot of functions together, especially on Middle Street there used to be upstairs there was a hall we used to have dances at, (A: Okay) you know? And it was just a fun, just a social club.

A: Across from Owl Stamp?

K: Yes, up on the second floor.

A: Roger's Pool, upstairs, across the street on the right hand side of Middle Street?

K: Oh no, it was further down. (A: No?) It was further down.

A: Okay.

K: Just where the library is now, there was a hall up there. And like places like that we'd have dances. And that's, I guess that's how I got involved with my wife, because like I said, we'd go to the dances. My dad would come with me. (A: Yah) And now I'm like eighteen, nineteen years old, and he'd make an appearance and I'd drive him home. I'd have the car, you know.

A: Yah. Now tell me what was this Lowell Social Club that they started?

K: My mother (--) I don't know who the officers were, but my mother and my father, and Garfield White, (A: Okay) they were all, and Mrs. White, they were all officers in this club. And they'd just get together and have dances like this, and have other little social functions.

A: Was this for, just for the black people?

K: Just for the black people, right. (A: Okay) We had our own little(--) You know, it's, it's fine to be integrated, but you know, you don't, it's much, you know, you sort of pair off yourself. (A: Sure) And like I said, that's where I met my wife, and I knew most of the other girls there, you know, because you know. Then, like I said, Lowell is, there was an awful, there's an awful lot of minority people in the surrounding towns, like the Chester family from Harvard. (A: Okay) I remember we used to go out there and visit. There were three daughters. One younger than me, one older than me, and one I don't care about, you know. And [they're ready to go out]. And they, and her mother, Mrs. Chester would come to Lowell, you know, to the parties, the dances, and things like that. So it was just sort of a get together and having a good time.

A: Yah. How many blacks do you figure were in Lowell during the time you were growing up?

K: That's very, very hard to tell. I can't, I wouldn't even venture a guess. (A: Okay) I could name families, (A: Sure) you know, but I really (--) And we were, they were, notice how the Greeks were all in this section and little Canada? We were never like that. You know what I mean? (A: Yah) We lived in Ayer City. The Douglas' lived in Ayer City. The Lamberts lived on Kinsman Street. (A: Okay) And then what was his name? The chauffeur, lived over here in this section of town. Dixon, Al Dixon.

A: Where did he live, Centralville?

K: He was living in Centralville, you know, and like I said, and they, everybody had, everybody was doing their own thing. We were socially accepted in the neighborhood. Anything in the neighborhood that was going on, but we, we were (--) That's why, like I said, that's why the NAACP failed, because we all had, everybody had their own other interests. (A: Ummm, ummm, ummm) But yah, that's (--)

A: Now tell us some more about the NAACP, and what do you remember about the (--) You said there was kind of two, two versions of it. The early and then the later?

K: Yes, yes. I (--)

A: What do you know about the earlier one that your father and them help support?

K: See that was before my time. I, I know that I was very active in the youth group, (A: Okay) because I was chasing all the girls. (A: Yup, sure) And we had, we were very, we had a very good youth group. And when things started happening I remember Woolworth's here in Lowell, and when the minorities, the Afro-Americans in the south were not allowed to sit at the counters, I remember we, as a matter of fact, the youth group picketed the Woolworth's here in Lowell.

A: Really?

K: Yes. (A: Okay) And the youth group, because the adults didn't want to have anything to do with it. You know, most of the adults, they had a nice home, they had a decent job, and so they, the bigotry and prejudice that was all around them sort of shielded them. And they, and it was more, mainly the youth group that picketed. Like I say, we had our picture in the paper. We had petitions and things like that. (A: Really) Oh yah. Yah. We, we tried to participate as much as we could in anything. If we didn't have the problem here in Lowell with the Woolworth's, but you know, we were aware of what was going on in the South at the time.

A: Yah. Yah. Interesting. Did you ever suffer and discrimination, or prejudice around here?

K: Yes, everybody has, you know. You can't, you can't, you just can't single one ethnic group out from another, because I know that most of the companies that I've worked with, and I've only worked with a few, either the Masons, or the Knights controlled them. You know, like (A: Really) oh yah. And if you were a Knight you really didn't want to work at this company, you know. (A: Really) Oh!

