

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH HARVEY GRIMSLEY

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

SHAUN ILLINGWORTH

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TRANSCRIPT BY

JESSE BRADDELL

Shaun Illingworth: This begins an interview with Mr. Harvey Grimsley on May 21, 2019, in West Orange, New Jersey, with Shaun Illingworth, and also in attendance are ...

Charles Coles: Dr. Reverend Charles Coles.

SI: Okay, and ...

Jim Savage: Jim Savage.

SI: All right. Thank you very much for having us here, Mr. Grimsley. It is a great pleasure to meet you and interview you. To begin, can you tell me where and when you were born?

Harvey Grimsley: I was born in Halesburg, Alabama, March 15, 1922. [Editor's Note: Halesburg, Alabama was founded in 1885. The town is currently called Haleburg; it is unknown when this change was made.]

SI: Okay. Before the interview, we were talking a little bit about your family. Could you tell me, maybe starting with your mother's side of the family, a little bit about the Irvins?

HG: Let's see, see if I can count, count that fast.

SI: Okay.

HG: My mother, Penola Irvin, is the second child born into the Irvin Family. She was born in 1900. I'm not sure of her exact month, but I knew she's born in 1900. She's the second child born, and I want to say out of twelve children born in that family.

SI: Wow.

HG: I counted kind of rapidly, you know?

SI: That is okay. I should have mentioned before, since we are going to have a transcript of the interview, if you cannot remember numbers or dates or names, do not worry about it. We can fix it later on.

HG: But, she's the second oldest child in the Irvin Family. I can't remember her birthday, but I know she's the second oldest child--one, two, three, four, what is that, four daughters? and one, two, three, four, five, six boys. That's the number of children born in that family. I have an uncle younger than me. So, my mother and my grandmother were having babies at the same time, and that's not too rare. They are very rare, I should say.

SI: Did your mother ever tell you anything about her early life in Alabama?

HG: No, we didn't have time, after moving out of the South, to talk too much about childhood, because most of us coming out of the South had to pull together our work in order to bring the family back together.

SI: Sure.

HG: The family was scattered for--oh, it's part of that migration that came right after the Civil War and World War I, and then, mainly in World War II, where blacks fled the South in numbers, headed North, into Canada and Detroit, and East, into Newark, Philadelphia, New York City, even Massachusetts.

Detroit seemed to be a big one where they migrated into also, and I probably have relatives in all those cities that I mentioned. That's how widely the family became scattered, because I hear rumors that my father even had children in Newark, New Jersey, as well as in Detroit [and] Illinois. [Editor's Note: From 1910 to 1970, African Americans moved from the Jim Crow South to the cities in the northern and western United States for jobs and other opportunities, an era now known as the Great Migration.]

SI: Were the Grimsleys also from Alabama?

HG: Everybody was out of Halesburg, Alabama.

SI: You mentioned that your father was in the service during World War I.

HG: Yes. He was drafted in World War I, and just kind of became a wayward person. He moved about. Wherever he went and hung his hat, that's where he was, three cities mainly--Detroit, Newark, and, well, Bloomfield. We stayed there a year, trying to get his family back together, but I hear I have relatives right down the hill from Green Hill [Mr. Grimsley's retirement community], Newark, New Jersey. I've talked to some of them on the telephone, but I've never been able to connect. So, they're still there, I guess. Now, how close are they to the rest of the Grimsleys? I don't know.

SI: You also shared your earliest memory before. Oh, well, Dr. Coles would like to say something. Go ahead.

CC: Shaun, the incident that created the energy for them to leave Alabama was about a gentleman called--was it Piggy?--and with him taking his goods to be, cotton to be, weighed. Harvey, why don't you share that with him?

SI: Yes.

CC: So, that he can hear what stimulated your family to migrate.

HG: Okay, right. Shaun, I don't know whether you like to read Black history or not.

SI: Yes, I do.

HG: But, one of the finest books I've ever read is by Isabel Wilkerson, called *The Warmth of Other Suns*, *The Warmth of Other Suns*. [Editor's Note: *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic*

Story of America's Great Migration is a 2010 book by Isabel Wilkerson, author and Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist.] It just, after reading that book, made me feel better in understanding why we fled the South.

I imagine the date must've been--I think I was four years of age when the incident happened, that my grandfather [Cupid Alexander Irvin] had taken a load of cotton to the weigh station to sell. He had taken one load one day and he had come on the next day. He was taking the second load and the second load he took, he'd felt, was larger than the first load of cotton. When they pulled into the weigh station, got off the cart, wagon, so [that] they could weigh the cotton, the man gave, the weigher, gave him a [lower] figure.

He says, politely asked, "Mister, will you please weigh that cotton again?" At that question, he felt the man jumping on him. So, he just reached and grabbed the man's arm as he jumped on him, swung it over his shoulder and put his knee in his chest. He said, "Mister, I came here to sell you my cotton. Now, if you don't want my cotton, just let me go."

Now, the incident happened simply because, every time my grandfather would bring a load, he would ask them to weigh the cotton. They resented it, but they wouldn't say anything to him, except they gave him a name, "Pig." Every time they saw him come, they would say, "Oh, here comes 'Pig' Irvin." Sure enough, when he asked him to reweigh his cotton, I guess the guy couldn't take it anymore and jumped on him.

He just pinned him to the ground and asked him, "Please, let me get out of here." They allowed him to come back home, but, later on that afternoon, Reverend Stratton, who was the known minister in that area, was a Baptist minister, he pulled up in his buggy, came out to greet my grandmother and my grandfather. He says, "Cupid, there's a lot of talk going on in town and your name is being mentioned. What happened in town today?" My grandfather told him.

So, he says, "Well, the one thing I can tell you now--it sounds like it's mighty hot, it's mighty important--if I were you, why don't you go over and spend a couple of days [with] Reverend Neal in Georgia, right across the river? We'll stay in touch and let you know what's going on and when it's safe to come back, when it cools down." My grandfather agreed and got on his horse and said good-bye to his family and his wife, and said he'd stay in touch. They knew where he was, and they'd be sending him the news and he left.

Now, the news did not get any better. It seems as though, whatever was going on--was this an uprising among the Irvin Family and the Ku Klux Klan?--in particular, I guess, but there were other incidents. Like, a young kid, he was fifteen years old, coming home from school, and a pig ran across the road. This fifteen-year-old chased the pig to catch him, but, then, they grabbed him and said he was trying to steal the pig and gave him a whipping and sent him on his way. Incidents like that began to happen.

SI: Okay.

HG: There's another neighbor that knew other white neighbors in the area. Their daughter was on to church one Sunday and just happened to pass--what's his name? oh, Willy Whooton--who's

out in his yard raking something when she passed by going to church. She was walking. He just [said], he politely spoke, "My, you look mighty good this Sunday morning," tipped his hat to her. At eleven o'clock that morning, church dismissed for a hanging and Willy Whooton was hung, but the biggest one was that following Saturday.

Where you enter the center of Halesburg, going to town, there's an oak tree there, and one branch stood out almost across the road. There hung a young Negro man. They didn't know whether he was seventeen or twenty, eyes all bulged and hands handcuffed behind him, hanging from the oak tree leading [to] downtown Halesburg. It just didn't stop.

So, they had a conference and said, "Cupid, I don't think it's wise for you to go back to that place," and that's when they made plans, because they were not only just after Cupid, they looked like they were after other family members. It had become a family feud, in a sense. So, my grandfather just decided, pull up stakes and head North, because he already had an older daughter [there]. His first daughter, Pearl, Pearl Tharps, had moved to Bloomfield, New Jersey. That's where he headed, so [that] he could stay with her, locate a job, and then, send money back to the family, so [that] they could slowly start packing and coming to Bloomfield, New Jersey. So, as fast as they could earn money, they would send the money.

SI: Sure.

HG: And as fast as they could sell whatever was on the farm at that time, too.

SI: Well, let me interrupt--Dr. Coles, go ahead.

CC: Harvey, don't forget to tell him about the time where the Klansmen came to the house, and your grandmother said ...

HG: Oh, yes.

CC: That part is very powerful.

HG: Right, okay. Now, when my grandfather came back from weighing his cotton, that's when the Reverend Stratton pulled in, that afternoon, to tell him he'd better leave. Sure enough, the following morning, just as the dawn was breaking, six men on horses pulled up into my grandfather's front yard, with ropes and torches.

There standing on that porch was his wife, Eliza, [Mary Eliza Henderson Irvin], to greet them, plus seven-year-old Monford Irvin, okay. He was not the youngest son at the time, but he was standing there with his mother. [Editor's Note: Montford Merrill "Monte" Irvin was an African American Major League Baseball leftfielder who lived from 1919 to 2016. He played for the Newark Eagles in the Negro League from 1937 to 1942 and then from 1946 to 1948, his career interrupted by service in the Army during World War II. He then played for the New York Giants from 1949 to 1955 and then the Chicago Cubs in 1956. He won the World Series Championship in 1954.]

SI: Yes.

HG: When they pulled up and they were yelling, "We want Pig. Tell Pig to come on out of that house. We just want to talk to him," my grandmother recognized the voice. So, she says, "Mr. Wilson, my husband left here yesterday afternoon, and I'm still waiting for him to come back."

Hearing his name, Mr. Wilson was so shocked that he reigned the horses and just shouted, "Cupid, we know you're in there. We're going to get you. We're coming back." Okay, reigned the horses, "Come on, men," and all six men rode out of there. So, you knew they were after him.

SI: Wow.

HG: Now, imagine for you to be seven years old and you see six horsemen riding through your yard, carrying torches and ropes.

SI: Wow.

HG: That's not a pleasant sight to see, but that's what he saw. That's just part of their leaving.

CC: Didn't she quote, "Mr. Wilson, please don't burn down our house?"

HG: I'm sorry?

CC: She said, "Please don't burn down our house."

HG: Oh, yes, she pleaded with him. She said, "Mr. Wilson, please don't burn down my house." She says, "I'm waiting for my husband to come back, okay." Then, I guess his being recognized, that stopped them from throwing the torches, I guess, but that's what went on in those days, and then, the hangings, the misidentifications and whatnot.

Otherwise, the Ku Klux Klan was the law. Whoever they decided to kill or maim or whatever, they did, and that's why you had that mass migration during World War I. So, if you ever want to read a good book about the migration of blacks out of the South, *The Warmth of Other Suns* will give you one of the best readings you'll ever read, okay, because I started reading it, I couldn't stop, believe me.

SI: Oh, yes, it is a powerful book. You were about four or five at this time, you said.

CC: Four?

SI: Four?

HG: Yes, I was probably about four years, right.

SI: Okay.

HG: Because Monte was seven at the time, right.

SI: So, your grandfather went to Bloomfield.

HG: He went to stay with his oldest daughter.

SI: Yes.

HG: Pearl Tharps, her name was, and he just slowly, as he found a job, sent money and whatever they could sell, that was left there. Otherwise, the preacher helped him to sell his crop off, pigs, chickens, whatever he had, wagons, whatever it was, and they were sending money also. That's why he had money to send back for whoever was to come next, because, as they came up, different opportunities popped up.

When he moved in with his son-in-law, Tyson Tharps, who had married his oldest daughter, they had another cousin, Aunt Carrie, living in Orange, New Jersey. They decided, this Saturday, to go down to Orange and visit Aunt Carrie, and his son-in-law, Tyson Tharps, put him in the truck that he had at that time, to visit Aunt Carrie. He took his wife with him, down there to meet their cousin.

Sure enough, when they got down there, they started talking, and whoever the man was, that I can't think of right now, just told them that, "If your father's looking for work, Becker's Dairy is looking for somebody to do their horses right now." Now, back in those days, horses pulled the milk wagons. You're too young to remember this, okay. [laughter]

SI: Yes.

HG: They slowly started switching over to trucks, but they needed somebody, right at bedtime, to feed the horses, clean them, do everything, take care of them, because they had wagons constantly going out delivering milk, eggs, butter, whatnot. Now, Becker's Dairy is right at the bottom of this hill here.

SI: Okay.

HG: That's where my grandfather worked for, until--well, not until he died, but almost died, okay--and turned out [to be] one of the best jobs he had, because it fed his family.

SI: Yes.

HG: He got the job, that he went down to the office; luckily, it was opened on a Saturday, somebody was there. He told them what they were looking [for], said, "Well, you're the man we're looking for, take care of our horses and whatnot."

So, you got certain pay. Now, if anything was leftover on those wagons coming back, like eggs, butter, milk and whatnot, he could take home, and, here, he has a family, boys, growing up. Now, plus, he got a salary. Now, was that a good break?

SI: Yes.

HG: So, when they moved into a house in Orange, that's where his children started going to Orange High School. Let's see, Irene Irvin, Irene Slater Irvin, was the first Irvin to graduate from Orange High School, and that must've been 19--what?--had to be around the 1930s, all right. She was the first to enter Orange High School. She had one other brother, was just a year too old to go to school.

SI: Okay.

HG: Then, behind her was Monte, Monte Irvin, entered Orange High School, then, another brother was in there, and then, the youngest brother, Cal Irvin, who was a great basketball player also. They're all famous [in] Orange High School.

SI: Wow.

HG: Then, it just so happens that my brother played football for Orange High School, along with me. So, we fed Orange High School for about--what?--twelve years. [laughter] They had a good running back, a good defense, every year that an Irvin or a Grimsley was there. We made that high school in a sense, and Monte Irvin, today, perhaps is the greatest athlete that ever graduated from that high school. So, did it do us a favor or what was it? They also put him into the Baseball Hall of Fame.

SI: Your uncle.

HG: And they also put up a statue of him in the Orange Park, right down the hill from here. [Editor's Note: In 2006, Orange, New Jersey renamed Orange Park as Monte Irvin Orange Park. In 2016, a statue of Monte Irvin was erected in the park. In 2010, the San Francisco Giants retired Irvin's number, 20. He became a member of the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1973.]

SI: Okay.

HG: Greatest athlete that ever came out of Orange High School.

CC: He made All-American and All-State in three sports; tell him about it, Harvey.

HG: All of them, all of them. His first year in high school--now, let me say this now, after they migrate, how things can be tied together. All of this migration, at the same time, you had--what's that man's name, the one that we just dedicated the field to?

SI: Paul Robeson? [Editor's Note: Paul Robeson was an African American singer, actor, activist, All-American college football player, and valedictorian of Rutgers College Class of

1919. He lived from 1898 to 1976. The dedication of the Paul Robeson Plaza on the College Avenue Campus took place on Friday, April 12, 2019, as a part of Rutgers University's year-long commemoration of the 100th anniversary of Robeson's graduation. The Robeson Plaza was envisioned and made possible by the Class of 1971, which includes Jim Savage, who partook in this interview.]

HG: Paul Robeson. When Paul Robeson was at Rutgers, he played with a fellow by the name of Henry Benkert. He was a running back. He made All-American also, and he and Paul Robeson were tight. They were always [tight], became friends all their lives.

So, when Monte Irvin migrated, grew up, at the time that he was fifteen, that's when he entered Orange High School. Now, Henry Benkert had graduated and became head coach at Orange High School, so that when Monte Irvin walked down the hallway that particular September to register, Henry Benkert also walked down that hallway. He was the head football coach.

So, he stopped him, he says, "Who are you?" and he told him. He says, "I want you to play football for me." He says, "I can't play football. My mother won't allow me." He said, "Will you allow me to drive you home and speak to your mother?" He said, "No, not at all, sir;" sure enough, after he registered and whatnot, drove him home. Now, his mother was reluctant in dealing with whites and all that, but, when he mentioned Paul Robeson's name, [laughter] she lightened up.

[Editor's Note: Henry Marvin "Heinie" Benkert (1901-1972) was a professional football player and football coach. He was born and raised in Newark, New Jersey, and attended East Side High School. He then played football at Rutgers from 1922 to 1924 and for the New York Giants in 1925. After his professional career, he coached the Orange High School football team and taught there as well.]

SI: Yes.

HG: Now, isn't that something? right there. He promised her, he said, "Mrs. Irvin, you let your son play for me, you'll be proud of him." She said, "So, you're going to take care of my son?" She says, "All right, I'll let him play football," but it wasn't just football.

He entered Orange High School that particular September in preparation for the year--that was 1934, I believe--to play football. Now, here's a Southern boy coming out of Alabama. Now, had they not moved, he'd be going to Bloomfield, I guess now, but, now, he's at Orange High School. He went out for football and, at the end of the practice season, he was issued a suit. Not only did he play offense, but he played defense.

So, when the year was over, they looked around, here's a fifteen-year-old playing with other, I guess, freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors, had the best statistics in running the ball and tackling on defense, everything, a freshman, Monte Irvin. He made All-State as a freshman.

SI: Wow.

HG: Now, Monte was standing about six feet tall and weighing about 175 pounds. So, naturally, the basketball coach picked him up--never played basketball now--and put him in at center, six feet. At the end of the basketball season, they looked up again and Monte had enough statistics, offense and defense, to become All-State.

Spring came, okay, and baseball season--the baseball coach wanted him to play, okay. At the end of the season, he had more homeruns, most of the stolen bases, okay, enough statistics to be All-State again.

SI: Wow.

HG: So, in his freshman year, he made All-State in every major sport, and it didn't stop then. It only continued, because, in his freshman year, whenever Monte entered the game, they didn't call him Monford, they called him "Mugs." They gave him a football name, because, if he didn't stop you on defense, he was running over you on the offense.

Where that Bell Street Stadium is in Orange, it's, like, in a valley, and, by the end of the season, Monte had become so attractive that the stadium filled up every Saturday afternoon. When he was carrying the ball, they'd ring out, "Let's go, Mugs. Let's go, Mugs. Let's go, Mugs." That cheer would ring out all across that valley, "Let's go, Mugs." [Editor's Note: Orange High School's football stadium is located at 49 Bell Street in Orange, New Jersey.]

SI: Wow.

HG: And the strange part about it now, Becker's Dairy was on the next block. His father worked on Saturdays, okay.

SI: Okay.

HG: His father could hear them cheering his son on, but never had time to take off to go see his son play football.

SI: Wow.

HG: Isn't that something?

SI: Yes.

HG: He never saw his son play football. He had to work. He had to keep that food coming, okay.

SI: Yes.

HG: Now, we said every major--track was a major sport at that time, also. It just so happened that, one year, he's playing baseball, they had, like, an all-state meeting among the Essex County teams at the same park, with track season going on. The baseball game was going on at the same

time. Orange was, I believe, ahead by one, one run, a run or two, or something like that, but the [other] team scored to tie the score.

When it came time for Orange to be up and Monty's time came, they told him, "Would he take time off, wait, and throw the javelin?" See, you could do that in those days. You're talking about way back in the '30s.

SI: Yes.

HG: So, he took time off before he batted, okay, and picked up the javelin. I forget the exact figure, something like 298 feet, four inches, or something like that, [192 feet, eight inches], I think that was the [distance], set a record. Now, we're talking about--what, 1932 or '34?--but that record sat there for seventy years. [laughter]

SI: Wow.

HG: Before it was broken, but the idea was that, every major sport, he had made All-State in, but, as we grew old and whatever we were doing, Monte and I [were] sitting down talking one day. As sports grew, other things grew with it, becoming a student-athlete and all that, okay.

SI: Yes. I just want to clarify--you were watching some of these games, at least, or watching him play while he was in high school. Did you go watch him play?

HG: I never saw him play myself.

SI: Really? Wow.

HG: Yes, because I'm behind him and, again, now, to take a day off--hey, Saturdays, I worked. I'm trying to earn money, also.

SI: Oh.

HG: Doing all kinds of things, okay; no, but other brothers were coming behind him, also, because my brother played maybe one or two years with him. Then, I came along. Cal Irvin did not play football. He only played basketball, and he was one hell of a basketball player.

I can easily say, had they picked him up right out of college--you ever hear of Bob Cousy?
[Editor's Note: Bob Cousy, point guard for the Boston Celtics from 1950 to 1963, is a six-time NBA Champion and 1957 NBA MVP. He also was a NCAA Champion in 1947, playing for Holy Cross.]

SI: No, I have not.

HG: Never heard of Bob?

JS: I have, sure, Boston Celtics Hall of Famer, considered one of the best guards in NBA history.

HG: And that was Cal Irvin, too.

SI: Yes.

HG: He could've played just as easy with Cousy as anybody else. That's how good he was, okay, but, anyway, we're talking about Monte finishing up at high school, right. When he finished high school, he thought about going to college, but he couldn't play college football and, at the same time, earn money, back in those days. So, he had to make up his mind, whether he was going to earn money or go to college, but he decided to go and play with the Newark Eagles, Abe Manley and Effa Manley, Negro National League. [Editor's Note: The Newark Eagles, owned by Abe and Effa Manley, were a professional baseball team within the Negro National League from 1936 to 1948.]

Now, the Negro National League had some great players, also, I guess you can recall, but Monte played with them during the summer, because it shut down here in America, right. There's only a few guys that did this, but Monte Irvin did it--during the winter, they could go down, play in the Cuban League, the Puerto Rican League or the Mexican League. So, that meant that--I'm trying to think of the name of the guy who was killed in an airplane crash.

JS: Roberto Clemente. [Editor's Note: Roberto Clemente (1934-1972) was a Puerto Rican Major League Baseball player who played for the Pittsburgh Pirates from 1955 to 1972. He was killed in a plane crash in the Atlantic Ocean, shortly after takeoff from Puerto Rico. The Mexican Baseball League was founded in 1924. The Cuban League was founded in 1878 and dissolved in 1961 after the Cuban Revolution. The Puerto Rico League was founded in 1938 and renamed in 2012 as the Liga de Béisbol Profesional Roberto Clemente.]

SI: Yes.

HG: Right. He played with Roberto Clemente during the winter. They became close friends, and I'll be doggoned if he didn't put up enough, during the winter, to make All-State for that team. He also played some seasons for Cuba. What is the guy's name there, that we were at odds against?

SI: Castro?

CC: Castro?

HG: Castro, yes. He used to throw batting practice with Monte Irvin, but Monte also ... [Editor's Note: Fidel Castro (1926-2016) was a Communist revolutionary and dictator who took over Cuba in 1959 during the Cuban Revolution.]

CC: He pitched, yes.

HG: Became a Hall of Famer even in Cuba.