A: What are some examples of that?

K: I worked at Sylvania Electric (A: Okay) as a machine designer. (A: Yah) And I remember all the managers there were all Masons. (A: Really) I remember one young man came in to apply for a job and in this pocket he had a Knight's ring, in this pocket he

had a Masonic ring, because he wanted to see which way the weather was fired before he put the, put the ring on. [Chuckling]

A: So the Knights of Columbus?

K: The Masons, Masons, there are Masons there.

A: And these were the Yankees and the Protestants?

K: You got it. You got it. Yup. And the Masons controlled the Watertown Arsenal.

A: They did?

K: Yup. I didn't (--) That was very subtle. That was very, very subtle, but I, like I said, I've never been, I've never been involved in either one of the groups.

A: Yah. Yah. What were some of the companies that the Knights?

K: I can't, I never worked for one. (A: Okay) I worked at General Radio.

A: Where was that?

K: In Concord, Massachusetts. (A: Okay) It was started, one of the first electronic outfits that was started in 1915. (A: Oh wow) And I was the first black they hired, okay, in 1965. And every October the vice-president took all the Masons out to dinner until Val Williams came to work. Val Williams was a black Mason. And one day at the luncheon one of my very good friends [unclear] said, "Oh, by the way, how come Val Williams wasn't?" And they all went "What?" And that was the last time they ever went out to dinner, because they didn't want to invite this black guy. No, because one of the main things was you know, all the Masons got to know you, inviting each one to their home, not their homes, their lodges and things like that. (A: Sure) And they couldn't invite him to their lodge.

A: Because some of the lodges wouldn't even accept him?

K: No, they wouldn't, that's true.

A: Now where was he a Mason, here in Lowell?

K: No. All the Prince Hall Lodge in Boston.

A: Prince?

K: Hall Lodge in Boston.

A: And was that a black lodge?

K: All black lodge. It's still going strong.

A: Oh really? Okay.

K: Yes, right up in, right up in Grove Hall. (A: Okay) In fact I got my father's Masonic ring in my jewelry box.

A: Okay. Your father was a Mason?

K: My father was a Mason.

A: And belonged to that down in Boston?

K: And belonged, oh yes! (A: Okay) And that should (-- To give you an idea (-- Like I said, I was very active in Lowell High School. (A: Yah) And all the young Protestant boys all wanted to become Demolay. (A: Okay) And I was never baptized. And I remember one evening I went over to Reverend Hiley's and he baptized me, you know, just he and I, and I had a piece of paper. So I could join the Demolay. And everybody was looking forward to becoming a Demolay, all the activities, and then they were all going to become Masons. And I stood back and I said, "Fine. I can become a Demolay, because I know other black young men that are in it, but you know, as soon as I graduated from high school I'm out. (A: Why?) Because to date there are no black Masons in Lowell (A: Really), or in any, or any of the at that time. So it's a, like I say, that's why I didn't join the Demolay. I said, "Why? I can only go this far and then." So I didn't join. Oh yah, there was always things like that going on in Lowell. Yup.

A: Now what else did the (-- Now you said that the NAACP grew after awhile?

K: In '46 we became the Merrimack Valley Branch, (A: Okay) in Lowell, Lawrence and Haverhill, (A: Okay) and it became very active. We, most companies didn't realize the power of a national organization. I was, like I said, I was very active especially in housing. Black people couldn't get apartment, and I would, until I became well-known I'd go down and apply for an apartment, call them up and you know, and just as soon as they saw me there would be some excuse. And then we had proof that there was something going on. And like I said, when all the real estate, all the bigots in the real estate business knew me. I had, I couldn't do it anymore, you know.

A: So where were the apartments that you?

K: Mainly in the Highlands.

A: In the Highlands.

K: I never got too much on this side, the other side of the river. (A: Yah) But I lived, I lived up in Belvi (-- After I got married I lived up in Belvidere.

A: At the house you're still at right now?

K: No, no. I lived at (--) My mother and father-in-law owned a house on 18 Pleasant Street. (A: Okay) And then my wife and I had an apartment on Boylston Street right across from Shedd Park (A: Okay) at that time, before we bought. But there was an awful lot of apartments that weren't available to us. (A: Really) And so like I said, I was, I was one of the gun-ho and "Oh yah, come on, look at the house," you know? After [unclear] what I saw, I was useless anymore for that, but that's always been going on. And also the, also going into, I remember going into Raytheon, getting, and wanted to know how come, this is before affirmative action. It was just in the beginning. And it's like my company, when they were interviewing black people after I got in there, they'd ask me to come down and talk to them, help them you know, to get the job, because maybe they weren't quite qualified.

A: Yah, okay.

K: You know, and so before that I, like I said, when I got out of the service I worked at the Watertown Arsenal. (A: Okay) And then they had a reduction in force. (A: Oh really) They were closing it down. We were making, they were making me atomic cannon and things like that in the 50's, getting ready for the next war. And when things started dying down they started, they started (--) And I was a qualified machinist, but I got a reduction in force. And I remember with another friend of mine, Caucasian, going out looking for a job. He got laid off the same time I did. They gave us thirty days.

A: Oh that was it, huh?

K: Oh yah. And um, I remember going to, my father had a very good friend that worked for Raytheon, and he told him, told him that there was, that they're looking for machinists at Raytheon.

A: Where was that? In Andover?

K: That was in Lowell, South Lowell.

A: Okay.

K: And he and I went there and the guy come walking out and took one look at us, and there wasn't any jobs. He suggested we go to Bedford Raytheon. You know, and that type of thing. And then we got the word that Salem, Massachusetts, Sylvania, was hiring machinists. And so we both went out there and applied for a job. And I am qualified at the time, and it was very interesting. Being very sensitive to things like this, I remember the head of the, the head of the machine shop said, "Will you wait a minute?" And he had to sit in the lobby, and he went into the plant manager to get permission to hire me. And the plant manager, you know, they were very, very subtle. You know, the plant managers come walking out and they're talking and looking around, you know, and I'm

very aware of things like that. And just as soon as they went back in, he come out and said, "When do you want to start?" You know.

A: That was good.

K: [Unclear]. But like I said, you know, they, they, you feel like you got two heads. And it's the same, like I said, it's the same thing at General Radio. They didn't have any, they were, they started in 1915 right aside of MIT. And there was an awful lot of black people in Cambridge. (A: Sure) And when they moved to Concord, Massachusetts they had not hired any black people.

A: Um, um, yah.

K: And when I (--) Most people, when you go to apply for a job at a company like that, you go through personnel, and then you go to the, your immediate boss who interviews you. (A: Yah) When I got there I was interviewed by the vice president, the plant manager, and the guy that I was going to be working with. And when I accepted the (--) When I went there to work everybody in the place new there was a black man working, you know, big deal you know, like I had two heads. (A: Yah) And like I said, I went there as a tool designer and I was qualified. I did my, you know. So, but there was still that, that's (--) So it's (--) And that's, like I said, I went from Watertown Arsenal to Sylvania, to General Radio, and those were the only three jobs I've held.

A: Really. So you worked at General Radio for quite awhile?

K: For twenty-five years till I (--) (A: Okay) and Sylvania, ten. (A: Okay) You know, and that was my whole working career. (A: Wow) Then I left Sylvania for a better job you know, but (--)

A: At General (--)

K: At General Radio. Gen Rad, it was Gen Rad up until October. Teradyne bought them out. (A: Okay) And so you know, and when I left there I was a manager of manufacturing engineering.

A: Oh great! Now back to the city, what other issues were happening regarding the NAACP when you were active?

K: Like I said, mainly, mainly police brutality. In fact, in fact you know, they (--) Oh boy, was it two or three years ago the [Unclear] were arrested? (A: Yes) And they came to us. (A: They did) And we, every single day they were on, that trial was, there was at least two or three of us in the courtroom. (A: Okay) And we talked to their, their lawyers were from Boston, and we, we talked to the lawyers. The lawyers new we were there and made a point to make sure that we you know, that we were there and we were representing the NAACP. And they were found not guilty. (A: They were?) In fact they're suing the city. And after they were found not guilty, they said, "Now, you know,

we're going to sue the city and we want you to help us. We can't, we don't want to help you. We're not interested in that. We're only interested in your civil rights and they were violated.