SI: Wow.

HG: He also played in the Mexican League, and he made All--whatever it was again--in Mexico.

CC: The Hall of Fame.

HG: Yes. So, when you look around now, you see what? He's in the American League, he's in the Negro National League, he's in the Cuban National League.

CC: And Puerto Rico.

HG: Yes. How many Hall of Fames does he have?

SI: Wow. Yes, that is five at least.

HG: Yes. So, again, maybe he didn't make the money that the regular guys did, but he had a--what do you call it?--a relationship, just about, with everybody that's ever played baseball.

CC: Professional baseball, yes.

SI: Wow.

HG: So, he had one hell of an experience. He played baseball year-round until they [Major League Baseball] picked him up, okay, because he only played so many years with San Francisco, yes. That's where they moved, but they managed to win two championships, he and Willie Mays, added to that team. So, only thing I can say, maybe he didn't make the money, but he had the experience, and he got to know people. I think that was the big thing, okay. So, his was just as rich in experience as others were rich in money, or whatever you want to say.

[Editor's Note: The New York Giants baseball franchise moved to San Francisco in 1958. Willie Mays played for the Giants from 1951 to 1952, then, from 1954 to 1972. He finished his career with the New York Mets from 1972 to 1973 and was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 1979.]

SI: Yes.

HG: But, he was every bit as good as Mickey Mantle coming out of high school, no question about it, okay. [Editor's Note: Mickey Mantle (1931-1995) played for the New York Yankees his entire career, from 1951 to 1968, and was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 1974.]

SI: Yes.

HG: Just a question of when they were going to pull him up.

SI: Yes.

HG: Well, they still got some pretty good ones, didn't they? Hank Aaron and all those guys.
[Editor's Note: Hank Aaron played for the Atlanta Braves from 1954 to 1974, and then, the Milwaukee Brewers from 1975 to 1976. He began his career with the Indianapolis Clowns in the Negro National League in 1952.]

SI: Do you mind if I go back and ask a couple questions about your youth?

HG: Go ahead.

SI: You talked about your grandfather going North when you were four. How soon after was your family able to go up, leave Alabama?

HG: Say that again.

SI: You said you were four when the incident happened and your grandfather had to go North. How soon after were you and your family able to leave?

HG: I believe--I'm trying [to recall]--I think I was six when I met my mother, okay, yes, because I was four when they left. So, it was a two-year period that they left my brother [and I] with my Uncle Charles.

SI: Okay.

HG: Him and myself, yes, and I think that's when my mother and father tried to put their marriage back together, and it didn't work. So, my brother and I, we were just on our own again. We were always living in, sleeping in, somebody else's house.

SI: Yes.

HG: So, when we met Mrs. Philips, that became our "other mother," the nicest person I ever met in my life, boy. She adored us. She needed sons and we were her sons.

SI: She was in New Jersey.

HG: Yes, she lived in Bloomfield, New Jersey, right.

SI: Okay.

HG: Now, what about her family? I didn't know that much about her family ever, but she took us in and gave us a bedroom, and the rest of it just became home. Now, in fact, that's where I started the school in Bloomfield, okay. I don't think my brother had been to school before, either, yes. Both of us started at Bloomfield High School on Broad Avenue in Bloomfield.
[Editor's Note: Bloomfield High School is located at 160 Broad Street in Bloomfield, New Jersey.]

SI: Do you remember anything about the actual trip from Alabama up to New Jersey?

HG: You see now, only thing I knew, my Uncle Charles called my brother and I together and said, "We have something for you," and gave us each brown suits to put on, somebody had made or whatnot, now, and said we were going to see our mother. Camp and Moses, I remember those names, too, cousins of ours, were coming North, and Camp and Moses brought my brother and I to that railroad track and we had a box of food.

Now, how long did it take us to get from Alabama to Newark, New Jersey? Because I think that's where we had to get off, because my mother's father and my sister were already living with the Baskervilles in Bloomfield. Mr. Baskerville and my father were in the Army together. Now, how well he made [out], I don't know, but I don't think his family held together, either, but they put the two families together. Now, that was on Easter Sunday that I can remember that now. My brother and I met my mother, and my sister was with her at the door. We're going to live with the Baskervilles, okay, two families living in [a house together]. That's the way you had to do it in those days.

SI: Sure.

HG: That mass migration, and everything went along okay until, one day, my uncle, my younger Uncle Bob, asked my father for some money and a scuffle started. He had to leave town again. Our family broke up and just went one way. I went to live with George Harris and my cousin.

Which way my father went, I never saw [him] again until I was in--we had moved to Orange, New Jersey. I never saw him again. So, where was he? Did he go to Detroit? Did he go to Newark? In my lifetime, I just keep hearing that, "Hey, there's Grimsleys right down at the bottom of this hill here. Then, there's some Grimsleys way out there in Detroit."

So, will I ever meet them? I don't know, but it would be interesting to meet them, if any of them are left, because, hey, I'm sitting on ninety-seven. So, not unless they have some younger ones, they'd better hurry up if they want to meet me. [laughter]

SI: George Harris was the guy with the piano.

HG: With the piano.

SI: Yes.

HG: Now, I can't criticize George now, but, in a sense, I can. It's just a question that my brother and I, wherever he went, I went, okay. Being put with my cousin, Layzetta, and her husband, George, now, why was that movement made if he did not like boys around, or other children? They had no children, but they had the extra bedroom.

SI: Yes.

HG: So that my hearing him play, I loved it; believe me, that man could play that piano. He'd come in after work and feeling whatever it was, blue, and sit down, knock out a tune. Then, he'd start singing, and you're talking about the blues? It's a wonder he wasn't on the stage, because that man could sing the blues like you don't want to believe. I started learning how to play, [Mr. Grimsley sings], "Don't know why there's no sun up in the sky. Stormy weather," okay.
[Editor's Note: *Stormy Weather*, a 1933 song written by Harold Arlen and Ted Koehler, was first performed by Ethel Waters.]

When he caught me [playing his piano against his wishes], I don't know what that caused, boy, because he got angry. All of a sudden, one night, we heard a scream, "George!" My cousin ran into our bedroom now, locked the door and got in the bed with my brother and I. There's George, kicking on that door, "Come on out of there," okay. Now, he start kicking at the door, then, he shot. The bullet landed above the bed.

SI: Wow.

HG: When she heard that shot--now, she was a heavy woman--how she got out of that window so quickly, I do not know, but, when he finally kicked open that door, she was not there. She had jumped out of that window; where she went, I do not know. Then, my brother and I [were] looking at each other and George and a smoking gun. Now, what was it that caused that kind of reaction, two kids out of bed? Was he that much of a boss or what?

Hey, now, as I understand it now, along when we left there, they still put it together now, whatever that was, because I saw later on, when she was--well, no, they had separated when I saw her later on, yes. She was living with some other woman, but can you imagine somebody [shooting]? Now, would he have shot her if she had not jumped out of that window? I don't know, but that's the experiences my brother and I would see together, because wherever I went, my brother was there. Shaun, I can't tell you, boy, I always felt safe. [laughter]

SI: Wow, yes.

HG: My big brother was with me, boy, Grimp, wherever I went, boy.

SI: Wow.

HG: Now, you're talking about a football player, shucks, man, [if] Rutgers got my brother, boy, they'd have been winners, because that's all he was, was a winner. He loved defense now. That's what he was--he was a defensive specialist, okay. Wherever he went, they had a championship.

He went down to Morgan, and you ever hear of a guy by the name of "Big House" Gaines, Charlie "Big House" Gaines, Clarence Gaines? [Editor's Note: Clarence "Big House" Gaines (1923-2005), an All-American lineman for the Morgan State College football team, went on to coach basketball at Winston-Salem State from 1946 to 1993. He coached the NCAA Championship team in 1967.]

CC: Oh, yes.

HG: Is that what college?

CC: "Big House" was a great coach, and a great basketball player.

HG: Yes. Well, he and my brother played on the same Morgan football team. Four years, Morgan was the CIAA Championships, because of my brother and "Big House" Gaines.
[Editor's Note: The Morgan State Bears won the Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association (CIAA) Championship fourteen times. During Gaines' playing career, they won every year.]

SI: Wow.

HG: They're the "Masters of the CIAA."

CC: What was your brother's name?

HG: Huh?

CC: What was his first name?

HG: Clarence.

CC: Clarence, that's right.

HG: Yes.

SI: I think ...

HG: Yes, Clarence "Big House" Gaines. He loved defense, too, now.

SI: How much older was your brother?

HG: My brother was older than me, I guess a couple years older than me.

CC: Yes, I think two years.

HG: Yes.

SI: Okay. How long were you with Maddie--I forget her last name.

HG: Maddie Philips?

SI: Philips.

HG: It was only a couple of, well, years, because, when my grandmother heard that Maddie Philips was a numbers dealer, she made my mother come get us, okay. "You got your sons

living with a gambler?" because my grandmother was highly religious now. She was the religious one. She loved Jesus, boy. I guess that kind of smoothed out the morality in the family, with all the moving going on and whatnot, but she made them walk a straight line, all them boys.

Let me see now, the oldest one was Maxwell, next was Steve--no, Carl, I'm sorry--the next was Robert, the next was Monford, the next was Milt, and the last was Cal. All of those boys, she raised. My mother started having babies with her, at the same time she was still having babies. That's how fast things moved on then, because Cal is younger than me.

SI: Yes.

HG: And turned out to be one hell of an athlete.

SI: How old were you when you left Maddie Philips' house and went with your mother?

HG: I imagine it was--let's see now--we went from Maddie Philips to live with my Uncle Mac. That was my oldest uncle, behind my mother. Now, they already had two children, a girl and a boy; I'm sorry, two girls. Now, my mother moved in and--hold it, hold it, no--my brother and I moved in. My sister and my mother did not move in.

My brother and I moved in with my Uncle Mac and his family for a short while, because, what happened, we later moved on to Orange, where all two families came together, okay. Now, we lived there. Then, from there, we moved to Hickory Street. Then, from there, we moved back to Wallace Street--let's see now--and, from there, we moved to--no, I think that was the last of it, because the family broke up again. Otherwise, it was trying to get settled. There are just too many things happening.

SI: Yes.

HG: But, my main thing is, my brother and I were together wherever we were going, okay.

SI: Yes.

HG: Now, Maddie Philips would've raised us, but one thing that my grandma was thinking [was] that she didn't want her grandchildren around gamblers. We might become gamblers. Well, so what? But my mother came and got us and put us with her oldest son, Maxwell, and his two daughters.

Now, from there, we moved to Wallace Street. Then, we moved to Hickory Street, then, back to Wallace Street. Now, where did we come after Wallace Street? We broke up again. My mother just took her brood, lived in a house on Wallace Street. That's where we started going to school, to the Orange Schools. Wow, so, we moved from there to William Street, then, from William Street to Hickory Street in Orange. That's where I finished high school, Hickory Street in Orange, New Jersey.

SI: Yes. With all these moves, how did that affect your education?

HG: I think I could've been a good student if I was ever stationary, but, every time I moved, I had to move again and get acquainted with another school. Now, because I was old enough, now, I went to--what grade was I? Before high school, Park Avenue School, I took shop there and I did well in shop. I made a sailing ship, everything, put it together in shop. I was good at shop, but, before you know it, I'm gone again. [laughter]

SI: Yes.

HG: So, now, did I have time to read? Well, maybe, [laughter] because I'm trying to work as well as help my mother make [ends meet]. See, what got me, now, I'm with my Uncle Mac and his family and my mother's family and a fight breaks out. So, they've got to break up. So, what my mother did was just move next-door with her children.

Okay, so, one day, I'm coming home from Park Avenue. As I walk up the stairs, I see this white man standing in the doorway, and he's shaking his fingers in my mother's face. I walked down to see what was wrong. There she is, she didn't have all the rent money together, and he was saying, telling her, "Don't you dare be short again." Shaun, I don't--now, I guess I'm about nine or ten here--how that made me feel, to see this white man putting his fingers in my mother's face.

SI: Yes.

HG: Demanding more money, that she didn't have. So, what did that cause me to do now? Get up off my butt and make sure she had it. So, whatever jobs that I could come by--I used to shine shoes, I worked at the icehouse, carrying ice. You ever set up pins?

JS: Bowling?

SI: Bowling, yes.

HG: Yes.

SI: It was all by hand.

HG: I forget how [much] you got for each game, but, hey, if I made a dollar or two, [I] brought that home to my mother, because I did not want to see that finger in my mother's face again, okay. Otherwise, how do you help the family survive? My thing was to help my mother pay the rent, because it looked like we were moving all the time. [laughter]

SI: Yes.

HG: We're in one place. Otherwise, if they could find a place that was cheaper than the other, you move.

SI: Sure.

HG: So, but all my life, I spent [working], when I was old enough, like--let me see now--I used to shine shoes on Main Street. Let's see, I worked in the icehouse, carrying either--see, you don't know about this. Icehouses, they disappeared with the refrigerator, okay.

SI: Yes.

HG: I did this when they had iceboxes, and you could get a ten-cent piece, fifteen-cent piece, a twenty-five-cent piece; now, a fifty-cent piece, man, "Whew," okay.

SI: Okay.

HG: So, I forget the man I worked for, but, as he got older, yes, he needed help. So, after school, I'd go by there. Ten-cent piece, fifteen-cent piece, twenty-five cent piece, fifty-cent piece, that wore me out now, because I'm going up stairs in a lot of places, okay.

SI: Yes.

HG: If I made that money, I'd come back and give it to my mother, okay. Now, where else could I make money faster or whatnot? I worked on the weekends in Orange Memorial Hospital, emptying bedpans, okay, to make money.

SI: Yes.

HG: Whatever you could do to make money. I got up at four or five o'clock in the morning to help a guy run milk, because the wagons were still being used, okay. If I got up at four o'clock, I could shorten his trip in half, because I could run--take the milk, put it down, come back, gone, boom. I'd help him get through earlier, especially in the wintertime, okay.

SI: Yes.

HG: So, he'd give me a couple bottles of milk or any butter in there that's left over. Whatever was left over, he'd give me. So, I always brought home some milk. My brother and sister at home, hey, man, a glass of milk in the morning? Hey, that was breakfast, especially if I brought home some honey buns with it. That was our breakfast, and scrambled eggs, whatever it took for us to come together.

So, it's just, "Do what you can, okay, to help the family." Now, my mother, she did "day's work," as she called it. She'd go, every morning, get up and go to other people's houses to clean for them and whatnot, fix their meals and whatnot.

SI: Yes.

HG: So, as my sister got older, she had to learn how to cook for my brother and I. Now, my brother didn't want to cook, but I didn't wait for my sister to cook. I'd cook it myself. [laughter]

SI: Yes.

HG: It's just, "What do you do?" okay, growing up. My sister was a good cook now, but, sometimes, she'd get in those moods and she wouldn't do it. So, I did it, okay. It's just growing up, and I prized myself in having an older brother. That was a good man to me, boy.

SI: Yes.

HG: Believe me. He was one hell of an athlete and one great personality--too bad a pro football team didn't pick him up. They'd have had a winner also.

SI: Yes.

HG: Okay, but it didn't happen, but life keeps going, keep moving. Imagine now, when I stepped out of high school, 1942, 1943, I found myself drafted.

SI: Yes.

HG: Now, I don't want to go to the service. I feel comfortable out here finally making some money with companies that came along that were earning Army money, making boxes and things like that. I was actually pulling in money--why the hell [do] I want to go into service? But they wouldn't let me go.

I could've gotten out of it now. I was told, "When they asked you, 'Do you like women?' say, 'No,'" and they would reject me. When they asked me that question, I couldn't say it. I didn't want to lie.

SI: Yes.

HG: Okay. Why am I going to lie about something? If I get rejected, I get rejected, but, no, I passed. The next year, next March, I'm in the service, March 1943, and I found myself in Fort Dix. It's down in Piscataway. During that Winter of 1943 ...

SI: Well ... [Editor's Note: Fort Dix is located eighteen miles southeast of Trenton, New Jersey. In 1942, Camp Kilmer was established in central New Jersey, partially in Piscataway.]

HG: I was in Western New York. Where was that? What was the name of that Army station up there?

SI: Camp Drum? [Editor's Note: Fort Drum, established in 1908 in Jefferson County, New York, remains an active base today.]

HG: Say that again?

SI: Camp Drum, or Plattsburgh?

CC: Fort Dix?

SI: Oh, he said it was in New York.

CC: Oh, New York.

HG: Right across the river from [Buffalo]--it'll come to me, but I just can't pull it right now.

SI: Okay.

HG: But, we went all the way over on the Erie, all the way across Western New York State. We were there until March, again, and I found [myself] in Pennsylvania. We were issued what they called DUKWs [pronounced "ducks"]. You ever hear of an automobile called a DUKW? [Editor's Note: The DUKW, an amphibious truck used by the military during World War II, was produced from 1942 to 1945.]

SI: Yes, the amphibious trucks.

HG: Right, amphibious, that's what I was into, okay. We ran, that spring in '43, we took shooting practice in Pennsylvania. I think it was just outside of Pittsburgh, wherever it was. I can recall looking across a river and you could see something, but you didn't know what it was. You had to look through the spyglasses. There was the target.

"Now, with a fifty-caliber machine-gun, can you hit the target? Okay, can you look through that and sit up there," because, see, in the outfit I was in, DUKWs, a DUKW carried two people, the driver and the assistant driver. The assistant driver also handled the fifty-caliber that was mounted on the DUKW, so that in any heavy fighting, you had a heavier gun.

We had to practice our watching through them, "Can you hit that target across the river?" and that's the target practicing we had, okay. That's coming spring, because we didn't know we were going to move this rapidly, because it's Spring of 1943--let's see, '43, '44, '45, I'm trying to think of how fast did we move now?--because, from that field outside of Pittsburgh, we drove down to Savannah, Georgia.

SI: Yes.

HG: Worked the docks there, but--let me see now--in the Spring of 1944, was it?

SI: Probably 1944, if you went in 1943.

HG: I'm getting foggy on memories again, now.

SI: That is okay. We can correct it later on.

HG: We were put on ships outside in the harbor, Savannah, Georgia, and we were headed to Wales, England, okay, Wales, England. We docked there, okay, so that, now, June, now, we're

doing all right now, except that on one June 5th, now--we were in Wales, okay--there was a constant buzz going on. I mean, the air was just full of airplanes all the time.

SI: Sure.

HG: But, you don't pay any attention to that; things are moving anyway, okay, shooting by you and whatnot. So, Jimmy (Green?) and I, we happened to be walking together and we decided that, "Hey, man, let's go in here and get some," see, fish and chips is famous in England, in Wales. We decide to walk into this, like, a bar and get some fish and chips.

We walked up to the counter. Before the guy could say anything, this loud voice spoke out, "You can't go anywhere around here without the niggers breaking in." So, I turned and, sure enough, in the big dining part we walked by, all of them were Americans, with their uniforms on.

I looked into a sea of eyes; looked like I didn't see the uniform, but I knew they were Americans. Now, the only thing it looked like I could see were the white of their eyes sitting back in there. I didn't think they were sitting back in there, and I heard this big, loud voice talking about, "You can't go anywhere without the niggers." Well, I turned around. I want to challenge that now. Can you imagine that?

SI: Yes.

HG: I wanted to say, "Will the idiot who said that please stand up?" but something told me, "Boy, you'd better get your ass out of here. You're in an evil place." So, I just quietly said, "Hey, Jimmy, we're in a bad place. We'd better get out of here," because you don't know how these guys feel, okay. You know, there's only two of us; man, you've got a whole [group of whites]. So, we walked out and forgot about those fish and chips, but the odd part about it, that was the eve of the invasion. That's what all that noise was about.

SI: Sure.

HG: They're invading France at the time that statement was made, early in the morning that they were landing. That's when everything went, like the whole Earth started moving, boy, because, hey, [as] soon as we got back to [our] tent, we had to get dressed, get ready, "Fold up, let's go."

By the next evening, we're crossing into France, also, and, as you approached, the noise got heavier. Those big battleships sitting out there, what they were doing, they were shooting salvos into the cliff front, okay. What the Germans had done was build tunnels, to carve up holes in the face of the cliff and put their heavy guns there, okay. When they found that out, what the battleships would do is just come out there and, if they saw a hole, sent a salvo into there. That's all you [heard], "Woof, zoom; woof, zoom," down came half of that cliff, boy.

SI: Wow.

HG: And I'll be damned if you didn't see bodies flying out of there.

SI: Can you describe for us your unit in general, and what their role was during this landing?

HG: Ours was, they called us the 469th [Amphibious Truck Company]. Well, what kind of engineers really were, we'd cross bridges, we'd cross waters, we crossed anything to help the Army move. Our specific orders were to follow--what's his name, his tank force?

SI: Patton. [Editor's Note: General George S. Patton commanded the US Third Army.]

HG: Patton, "Follow Patton. Whatever he needed, wherever he goes, make sure he gets enough fuel." That was our assignment, so that we had to go in, find a camping place, set it up, so that when Patton came through, we'd just get behind him. How fast could he go? We had to be right behind him, and make sure he does not run out of fuel. That was our job. If he came to a river and couldn't cross it, hey, we'd help him cross it, okay, the engineers. We called ourselves engineers, but we just really ran the port wherever we went, so that was our job, just to follow Patton. We did, all the way up until May, when it ended, in 1945.

CC: You were an all-black battalion or company?

HG: Yes, we were an all-black unit, right. What the funny thing about it [was], though, Shaun, like, wherever we went and we bumped into a white unit, friction came. Why? I don't know, okay. It just seems as though that we're on the same team, but, then, we're not the same team.

I was a staff sergeant, because I kept charge of where all the DUKWs were, wherever they went, that I had to keep a record of it, but I was also put on guard, guard watch, at night. Somebody went around that camp and made sure everything was quiet and whatnot. What did they call a watch? I can't think of what that watch name [was], we called that.

CC: MP?

HG: Say that again?

SI: MPs?

CC: MPs, Military Patrol?

HG: Yes.

SI: Perimeter?

HG: Yes, patrol. Yes, you patrolled the area.

CC: Right.

HG: It was your duty to patrol, check everything, don't take anything for granted. You make sure that nobody's sneaking up or on ...

CC: Military Police? No?