A: Okay. Okay. Yah. (K: You know, and) What was the, what was the incident about?

K: The (--) I hate to talk about ethnics, but that Asian cop who they were, they were double parked over wherever they lived.

A: In Centralville I think.

K: Yah, in Centralville. And they were, one was visiting the other. And they asked him to move the van so that that guy could get his car up to go you know, and they gave him a hard time. And so you know, they were plain and simple, yet we want to move our car. And that Asian cop really jumped all over him.

A: The Asian cop had doubled parked?

K: The, it was either the cruiser, or one of them, one of the police cars, yes, and all he wanted is to move it so that they could their car and drive, go on about their business. And there was nothing that (--) They were there called for another problem that was already solved, and they were just standing there. You know, they could have moved the care without any problem. (A: Yah, yah) And when they asked several times the cops beat them up. (A: Really) And you know, really, really gave them a hard time. They were, they were (--) It was interesting. I was in the courthouse and I usually have a notepad to take notes. (A: Sure) And the clerk of course come over and said to me, "The judge doesn't allow anybody to take notes in the courthouse." "Oh fine," you know. I put my things away. The guy aside of me had a notebook like this, writing like crazy. So during the intermission I went up to the clerk. I said, "Hey, what's the story. How come he can do all the writing and I can't?" He said, "He's internal affairs in the police department." He said, "He can do anything he wants." You know? But they, like I said, you could see the jury looking at them, you know, because they, they were sincere. They, most of the [unclear] that are in this city, every single one of them has a high school diploma. (A: Yah) And a lot of them have college degrees. And one of these guys that arrested is a student at U Lowell, you know, and studying [unclear] You know darn well that he's not, you know, they're not going to give the cops any trouble. (A: Right) You know, and it was just the case of you know, just the cops overstepping their bounds. But like I say, we were there and that was another nice experience, because noontime I was invited to their home and shared their type ethnic food. Of course it was another experience.

A: Do you remember discrimination at the Golden Nugget? I think it was a bar on Market Street.

K: Vaguely, (A: Okay) but I would not want to comment on that. I can't, I don't remember.

A: Okay. How about some of the other people that were involved in the NAACP, um, Richard Greene? Did you know him?

K: No.

A: How about Reverend Julius Mitchell?

K: Reverend yah, Julius, yes, but he's from Lawrence.

A: Oh is that where he was from?

K: He's from Lawrence. His church was in Lawrence.

A: Okay. All right.

K: In Lowell it was Reverend Fred Faulcon. (A: What was his name?) Faulcon. (A: Faulcon?) Yah, F U, F A U L C O N.

A: Oh, like the bird, Faulcon?

K: Yes, up on Main Street. He was, he was one of the past presidents. (A: Okay) Godfrey Hall, who is still alive, was, he lived up and Inland Street.

A: Okay, in the Highlands.

K: Was another, was another past president. Ah, Mr. Finnegan and his wife from Billerica, and they go way, way back, they were very active in the (--) And most of these people were involved in the NAACP. Sam Craten was the first president. (A: Yah) You know, but the (--) Yah, I don't remember Mr. Greene at all.

A: So Mr. Faulcon, he was a Reverend?

K: Yes.

A: And he had, he had his own parish?

K: He was a Reverend, but he never had a church. He was a janitor. He was down here at Lowell YMCA, (A: Okay) but he was, you know, they called him Reverend Faulcon. (A: Okay) And he was very active in the Emmanuel Baptist Church. You know where Manchester Street off of Gorham Street? (A: Yah) The next street down.

A: Blossom?

K: Blossom Street, there's a little church there, Emmanuel Baptist Church. (A: Okay) And [Dighton Dougland] also, he also graduated from Lowell High School at the same time I did. He was also very, very active in the church. In fact it was, he received his Doctorate in Theology. (A: Wow) He's back in his country now, but he spent all of his life in Africa as a missionary.

A: Really. What's his name?

K: Dighton Dougland. (A: Okay) And his mother was a Faulcon. (A: Okay) Okay, and she, she just passed away a couple of years ago at 101.

A: Oh wow!

K: And she was a mid-wife (A: Oh wow!) here in Lowell. And at her funeral quite a few of the people there were, she brought into this world.

A: No kidding. No kidding.

K: But they were very active. Those were the type of people that were very active in the NAACP, in 1946 and on.

A: Yah. Okay. Now you were a member of the Human Relations Committee for the city back in the early 70's, right?

K: Yah, I was involved in an awful lot of committees, yes.

A: Do you remember that committee and what you guys were doing?

K: Very little.

A: Okay. You were doing very little, or you remember very little?

K: I remember very little, because we were doing very little. Most people weren't (--) Most of the complaints like I said, we were still getting them. I was at the NAACP, we have an office, the NAACP has an office in Lawrence. (A: Okay) And I was in the office the other (--) I'm a secretary by the way.

A: Are you?

K: And I was, I was in the office yesterday and there was still people commenting and complaints. (A: Regarding?) Jobs. I have [Wontico] was a, there's an awful lot of Kenyans in Lowell now too.

A: Is there?

K: There's three churches, and one of them over here in Centralville has 300 people in it [unclear]. (A: Really?) Yah, Wontico lives in Milford, New Hampshire, and she is, I'm trying to the NAACP to help her. The government is after her for visa fraud. (A: Okay) But that type of thing, and it's still going on. And there's still, the cops are more subtle about it, but we're still getting you know. Now this younger generation, some of these kids are so arrogant you know, that it does, it doesn't, you can't always completely blame the law enforcement.

A: Sure. Sure. Did you remember Charlie Gallagher, the city manager?

K: Yes.

A: What did you think of him? Any relations with him?

K: No, no relations at all with any. Openly and in public they were all very, very supportive, (A: Yah) and of anything we did. And over the years we found that one or two people going in and sitting down with anybody where there's a problem, and you're laying all of your cards on the table usually work very, very well.

A: It did, okay.

K: And of course they know that you have the backing of a national organization, and most people don't want any bad publicity. And if you can lay the facts on the line, and tell them what's going on, and we don't, the NAACP still, they don't take anything until it's notarized. [Unclear] what the problem is in writing and sign your name to it, and have it notarized. (A: Okay. Okay) So we got something behind us. So we you know, and most, most problems are solved very, very simply just sitting down and talking.

A: Yah, I see.

K: Even with the police, and the police brutality and things like that, it's very, most of it don't want the, you know, would rather solve the problems. If they've made a mistake, or there was something involved, they could correct it, they will.

A: Now a lot of black families lived at Bishop Markham Housing at one time, right?

K: Umhm. Oh yes. Yah.

A: Do you remember the incidents that happened down there?

K: No, I wasn't involved with him at the time, (A: Okay) but I know I had an awful lot of black friends that lived at Bishop Markham.

A: Yah.

K: I'm just thinking about one particular young lady, but yah, and they used to have a club right across the street from the Tower's News. The Elks, the Black Elks had a little club going there for awhile.

A: The Black Elks?

K: Yes. (A: Really) You don't, you don't see (--) If you go to the Elks out here you don't, back there then in the 60's, you didn't see any minorities that they were involved in that. And so they had their own little after, they had their own little place up there that was a (--)

A: Okay. And did you ever go there?

K: One or two times, like 2:00 in the morning out bouncing around, you know, and I'd go in and have a drink and see what's going on, but I was, I was sort of on the other side of the track. I don't know, they never (--) Most of the, most of the black community really didn't have much to do with me. I'm sort of a snob. I'm a loner. No, you know, I don't, I'm not very social and either with any groups you know, and so that sort of puts me off on the, on the outskirts, which I have no problem with that at all.

A: Now a lot of people used to hang around at Homer's Café, right?

K: That's right.

A: What kind of a place was that?

K: Never been in there.

A: Never?

K: No. Like I said, I'm, you know, and there was a couple, I remember a young man gets killed down there because you know, a couple of white kids walked in there and you know, thought they were going to take on the world. But I never, like I said, I never, I never hung out in there. I, see, I try not to segregate myself, and that's why I'd never been to visit all of these beautiful black churches in the area. I just feel that that's, that, you're segregating yourself, and you don't, you don't know how to deal with the community if you do that. And so I just sort of never got involved with things like that, you know.