HG: They're called a guard, or something.

CC: Okay.

HG: You're just on perimeter guard, I can say that, but there's another name.

SI: Yes.

HG: But, anyway, it was my charge for the night. Sure enough, this is about getting dark and I heard all this noise, that it was a problem on the car line and got down there. Sure enough, see, there was a company further north of us and, when they'd come by, they'd always throw bottles at us as they passed by, because we're in a schoolyard when we're at parade rest, okay.

We would tell the Captain, "Captain, we've got this company above throwing bottles at us when we are called to duty." He ignored it. So, sure enough, one morning, boy, he's out there and we're called to duty and we lined up. Here comes a truck down the road--honestly, that Coke bottle missed him by a dime. So, I said, "I told you, Captain, they're hostile." He had the nerve to go up there and fuss.

So, behind that incident, I'm on duty. I'm in the jeep, and I see our guys have picked up this white soldier. Where they got him from, I don't know, but I know no good was going to happen to him that night, okay, because he was drunk. He had ambled down into this--we were a corner place then--looking around and whatnot. I don't know what my side would've done, but I'm pretty sure he would not have gotten out of there alive, okay. That's how hostile we were toward each other--isn't that something?

SI: Yes.

HG: So, what I did, I just said, "Hey, man, nothing's going to happen this night." I put him in the jeep. Now, do I go up on the other end and cross that line? How will they accept me bringing back a white soldier? Now, they could put the same thing on me.

SI: Yes.

HG: But, luckily, I took him up there until I saw whoever was on guard and said, "This man is drunk. Can you take care of him?" I turned around and left. Luckily, I got out of there without a scratch. Of course, like, violence seemed to follow us, for some reason, wherever we met--and the thing about this now, Shaun, a good thing happened later on, okay.

SI: Yes.

HG: Because the Battle of the Bulge, we were at Le Havre that winter. When the big snow came around Christmastime, boy, that kind of bogged down everything, called it the Battle of the Bulge, but, then, that's when we also found out that most of those Germans that got killed in that

battle were teenagers, fifteen, sixteen, and seventeen years of age. [Editor's Note: The Battle of the Bulge occurred from December 16, 1944 to January 25, 1945. Initially surprising the Allies, the Germans created a bulge in the front lines. However, they soon were pushed back and defeated.]

He [Hitler] had made the wrong decision earlier. October, he had made a decision to break his treaty with Russia and went after Russia, but they happened to break into one of the more harsh winters in October of that year, when they attacked Russia. They got their behinds kicked. There, they didn't have enough winter clothing for the soldiers. They froze to death. They could not get enough gasoline through; their tanks froze. So, they were sitting ducks for the Russians, so that it was over for him.

By the springtime, we're entering Berlin, because the Russians--well, we're taking Berlin. That's when Berlin was split. Americans had this half and the Russians ran the other half, because we weren't getting along too well with the Russians, either, way back then. [Editor's Note: On June 22, 1941, Hitler broke his neutrality pact with the Soviet Union and invaded Soviet occupied Poland and, later, the Soviet Union itself.]

SI: Let us pause for a second.

[TAPE PAUSED]

HG: Despite all of this hostility.

SI: Okay.

HG: And I saw them with this one. He was only a kid, to me now, okay--maybe he was in his twenties--and he's drunk. Now, why you want to bother a drunken fellow soldier, okay? But I just said, "Hey, nothing's going to happen on this run." So, I put him in the jeep to take him back to where he belonged. Now, if anything happened on that end, that's their thing, but, at the same time, I'm putting my life at risk by going that far.

CC: Right.

HG: Okay, because I don't know what they'll do to me if they catch me.

SI: Yes.

HG: Okay? You never knew. These things would erupt. Like, later on, just walking with a girl--what'd they call it?--it was, "Go for a walk along the riverfront," you get shot at, and you're American soldiers.

CC: I think what you said before was that your troop was on one side of the river and they were on the other side. Your guys stayed in the tents and they stayed in the hotels.

HG: They had the city.

CC: In the city.

HG: Yes.

CC: You guys would shoot back, shoot bullets back across the river at each other, if you tried to date or whatever you were doing.

HG: Yes. Believe me, if you were walking your *fraulein*, in the afternoon, along the riverbed, and, if they see you, "Woomp," you'd take pots at each other. It didn't make sense, but it happened.

SI: The ones that were shooting at you were the white Americans.

HG: Right, yes.

SI: Yes.

HG: And so that when it came down to May now, when everything ceased, boom, now, what do you do? You've got Patton and his army, all of his army here. There's a war still going over in the East. You pack up and you go there. I think that was the thinking, okay, but I think what saved us was the atom bomb, okay, when they put those two bombs in there, one--what was it?--Nagasaki, and then ...

CC: Hiroshima. [Editor's Note: On August 6, 1945 and August 9, 1945, atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan, respectively.]

HG: Yes, which one?

SI: Hiroshima first.

HG: Yes, that ended the war. Then, now, what do we do? Since we were at peace, for some reason, a guy walks into our camp, white guy, from Patton's Army, said, "You guys got anybody who played baseball?" and we whipped up. They challenged us to a baseball game. Sure enough, we went out there and they had measured a baseball field, and Patton's men had done that, to play baseball.

So, now, I had pitched before, okay, when I was right out of high school, pitched for the Orange Triangles [an African-American semi-professional baseball team]. The first time ever out, I threw a no-hitter, left-handed, okay. Now, here's a white guy walking into our camp, challenging us, okay. Can we put a team together to play against Patton? Well, who the hell is Patton to us at that time, anyway? We were engineers, okay.

Anyway, we started the game. We challenged them and started playing, and I was the pitcher. I'm not thinking about much except that, "Hey, I've got a chance to play a baseball game today," and I'm the pitcher. At that time, being young and stupid--not exactly, but maybe skillful in

some things--the way I threw a ball, okay, I could put more speed on the ball by throwing it overhand, okay, but the ball that was hardest for them to hit was a slider that [I] threw in from the side. I really only had two pitches, okay.

So, what I would do first is to throw that fastball. If you could hit this fastball, you deserve it, okay. Now, if I threw the fastball and it got by, now's going to come the slider, comes in on the side, okay. Now, if you didn't hit that, then, I'm going to come back with another fastball. [laughter] It was so simple, and that's all I'm doing, just mixing up a slower ball, a slider, and an overhand fastball. I'm striking them out like you don't want to believe. I looked up at the end of the game, I had thrown a no-hitter against Patton's mighty tank force.

SI: Wow.

HG: By luck, okay--anybody ever write it down? I don't know, but I know that they gave me another stripe for pitching that game. Now, is it on record somewhere? I don't know.

SI: Wow.

HG: Yes, but it's, "How can you have so much misery all of a sudden turn to joy?" because those tank guys were patting me on the shoulders as well as my mates did. They were happy. I made everybody happy, okay.

SI: Wow.

HG: Now, what did that get me? We had time. Here it is, May of 1945. So, what do I do? The First Sergeant and the Captain offered me a chance to go to Biarritz American University.

[Editor's Note: Three universities were established in Europe after World War II ended for soldiers who were close to the end of their service to help transition soldiers into civilian academic life. Biarritz American University was established in August of 1945 in the hotels and casinos of Biarritz, France. The university closed in March of 1946.]

SI: Oh.

HG: It was a university built for goodwill.

SI: Yes.

HG: And promote basketball in France. They had a few teams playing, but not like America. So, they brought in--now, my niece has that clipping, with pictures--I was the shortest guy on the team. I was five-nine. They just kept going up until they reached six-eight, about twelve of us.

SI: Wow.

HG: And, now, Biarritz American University, what we did was travel around to the other universities that had a basketball team, like Toulouse, Paris, Bordeaux. It was about twelve games we had that year, came out undefeated.

CC: Wow.

HG: Okay. Now, my niece has that write-up. I don't know whether I can get it or not, but ...

SI: Was it an all-black team or was it integrated?

HG: Strangely now, what wound up on that team, I was the shortest at five-nine, the next black guy was six-seven, "Stretch" Wilkins from Harlem.

SI: Wow.

HG: Wilkins, I'm sorry, "Stretch" Wilkins. He and I were the only two blacks on that team. All the rest are white guys, and we went around playing different universities. Now, again, that was goodwill, and I guess we didn't have too many blacks, but there were enough blacks to show goodwill, I guess. I guess that's what it was all about.

SI: Yes.

HG: Because France didn't have anything to do with, like America, separation. You could go anywhere you wanted in France, okay. So, I guess they decided to mix the team, and "Stretch" Wilkins and Harvey Grimsley were the only ones on that team for that term, October to--what was it, February of the next year?--because I'm home by June of 1946, right.

SI: Wow. Can I go back and ask some questions about your time in the service?

HG: I'm sorry.

SI: Can I go back and ask a few questions about your time in the service before we move on?

HG: Go ahead.

SI: You had described the bombardment on D-Day [the invasion of Normandy, France, on June 6, 1944], seeing the holes in the cliff being bombarded. What else do you remember about that day? How did you get ashore, that sort of thing?

HG: Now, Shaun, believe it or not now, that thing happened so fast, I think I went through numb, although it shook me to remember it. See, the only thing I can recall now, when we left that pub and went back to the outfit, they were already packing up for moving, to get down to Southport, where we left from ...

SI: Southampton?

HG: Southampton.

SI: Okay.

HG: To go across, and they had the LSTs [Landing Ship, Tank, amphibious cargo ships]. We had to load up on the LSTs and whatnot, and the thing about it, there were some behind us, okay. So, you had the original force to go in, okay, now, and I guess the original force had to clean the front where you land. Now, I think we were Utah. We were southern, and the British were northern. We went in on the southern end, okay, where there were more cliffs and sand. [Editor's Note: Utah Beach was the most western beach taken on D-Day.]

Someone was ahead of us--what outfit, I don't know--but, otherwise, you clear away as you go for the next guy to come, but you can't stop. You've got to keep moving. Now, why the Germans were not ready with their armor, we'll never know, but they caught them with their guards down. I think--what was the name of their tank man?--he was ...

SI: Tiger? [Editor's Note: Tiger I and Tiger II were German Army tanks during World War II.]

HG: Say it again.

SI: Oh, Rommel?

HG: Rommel. [Editor's Note: Erwin Rommel was a Field Marshal in the German Army during World War II. He was known as the Desert Fox for his tactics in North Africa. In 1944, he was responsible for the defense of France's Channel coast and to repel invasion. He lived from 1891 to 1944, committing suicide after being implicated in a plot to assassinate Hitler.]

SI: Yes.

HG: Rommel was not at either front those days. Where he was, it was somewhere--they said his wife was sick or something like that--and he was not on the beach. Now, could he have beaten the force back? I don't know, but the only thing I know [is], we got on there, the first one landed, and then, the second one behind it. The worst thing we had to think about at that time were landmines and gunfire ...

CC: That's the beach at Normandy, right?

HG: And the gunfire coming from the cliffs, okay. Now, had Rommel been there with added backup, would it have made any difference? I don't know, but we were able to reach the first city before Rommel ever showed up, okay. So, now, when I went, now, when our team went in, I think they were still cleaning mines, the beach for mines.

SI: Landmines.

HG: Okay, because they had "beaters," [mine flail vehicles]. You ever see something that throws a heavy thing down, "Boom." If there's anything there, it's going to explode.

SI: Yes.

HG: That's what was still cleaning the mines, and they're picking up pieces, okay, so that when I came through, it was rather smooth for us, okay.

The only thing that happened in my outfit was that we had a guy who liked to show off. His name was Randolph, always showing off doing something. So, now, he's the assistant in his DUKW, okay. So, as we're driving up on dry land, he gets on the deck of the DUKW, puts his hand in here, like he's Napoleon, sticks out his chest like he's conquering, okay.

Now, it would've been a nice picture, I guess, to show your grandchildren, but a landmine that's about thirty or forty yards down their side explodes. He's up there on top of this thing, a DUKW, showing off--took all his manhood, hit him and took off his manhood. Only thing he had to do was stay in that DUKW.

SI: Wow.

HG: But, that's just silliness that some people will do.

SI: Yes.

HG: So, now, yes, we got through--that was our only casualty--found a place to camp, okay. Now, we're in there for the day and we're preparing for whatever is going to come by digging ditches and whatnot, in case there is an attack. Sure enough, boy, a siren goes off. Parachutists, that was the thing. Shaun, my buddy and I, we got in on our shovels and we shoveled out deep enough for you to put your gun up and see anything there, shoot it. Now, do you use a fifty-caliber, but the smaller gun was a ...

SI: M-1?

HG: Say that again.

SI: An M-1 rifle [M-1 Garand, the standard issue rifle of the American Army during the war].

HG: M-1, right, so that if you see a parachute, you better shoot, okay. So, we had dug the hole and we're in there, we're waiting and looking and seeing and whatnot. Shaun, I'm shaking all over, honestly. I'm shaking so badly, I wondered if I could've shot somebody. I don't want to see that parachute. I don't want to shoot anybody. That's the way I felt, that's all. I can't tell you any feeling, but I was so glad nobody fell out of that sky that night, or evening, it was, okay. I don't know whether I could've shot them or not, I was shaking so much.

Everything got over, okay, and, next morning, you pack up to get ready to move again, okay, because somebody's behind you, okay. You keep moving and before--I forget the name of the first city up above us--but we hit Paris by--what?--that was in June. Yes, July, we were in Paris,

because we marched through the Arc de Triomphe in Paris, okay. [Editor's Note: The Allies liberated Paris, France, on August 25, 1944.]

SI: Wow.

HG: And we occupied Le Havre in France.

CC: So, Harvey, to your knowledge, you never killed anybody?

HG: Huh?

CC: You never shot, you never killed anybody.

HG: I have yet to shoot and kill anybody, "Hooray," and I feel great about it.

CC: I just want to document that, yes.

SI: Yes, wow.

HG: Believe me, I feel good about it.

SI: Yes.

HG: Okay, but that's me. Again, I don't think I could've shot anybody, I was shaking so much.

Now, I'm back home, been to college, got one of the best jobs in my life, being a recruiter for Governors State University, recruiting students, way out in Chicago. I meet a guy one night and we're talking. He says, "Harvey, you're in World War II, weren't you?" and I said, "Yes." He says, "There's a picture out called *Saving Private Ryan*." You ever hear of it? [Editor's Note: Governors State University, established in 1969, is a public university in Chicago.]

SI: Yes.

HG: *Saving Private Ryan*, you know what it's about? [Editor's Note: *Saving Private Ryan*, a 1998 film directed by Steve Spielberg, begins with the invasion of Omaha Beach on D-Day and the subsequent movement inland.]

SI: Yes.

HG: How about you?

CC: Yes.

HG: Okay. You heard about it. Did you ever see it?

CC: Yes.

HG: You saw it, Charlie?

CC: Yes.

HG: You saw *Saving Private Ryan*?

CC: Yes.

HG: So, you know about when the picture opens up, boom, there's a big screen there, okay. Now, it's about Private Ryan, who's coming to the cemetery to put flowers on a particular grave. I forget who played that part, the other part, guy who was going after him. I can't think ...

JS: Tom Hanks.

SI: Tom Hanks.

JS: Tom Hanks.

HG: Who?

JS: Actor Tom Hanks.

CC: Tom Hanks, yes.

HG: Tom Hanks, that's right, boy. That was a great picture, boy. Tom Hanks had gone to save this one last brother, okay, and he's putting flowers on his [grave], but, then, it opens up, the screen, to the invasion of Normandy.

I sat there and I cried like a baby. Man, I'm sitting in this theater all by myself, shaking and crying like you don't want to believe. I needed that to wipe it all out of me. All that time, I had held that invasion in my head.

SI: Wow.

HG: Okay, and that night of sitting up, waiting for somebody to come out of the sky, came back to me, and I started crying like a baby.

SI: Wow.

HG: And I still think, if I saw it again now, I'd still cry. That's the funny thing about it. Stuff like that doesn't leave you too easily. That's what was in my system all this time. I'm carrying it around, was the load I was carrying, okay.

See, an invasion, that thing is so big, you've got to move or, otherwise, you get run over. That's what it's all about. Now, you may be telling me to go someplace you've never been before, and

what's over there? Landmines. I think that's what I'm thinking about, but, no, if you run over one in the DUKW, that's gone, too. Okay, you never knew. It could happen any time. We were lucky enough to get in and get out, okay, "Get out of the way, because others are coming through, move. Find yourself a place and move it aside, because here it comes, boy." It's a steady stream, okay.

Now, where were the Germans? I never saw them, I just heard about them, but, in the breakthrough that following winter, the Bulge, really never saw them. In fact, some of the concentration camps, they wouldn't let our group see it, but Patton's group, they could go walk into those camps and see them. Concentration camps, they were a mess, too, boy, but they wouldn't let us see it.

SI: You had said earlier that you were at Le Havre when the Battle of the Bulge started. Was that correct?

HG: Le Havre.

SI: Yes.

HG: It's a city port, yes.

SI: Yes. You were moved from Le Havre over to the area where the Battle of the Bulge was taking place.

HG: What?

SI: You were moved from Le Havre over to Belgium, where the Battle of the Bulge was taking place, or did you just hear about the Battle of the Bulge?

HG: We were in Le Havre for the winter.

SI: Yes.

HG: Of that year, and, now, when the Bulge took place, I think it was around December, right? No, I don't know where our team was, but I know Russia had attacked, okay. So, there was some diversion, I suppose, okay.

The only thing I knew is that Captain called us to order and he told us that there'd been a breakthrough, and they needed volunteers to fill up the hole. "If you want to volunteer, step right over there. If you don't, no hard feelings, but we're looking for volunteers," and I stood in my place now, but there were other guys who wanted a little action. They left, never saw them again. Now, did they get hurt? What happened? They never came back to that outfit. So, what happened to them? Never saw them again, the ones who volunteered.

Of course, the Bulge was plugged up, but what they found in those suits were young kids, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, and seventeen years of age. They took them out of school, yes, to

fight. So, otherwise, they should've left Russia alone. That's what, sort of, the lesson was. You made a peace agreement with them, and then, you break it. Then, the weather wasn't good to you, also, half your army froze to death. He just made the wrong move, that's all, because, see, Adolf Hitler was much like, believe it or not, Trump, "You do what I tell you to do."

SI: Yes.

HG: Right, he'd talk over his [experts], whoever had the experience in fighting and whatnot.

CC: His advisers, yes.

HG: Yes, "You do what I want you to do. I have the last word," and you see what the result was--boy, the Russians ate him up, man. I'm still trying to think of that city they tried to overrun. That's where the Russians caught them, boy, stopped them dead on their heels, man.

SI: Stalingrad? [Editor's Note: The Battle of Stalingrad occurred from August 1942 to February of 1943.]

HG: Stalingrad, thank you.

CC: Very good, wow.

SI: You were at Le Havre for a while. Le Havre, you were stationed there for a while.

HG: Hey, we're still at Le Havre, I believe now--let me think now--because we played Patton's team that May. We were still in Le Havre, working the ports, okay.

SI: Yes.

HG: Yes, so, now, I left Le Havre for Biarritz American University. When I went, that went from--what, October to February, January of 19, is that, '46?--yes. No, '45, it was, because '46, I was a freshman at Rutgers.

SI: You would have been playing with the team until February of 1946.

HG: Right.

SI: Yes, then, come home from there.

HG: Now, because, see, when I got home in June of 19--not June, I got home. Shaun, you'll have to correct it, because I have to think of, "Where did I go?"

SI: Sure.

HG: When I came out of the Army now, my mother no longer lived on Hickory Street. [laughter] Now, where the hell do I go? I'm discharged in March, again, of 1946, okay. I found

my mother had moved in with my aunt. She had married and bought a house in Orange, New Jersey. She and my sister were staying there. My brother was at Morgan, and so, he had rented the room there, so that when he came home during the holidays, he had a place to stay.

So, I just left [the Army]. Naturally, I came, got out in March, and I came into my aunt's, to live with my aunt and her husband, and my mother and my sister were there. So, my sister did most of the cooking, because my sister was there and my mother was there. So, there was no problem in cooking, okay.

Now, a funny thing happened. I'm thinking about, "What do I want to do now?" but I know I want to go to college, okay. The GIs have a bill from that. They're going to pay for my going to college, the GI Bill. I had thought about going to Morgan, where my brother was, okay.

[Editor's Note: The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, known as the GI Bill of Rights, offered funding for college or vocational education, as well as one year of unemployment and loans to buy homes, to returning World War II veterans.]

SI: Sure.

HG: Now, do I go to Morgan? Where do I go? When I came to live with my aunt, somehow--you remember the name Henry Benkert, the coach?

SI: Yes.

HG: Okay. He no longer was the head coach at Orange High School, but, I guess, he was still recruiting for Rutgers. Henry Benkert came by my aunt's house to see me and said, "Harvey, I'd like to take you down to meet Harvey Harman, the new coach at Rutgers." He was an Army admiral, I believe. "I'd like to take you down to meet him," and I said, "Well, sure."

Now, that gave me a choice. I could either go to Rutgers or I could go to Morgan where my brother was, but he had graduated by this time. So, sure enough, he came by on recruitment day at Rutgers, took me down to the campus. I met Harvey Harman and his coaches, okay, Art Matsu--who's the other one? I'll think of him later, but ...

[Editor's Note: Harvey Harman served as the head coach of the Rutgers Football team from 1938 to 1941 and then again from 1945 to 1955. During World War II, he served in the Navy. He lived from 1900 to 1969. Arthur Matsu (1904-1987) served as an assistant coach for the Rutgers Football team from 1931 into the 1950s.]

SI: I know there was an Art Matsu.

HG: Matsu.

SI: Yes.

HG: Right, right.

SI: And, I am trying to, yes ...

HG: There's one, a guy who played for Fordham.

SI: We can put it in later. [Editor's Note: Mr. Grimsley was referring to Alexander "Alex" Sabo, the Rutgers Football team's end coach, who had played for Fordham.]

HG: It'll come to me later, but, anyway, while I was there, meeting everybody, sure enough, [I met] Bucky Hatchett, out of Verona, New Jersey, kid who was All-State in football, basketball, and track, fresh out of high school, and, also, Henry Pryor, great runner out of South Orange, New Jersey, okay. He had been in the Marines, and he was being recruited. So, what I found out now, I was selected because I could use the GI Bill, okay. So, that saved ...