A: How about the black church that was up on Howard Street?

K: Yes, that's the [Choates] had that little (--) He's the one, that's the one in Pelham, New Hampshire now. (A: Okay) He's a Bishop now. (A: Is he?) Yah. And I don't know if he has a high school diploma. And Jules was my friend. And Jules I know graduated in sixth grade, and he was the Reverend. He was a Reverend up there. He passed away about two or three years ago.

A: I see.

K: Jules Choate. But the Choate family runs that church. That's another way the population, black population in Lowell started. One member of the family would come to the city and he'd like it. And then he'd (-- Like my, well like my wife's family, my mother came, my mother-in-law came here and she brought her sister, and she brought her brother. (A: Okay) And then, then her, her sister-in-law's husband was in the service, the Plumbers, and they still live here in Lowell. (A: Okay) And then their kids come, you know, and that's how. And it's the same thing with the Choates. The Choates, and they bring their husbands, and wives, and family. So now you got a Choate community, you know?

A: Okay.

K: But they don't, we don't clutter like you know, they, like I said, they're at Bishop Markham, and Shaughnessy Terrace, and around. (A: All around) All around, umhm.

A: How about some other families around town? When I was a kid we used to go get our furniture repaired at Mr. Anderson's somewhere in the Acre. Remember him?

K: No, no. Don't remember Mr. Anderson.

A: How about Slim [Gayard]?

K: No. No.

A: He was a famous singer. He could sing Greek songs and everything.

K: No. There must be (-- That's a new one too.

A: The Craytons, Sam Crayton was a good guy, huh?

K: Oh Sam Crayton. Oh yah. His oldest daughter Mattie was in my NAAC Youth Group with me. I ran the youth group which (-- And then the next two babysat for us all the time, my wife and I. (A: Oh yah. Yah) Facythia, oh yah. Like I said, I was very friendly with Mr. Crayton.

A: What did he do for work?

K: He's another one that (-- A&P Corrugated Box Company was from New Jersey. (A: Okay) And when they moved here they brought him along. (A: Oh really?) Yes.

A: Okay.

K: And Garfield White is the same way. In fact, when A&P Corrugated left here and moved out to Gardner, Garfield White went with them out to Gardner. He still lived in Lowell, but he was commuting back and forth weekends.

A: Okay. Really, wow.

K: But that's, that's how. And Mr. Crayton was involved in an accident, lost a couple of pieces of his finger. And that's when he started his own little (--) I guess he got a few dollars out of it, enough to start his own business.

A: What did he do for his business?

K: Painting.

A: Okay.

K: Yah, he was a painting contractor. He did work for, in the 60's if you were black and you had business, you were going to get hired. (A: Really) He used to go around painting Exxon Gasoline Stations, and some of the big companies around here, he'd go in and paint them.

A: Because they wanted to give some money to the minority owned businesses?

K: They wanted to hire minority practice, yes. Umhm.

A: Interesting. Now this Garfield White, he was an influential guy in the community?

K: He was very active in the community, very active in the NAACP, he and his wife. (A: Yah) His two daughters were in my youth group. They moved to California.

A: Okay.

K: Oh yah, he was, he was active. Yup.

A: Any characters in the black community?

K: Oh, of course. In fact Rufus Simmons is still around.

A: Rufus Simmons?

K: Umhm. He (--)

A: Does he hang around downtown?

K: Could be.

A: I see a tall, skinny guy hanging around downtown all the time.

K: He's old though, he's in his 70's now. (A: Yah) He used to work at the foundry. (A: Okay) He lived on Howard Street.

A: He did, okay.

K: And he used to have, if you wanted a drink at 3:00 in the morning you'd go by his house (A: Yah?), yah, a little after hours drink. That's where all the drunks would go to drink. And Sergeant Carter was a, had one right across the street from [DKV] Club on Back Central Street. He had an after hour joint. You want a bottle you could go there anytime of day, and he was a Sergeant, a retired Sergeant in the service. So he'd go to Fort Devens and buy his booze really, really cheap.

A: And make some money from there.

K: And make bucks, oh yah. (A: I see) Oh yes. But like you said, it was (-- ) I sort of just stayed out of home bodying. I wasn't very, very social I guess is the word.