[Editor's Note: William F. "Bucky" Hatchett (1927-2011), a three-sport athlete at Verona High School, went on to successfully play basketball and football at Rutgers and, also, served as President of the Class of 1950. In 1991, Hatchett became a member of the Rutgers Athletics Hall of Fame. Henry Tower "Hank" Pryor (1924-2011) was a Marine Corps veteran and Rutgers Football Hall of Famer in 1994.]

JS: A scholarship?

SI: A football scholarship?

HG: It saved another spot, okay. Now, I believe we used it, too, now, okay. So, that's what [happened]. So, seeing Bucky Hatchett and Henry Pryor, that was enough for me, two of my old buddies. Well, I didn't know Bucky Hatchett that well, but you know he was a great athlete, boy, coming out of Verona. I don't know whether you ever heard of him or not.

SI: Oh, yes, sure.

HG: But, he's an All-American, all-around, okay, Hall of Fame in basketball and football at Rutgers.

SI: Yes.

HG: So, that's where I decided to hang my shoes. That's where I met--now, we both have the same name, Harvey--Harvey Harman and I just didn't get along for some reason.

SI: Yes.

HG: Oh, what a bind, I don't think he trusted me as being a good runner, okay. So, I made the squad. I ran well enough to run the squad, but, now, about two weeks before the game opener--that was going to be at Columbia in New York--I bumped my left leg and had a kink in it, all right.

So, now, how well I ran, was it well enough to run on? But, anyway, that was the excuse that Harvey Harman used to push me back to play with the JV squad, okay. The JV squad was going to play at Rutgers against Navy, okay. So, it was a home game for me and an away game for the varsity, and they played against Columbia. I forget the name of the quarterback that Columbia had, was pretty good, but, see, we had Frankie Burns. Frankie Burns was just as good or better.

[Editor's Note: Frank R. Burns played quarterback for Rutgers from 1945 to 1948. He later coached for Rutgers and served as head coach of the Rutgers Football team from 1973 to 1983.]

So, on the opening day, or a couple of days before the opening Saturday in New York, Harvey Harman told me that he thinks I need a little more training, and he's going to start me on the JVs squad, won't take me to New York City. So, in other words, I had to work my way back up, okay. Sure enough, Rutgers played against ...

JS: Columbia?

HG: Columbia that Saturday, and Columbia had beat them 13-0.

JS: 13-7, right?

HG: Or, was it 13-7?

JS: 13-7, I think. [Editor's Note: Columbia beat Rutgers 13-7 on September 28, 1946, at Baker Field in New York City.]

HG: Yes, okay. I scored five touchdowns against Navy's B-squad that Saturday, same Saturday. I don't know, I just felt like running. Maybe I was running because I was angry, maybe I was running because I was in good shape--I don't know what it was, but they couldn't stop me, really. It came so easy, it was a shame. I just thought, I said, "Well, I could've given one of those touchdowns to the varsity, had I played, but, hey, he's the coach."

So, in the next game, I sat on the bench, and he had a habit now--I was a right halfback, Hank Pryor was a left halfback. He would always call the two of us to come in at the same time. Why? I don't know. Hank was from the veterans, also, the ...

SI: GI Bill.

HG: Yes. Now, what was that? Now, I'm a right halfback, Hank's a left halfback. He would send us both in at the same time. Right away, *The Targum* picked that up, boy, that they had--what was it, these twins?--"Gold Dust Twins." Hank and I became "The Gold Dust Twins." So, now--but that's all right, but I don't know that. [Editor's Note: "The Gold Dust Twins" refers to racist caricatures of African American children used as the trademark for Fairbank's Gold Dust Washing Powder, dating back to the nineteenth century.]

The first time I got in was about--I think it was the second game at home. He asked me to go in at right halfback, but he didn't ask Hank to go in. The first play, I went sixty yards for a

touchdown. The next time I got my hands on the ball, it was forty yards for a touchdown. I scored two touchdowns just like that, to win.

I guess the name "Gold Dust Twins," "Rutgers and The Gold Dust Twins," I don't know whether you've ever seen that headline, but that was mainly in *The Targum* now.

SI: Yes.

HG: Because Hank and I went down to *The Targum*. We told them that we knew each other, but we weren't brothers. "Now, if you want your windows to stay unbroken--put it in there again, you're going to find some broken windows," and they stopped. They were polite enough to stop it.

It just seemed as though I could play, but I couldn't play, and it was back and forth. Like, every time I got my hands on the ball, I'd score a touchdown. What was it?--and I still was just a right halfback, until I guess, now, we were playing against Lafayette, at Lafayette. Lafayette was pretty good at that time and they were in our way as far as for the little cup that we played for, [The Middle Three Cannon]. We went up there on a day when it had rained, October day when it had rained, and their field was kind of muddy, okay. So, you needed cleats on.

We went, in the first half, no score, third quarter, no score. We went into the fourth quarter, and I'm still sitting on the bench. Finally, he says, "Grimsley, get in there;" so, first carry, sixty yards for a touchdown. They fumbled on the forty-yard--forty yards for a touchdown; the next touchdown, sixty yards for a touchdown. [laughter] Now, that was against Lafayette, and I guess that's when he says, "Well, maybe I deserve to be the right halfback," but it never did happen, okay. I was in and out of any game we played, okay.

It's just a question [of], "Why did he never trust me as been the player that I was?" I always had [to be] coming behind something, okay. He never gave me a straight-out start and said, "Hey, play the game. See what you can do," never had that chance.

JS: Harvey, you're saying never?

HG: To start a game and play fully.

JS: Not even when you were in your senior year?

HG: Not even in my senior year.

JS: Well, Harvey, tell Shaun the story, early on in your football career at Rutgers, when the coach told you what position you were supposed to play. You remember that story?

HG: Oh, yes, he wanted me to--when we were in pre-training, now, I'm a running back, okay. Sure, I guess I could've played offensive or defensive guard, either, okay, but, when he said, "Linemen over here, backfield over here," I moved to go to the backfield.

He grabbed me by the shoulder, said, "Grimsley, you go over there with the linemen." I looked at him and I said, "Well, Coach, I'm a runner, okay." I said, "I run the football." That probably pissed him off like you don't want to believe, boy.

JS: Yes, right. [laughter]

SI: Yes.

HG: You going to take away the only thing I got? [laughter] So, I just went on over with the other backfield runners, and I guess that kind of put me in a spot, right there. When are you going to give me a chance to show what I've got, okay? So, I don't know, but Harman, he's my coach, but he's always spotty, never could depend on him. I could never get one streak going or whatnot, always an interruption. Okay, he kept me off balance, okay. So, all those touchdowns I scored, it's just, as far as I'm concerned, by luck; nothing was planned. I was just in a ballgame.

JS: Yes, but the incredible thing, Harvey, is you scored all those touchdowns, went into the Rutgers Hall of Fame, but never as a starter.

[Editor's Note: Mr. Grimsley was inducted into the Rutgers Athletic Hall of Fame in 1993. His citation on the [Scarletknights.com website](http://Scarletknights.com) reads, "The leading scorer with 168 points for four varsity seasons during the "Golden Era" between 1946 and 1949, Grimsley tallied eight touchdowns in three of his four seasons, when the Scarlet Knights posted a 28-8 record. In 1947, the 26-year old Army veteran averaged over five yards per carry and scored 48 points for the third time in an outstanding career. He capped his career by racing 63 yards in characteristic fashion for a touchdown against Fordham in his final contest. He scored two or more touchdowns in a game 11 times, and had 28 touchdowns for his career.]

CC: In spite of not starting.

JS: Right, right.

HG: Yes.

SI: Do you think it was just his way of coaching, or was there a bias element?

HG: He was in the Army. He was an Army admiral, yes.

JS: Admiral--what?

HG: Not admiral.

JS: General.

HG: General? Was he a general? I'm not sure.

JS: I don't know, but he was a ranking officer?

SI: He may ...

HG: Yes, he was a ranking officer.

SI: Yes.

HG: Yes, but, hey, at that time, that's the way it was.

JS: Yes.

HG: Because, again, now, I'm fighting something, too, now, okay. I'm looking at myself and how far do I go with Civil Rights and all this?

JS: Right.

HG: When I stomp and yell, or said, "Enough," or whatnot. We were playing NYU at Yankee Stadium on a Saturday morning, eleven o'clock in the morning. So, what we're going to do, we're going to take the bus from New Brunswick up to Yankee Stadium, run around and loosen up and get used to the place and whatnot, get back on the bus and go to the Rye Country Club, where they had asked for so many beds for a football team to come in and spend the night, getting ready for a game the next day at eleven o'clock, okay.

Fine, so, we go to the stadium and we look at it. We could feel the grass and we looked around it, as big as it was and whatnot. We get back on the bus and we go up to the front door of the Rye Country Club. Now, the coaches, Harman normally got off first, and then, the rest of the coaches behind him, and they enter into the foyer where the manager of the hotel is, or whatever he is, okay. So, he's there and he looks up. Then, he puts down his pencil and he runs to the front door, "Stop, stop--those negroes can't come in here," and Hank and I were the only two on the team at that time. Among all the rest of them, how did you see us two? [laughter]

Now, I look at Hank, I look at the Coach, I look behind me, and there's the rest of the team gathered behind me. Now, do I yell out and say, "Hey, I'm part of this team?" What do I say, or do you keep your mouth shut? You don't speak for the team, but I looked at Hank. So, Harman pulls us over to the side with the manager and said, "Harvey, we found a place for you to stay with close-by neighbors. We'll pick you up in the morning on the way to Yankee Stadium."

So, there was no fuss, no fight. Hank and I left and they took us to this neighbor's house. We met them and whatnot. They had done it before. So, I think I had a ticket and Hank had a ticket. We gave them the tickets to come see the ballgame. Sure enough, Hank was able to score a touchdown, so was I. So, we gave them what they came here for. That's the way I look at it, okay.

SI: Wow.

HG: But, this is back in those days where, hey, they're putting out black cats when you come up to bat and all that. I don't know whether you call them "The Horrible '60s" or what? What do you call them, the '50s or what? What do you call them days, Civil Rights all over the place, marching?

SI: Yes.

JS: Well, yes, that was even before Civil Rights, Harvey. You were talking about in the '40s, the late '40s, you were playing football.

HG: Right, I'm saying I was coming up then.

JS: There was no Civil Rights, not until the late '50s.

CC: Right.

HG: Well, we were on the edge of it. That's the only thing I can say.

JS: I don't even know if that. [laughter]

HG: Yes, but, hey, you take what you can get and you run with it.

JS: Right, right.

HG: I made up my mind, come to Rutgers. Now, do I switch and go to Morgan? no.

JS: Yes.

HG: Hank's going to hang in, Bucky's going to hang in. We all hung in, okay. Bucky became our class president, okay. You stay there and you hold on, that's all. Then, Hank Pryor had the nerve to be drafted for--now, what was the war [that] came?

SI: The Korean War?

HG: The Korean War. [Editor's Note: The Korean War was fought from 1950 to 1953.]

SI: Yes.

HG: Went right back in. I said, "This son of a gun." So, I gave him the name, "Double Duty." [laughter] You just came out of a war, played four years of football, and then, you go back to war--what a life.