A: Now you've been active in a number of other community activities?

K: Yah, yes.

A: Tell us about some of them.

K: I was on the Governor's Council, June Wright's Council way back. When I worked at, when I first started (-- ) When [Unclear] Putman [McAway], you know, [Two words unclear] and Putman was a black lawyer Republican from Methuen. Her father owned a pig farm in Methuen, and she was very active in the Republican Party. (A: Yah) And when Governor Volpe was in power, she was head of MCAD. (A: Okay) And her and I were buddies. (A: Oh yah) And she got me on this human rights, representing this area. (A: Okay) To the point that I went to my, when I was working at Genrad, General Radio at the time, and they allowed me to take the afternoon off to go into the State House to work on this committee. (A: Yah) And I was, I was Greater Lowell Mental Health for a while. I was on the International Institute for way back when. (A: Really) I was very, I was one of the past presidents of the Lowell Day Nursery, (A: Oh really?) Maggie Joy.

A: Okay. What year were you president over there.

K: Oh boy.

A: Roughly.

K: 60, in the 60's. '68, in '67, '68.

A: Were you active when they, when the city was threatening to take the building for urban renewal?

K: No. I was there when I was, I was very active when the, when the architect put the addition on. (A: Okay) You know, I was involved with that. Joe Donahue was the, he stepped down as the president and they made me president. (A: Oh wow!) And all the president did was do what Maggie Joy wanted. (A: Really?) Oh yah. Oh yah, she was, she ran that place and really developed it. But like I said, I was on (--) How I met her was on CTI when they first started out with, even before what's the fellow that got arrested?

A: Leo Desjarlais?

K: Desjarlais, I was in there before Desjarlais.

A: Okay. Okay.

K: We had, we started up Merrimack Valley, MVAA, Merrimack Achievement Association, Jules and I. And we were, we were sort of competing with CTI.

A: Oh really? Yah.

K: Yah, we had, right up there aside of the Towers News, Burke's, the Burke's had a store there that's now on Market Street. (A: Yes) We bought that building and we renovated it, and we were, we planned on using that place for the kids to come to help after school. And we had, when we got it started, the kids from, the students from ULowell, it wasn't ULowell at the time, were coming down and helping tutoring the kids.

A: Oh wow!

K: And things like that. And it was, and but we were, we're competing with CTI. And we sort of lost out, you know, because, but we weren't looking for government funding at the time. We were looking for, we were looking for the community participation, and it's (--)

A: So is the building still there?

K: No. That's the parking lot now aside of (A: Tower's) the dirty Tower's, because you could (--) There was about this much distance. You could walk up the flight of stairs at Tower's at the time, and there was a window there and you could step out of the window right on to the roof of (--) (A: Oh okay) So it, yah, that was one of our dreams that sort of petered out. But for there then I was on the CTI Board for a while.

A: Okay. What did you think of Leo Desjarlais?

K: It wasn't the personal touch there, everything was strictly business and professionalism, you know? (A: Yah, yah.) And [unclear] weren't doing the things too many, too much by the, my personal opinion, too many things too much by the numbers and not from the heart type of thing.

A: Okay. Okay.

K: But they, they were successful. They were getting things accomplished here (A: Right) in Lowell, you know, with all the money and things that they were receiving.

A: What happened to him anyways?

K: I lost touch. I just, when I got out, when we lost, when we lost that building and they were, they you know, I just, I just stepped away from the whole thing, they, they were running it and they were accomplishing, or they were trying to accomplish some of the goals that we had, that I just took a break from it.

A: I see. What did they, did you guys combine?

K: They hired several minorities and they were bringing in professionals to do it, but they sort of just phased us out. (A: I see. I see) Because like Jules Choate, like I, it was like I said, a sixth or eighth grade level education was running the show. (A: Really, yah) You know, and they were just, there was just too much professionalism on their part for us to really to compete with them.

A: Now he was close to Tsongas, wasn't he, Leo Desjarlais?

K: Tsongas. I don't know. I guess, like I said, I didn't, I really didn't want to, I really didn't get involved with, I stayed away from that type of thing.

A: Now what did you do when you were up with the International Institute?

K: Just on the board.

A: Yah.

K: In the 60's all these different organizations were all strictly Caucasian, and they wanted a little color on the boards. And I always, most, after I, when I, when I was at Sylvania I went in as a machinist, but I ended up as a machine designer. So I had a shirt and a tie. And so that was, that was one of the things. "Well he got a shirt and tie, and it's clean." So I was on, I was invited to be on these boards, you know? (A: Yah, yah) Just for, like I said, just for color. And it helped, because I, I felt an awful lot of people get into positions that they, they needed some sort of a political pull (A: Yah) to get in to, you know. Because I've had, I've had people say, you know, if you need, if you have any problems give me a call. And I could call up you know, anybody and say, "I need some help" for this or that, and the other type of thing.

A: Um, um, interesting. Now so like the Lowell Day Nursery, was that, it was all Caucasian before you came, but was it also a certain, certain ethnic group predominant?

K: The board, the board was mostly your lawyers and doctors (A: Yah), and the upper middle class that were, that were running the Lowell Day Nursery. And like I said, Maggie Joy, the Director, was one of these, I never met another person that was so opened about everything, you know, and just you know. And it was exactly the way she hired, however she was qualified. And the student that she took in, it didn't matter who they were, or what they were, they were all, they were all welcomed in it.

A: Was that considered a Yankee Organizations when you first went on?

K: Oh yes. Oh yes. Oh my goodness yes! Okay, you remember some of these very wealthy ladies in Lowell that were you now that would run the Board coming in, you know. Like I say I didn't (--) Lawyers and (--) But that's the way most of the boards were. It was a social thing to be on the board of this or that, you know?

A: Yah. Now you've been active in the Community Foundation for a couple of years now, huh?

K: Yes. Yes. Yes, like I said, they needed a little color. That's it, you know, and I represent the NAACP. (A: Okay) And then again when I was on the CTI Board I was representing the NAA, (A: I see) because there's not that many active members of the NAACP here in Lowell at this time. (A: No?) No. They support us from afar, but most of the membership is coming from the Haverhill/Lawrence area, (A: Okay) Methuen.

A: Okay. Well any final thoughts about your time living, working here in the city?

K: I, I find that you know, it's, I never left Lowell. I've lived in Lowell all my life, and I've lived in the house I lived in now because I can afford it, but when we were, back in 1965 when we purchased the house there was a petition going around up here to keep us out of the neighborhood. (A: Really?) Really.

A: What was the makeup of the neighborhood back then?

K: There was a doctor living across the street, and just regular people. You know, there was a school teacher that moved out of the house. Just regular you know, like the woman aside of us, her husband worked at Hanscom Field with my wife at the time worked at Hanscom Field, you know. And that was the thing. My wife graduated from Lowell High School. I graduated from Lowell High School, and when they went around with the petition most of the people in the neighborhood knew us. And you know, "Who cares!" you know, type of thing.

A: So a lot of people didn't sign the petition?

K: They, it failed. It completely failed. And the guy that signed the petition is still right there across the street, two houses up.

A: Really?

K: And you know, like I said, he's, he has his thing. You know, he's very friendly now. If I'm out working he'll come over and say "hi," and we'll talk, but I still remember. But I have absolutely no (--)

A: What did he do for work?

K: He's a tailor.

A: Tailor? I see.

K: In fact people are still bringing their clothes for him to you know.

A: Does he work out of the house? (K: Yah) Oh, okay.

K: He must be in his 80's now. I think he just does a little piddling around.

A: I see. I see.

K: But I find that most of the, most of the things in Lowell, people are you know, just regular ordinary people, and if you mind your business and you take care of your business and stay out of theirs, you know, everything is wonderful!

A: Yah. Yah. You think overall Lowell is an accepting community, and historically so?

K: Yes. With all the different ethnic backgrounds and all you know, and reading of what's going way back to the mill girls, all the different people that have, other ethnic groups that have come to Lowell, you know, you're just part of the, just part of the flow of people. And it's, in regards how, people are always going to be, they're always going to find somebody, but when 80% of the people are friendly and understanding you don't have any problems with the other 20%, because you just fade back into the woodwork.

A: Great. Well thanks very much.

**Interview ends.**