SI: Wow.

HG: So, but those were those days. Now, how far are we from there now? Man, I hope we are way away from that, but I don't know, with Bush ...

JS: Trump?

SI: Trump?

HG: Trump in there, I don't know where we are today.

SI: Were there other cases where you had to separate from the team because of accommodations or other things?

HG: I don't think so. Those are the main ones that I can think of. I don't think so.

SI: Okay. Did the team ever go south of Maryland?

HG: Well, we scrimmaged against Navy now, okay. When I went down to Navy to play, scrimmage, the first time I broke off a tackle and was going for a touchdown, the coach is running along with me and saying, "Stop that black nigger."

SI: Wow.

HG: Almost running as fast as I am. So, what I tried to do is get even, steal one of their blankets, Naval blankets. Of course, they caught me. They opened it up and found my blanket, and nice enough to take it off and not say a word. [laughter]

So, but this is just growing up, I guess, and learning, now, how does your life fit into all this mess? Can we ever straighten it out? Can we ever make it the place for everybody that we want it to be? Isn't that the promise of it? You can come to America and be whoever you want to be. You can be equal with anyone.

Now, I'm looking up--am I in the wrong place? Am I in the wrong place? You don't know. It's still here with us. Now, can we get away from it? I'm not trying to be political now, because we call ourselves--we're supposed to be the great what?

SI: Democracy?

HG: Democracy. Are we? I mean, I'm just speaking from my side of it now, my experience. I mean, I think I've taken everything America can give me and I've dealt with it so far, but have we reached the level of democracy that this country really needs to have? We're still arguing over abortions and crap. I say, when are we going to stop it and start living? We're still fighting over women's rights. According to Donald Trump, they're supposed to be doing great, though, and I wonder about that. That movement to hire women started way before he got in there.

SI: Well, let us take another break.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: We were talking a little bit about your time at Rutgers on the football team. Did you play any other sports while you were at Rutgers?

HG: I only played football there. Oh, wait a minute now, I did play freshman basketball.

SI: Okay.

HG: By a guy by the name of Bob Sterling. I don't know whether you ever heard of him, though. He was the freshman basketball coach at Rutgers when I got there. [Editor's Note: Robert M. Sterling (1918-2019) coached and taught physical education at Rutgers, then, worked at Piscataway High School for thirty years as its Athletic Director.]

SI: Yes.

HG: I played basketball for him in my freshman year, okay. Now, what was my point? Well, I made the varsity for the next year, that I know. What was I going to say about Bob Sterling? He was the freshman [coach]. He became the Athletic Director at Piscataway High School now, and that's Rutgers, too, in a sense.

SI: Yes.

HG: But, he grew up in that area and he was well-known, so that, one year, when Taigia went there, he brought me in as his assistant coach. Now, Piscataway High School was brand-new. So, when they started a sports program, they couldn't have a football team that'd count until somebody reached their senior year, okay, until a group reached their senior year. Otherwise, seniors play against seniors.

[Editor's Note: Anthony Orsini served as the first head football coach at Piscataway High School. James Taigia, who played as a guard at Rutgers with Mr. Grimsley, coached at Piscataway, as well as Rahway High School and Hillsdale High School, before returning to Rutgers as an offensive line coach in 1968.]

So, they didn't have seniors, where you're recruiting from, because Piscataway was a brand-new high school at the time. We had to wait for the junior year to the senior year, before the class became seniors, ready to play varsity football. Otherwise, you couldn't be varsity unless you were a senior. That's the way they started.

SI: Yes.

HG: So that any time, any coaching you did, you had to do for free. So, I came in along with Taigia and it was two years of free and one year of varsity. That was our hold still, okay. So, if you wanted to coach, you start coaching that team for the first two years, and then, become seniors in that third year. Then, it's real.

We worked together to build a football team, calling it *esprit de corps*, okay. We played other junior teams until it was time, so that when it became time for the senior year, now, the head

coach got five hundred dollars, okay, assistant coach got 250, which is okay. I'm coaching because I want to coach, okay.

SI: Yes.

HG: To me, that was my lifetime. I wanted to be a school teacher and a football coach. Whether I made head coach, well, that was doubtful, but, anyway, I took the job. I switched and came to Piscataway and, sure enough, put in two good building years, as I called it. Then, for the senior year, we got paid, okay. Believe it or not, back in those days now, for you to get five hundred dollars payment, see, the school--all football--was over every Thanksgiving. That's the way the old-time was.

SI: Yes.

HG: Everybody's last game of the season was Thanksgiving, all across the state. I don't think it's that way anymore. They can go longer or shorter. Even that 250 dollars, where we were at the time, if you got that 250 dollars around Christmas time, that was a pretty nice check. So, the head coaching job was really important, I guess, now, if you look at it that way, okay.

The only smartest guy that I know that ever coached in New Jersey was a guy out of Montclair by the name of Clary Anderson. He skipped all that stuff. He said, "I'll tell you what. I don't want the board to pay me anything. I just want you to give me a nickel on every head at home games on Saturdays." Can you imagine that?

SI: Wow.

HG: Figure it out now--Montclair used to draw fifteen thousand people at home games on every Saturday that they played.

SI: Wow.

HG: Especially home games, okay. How many nickels would fifteen thousand be? Anybody got a calculator?

JS: Seven hundred thousand nickels?

SI: 750 dollars?

JS: You're saying fifteen thousand, right?

HG: Fifteen thousand, home games now, only on home games.

JS: Fifteen thousand.

HG: "I want a nickel on every head."

JS: Right, fifteen thousand divided by twenty, right.

SI: Yes.

JS: Yes, yes. Well, I'm sure my brain is shot, so, I'll just use the old calculator here-- fifteen thousand divided by twenty--750.

SI: 750 per game, wow.

HG: Per game.

SI: Yes.

HG: And say, you got, there are normally about twelve games, right?

SI: Yes.

HG: For six games, how much is it?

JS: So, times six equals 4,500.

SI: 4,500.

HG: Much better than 250, isn't it?

SI: Yes, considerably.

HG: You see what I'm talking about?

SI: Yes.

HG: If you played all home games, then, how much would that be?

SI: Nine thousand dollars?

HG: Back in that day, that was better than a week's pay.

SI: Yes.

HG: Yes. See, if you're a thinker, you can do this. That's what Clary had.

CC: What year did you coach in Piscataway, Harvey?

HG: 1957 until 1970.

CC: Right. So, what was the first high school that you coached at?

HG: South Side High School, now called Malcom X. [Editor's Note: South Side High School in Newark, New Jersey, founded in 1914, was renamed Malcolm X Shabazz High School in 1972.]

CC: Okay, so, tell them about that experience, when you got out of the service.

HG: Oh, yes. When I graduated, I'm looking for a job, and I want to stick with coaching if I can. I just happened to--I had taken the Newark exams. Now, you had to pass the Newark teaching exam, like the rest of them, for permanents, okay. Otherwise, you were only put on a substitutes' list.

SI: Yes.

HG: They only call you when they need you, but, anyway, that's what I was going around doing, putting my name on substitute lists. Someone said, "Hey, man, why don't you go on down to South Side High School, put your name on that list?" I wasn't thinking about anything, went down there, walked into the office. I said, "My name is Harvey Grimsley. I'd like to put my name on the substitutes' list." The guy who was standing there was Otto Stoll.

That summer, they had lost their head football coach and they made him the head football coach, because he was an athletic teacher, but he'd never coached. What do you do? He says, "Are you Harvey Grimsley?" I said, "Yes." He said, "How would you like to be a backfield coach for me?" I said, "I don't have tenure." He said, "I can fix that. I can make you a permanent--permanent substitute."

SI: Oh.

HG: "You get a substitute's pay permanently, so [that] you get a check every month we play, okay." So, well, hey, I'm going into my first year--hey, I'll try that one. Sure enough, they hired me as assistant backfield coach under Otto Stoll and Peter DelGuercio. Where did Peter come from? He was out of Newark, but he became the line coach, hell of a line coach, boy, believe me.

We sat down in a meeting, trying to explain, "What kind of offense should we use now?" because, remember, most of us grew up under the single wing. The T formation was just coming in after the war.

SI: Yes.

HG: So, it was being experimented with. It's still experimental, but I had seen somewhere where Oklahoma used a split T, okay, but you need speed. "Ah, South Side has nothing but speed," sat down with Otto Stoll, showed him the formation, possibility of plays off that, "Because there's got to be some speed at South Side High School. Look at it, it's mostly black kids, and I know there's some speed there." Sure enough, we picked the right one, boy, because we had a kid by the name--what's ...

CC: Jimmy Graham.

HG: Jimmy Graham. We put in a system there, a split T, and it's only a thing of where it's finding a hole. To your right is one, to your left is two, three, four, five, six, okay. Now, the whole idea is, in line play, trying to drive a guy back, okay, and out of the way. "Uh-uh, we don't want you to use your strength for that. We want you [to] take all your force, hit the guy and stand him up, knock him off balance, okay."

Now, it's up to the quarterback to be fast enough, whereby wherever that hole is that that halfback has to run through, he can find it without looking for that ball, because that ball's going to come to him now, maybe or not, because the quarterback can put it in or take it out. It's up to the discretion of the quarterback.

Now, the quarterback has to be fast also, because he's got to go down the line. So, if he, say, goes to his right, he's got to come out, show that ball to that first hole--if it's open, let it go. If that person is at full, let it go, you go to the second one--if it's open, hand it to him. The only thing you have to do is feel the ball, grab it when you feel it and go as fast as you can.

Now, yes, it was awkward. It was awkward the first year, a little less awkward the second year. That third year, we start kicking butt. Man, I've never seen kids run like that [in] all my life. I mean, that thing came together.

Now, the funny thing about it, I had a thing where--I'm still in shape, all the practicing and all the tune-ups we did--at the end of the day, you had to race against me, okay. If you beat me, then, you're good. All of us had to run a hundred-yard dash, me along with the kids. Now, who can beat me at the hundred-yard dash? They tried. I mean, they tried, boy.

Now, I think Jimmy Graham was the only one that beat me, if I can recall now, okay, but, boy, the way he learned to find that hole and cut back on it, boy, and free. [laughter] That thing worked so [well], I didn't want to believe it, that thing could work that easy. Oh, man, that thing worked pretty--find that hole, hit it and gone. We had the City Championship in four years, all off speed, wasn't only blocking somebody down, just move them out the way, just block them from getting to the ball, "Whoosh."

Would I do it again? Could it work again? I don't know. I'd like to find out. Does that system still work? I don't know, but it worked for us one time, that's the only thing I can say, and that was the City Championship.

SI: Wow.

HG: And then, again, I didn't know I was the first black coach to coach in Newark.

CC: He was the first black coach in Essex County.

HG: In Essex County.

CC: He was the first black coach in Essex County, Assistant Coach.

HG: All this football and I'm the first one.

CC: All that time.

SI: Wow.

CC: And, besides being a football coach, Harvey also was an adviser to the football players or the basketball players, whoever was on staff. This is our story. [Editor's Note: Dr. Coles graduated from South Side High School in 1959.]

One day, Harvey called me, stopped me in the hallway or in the office, and said, "Charlie, what are you going to do with the rest of your life? What's your forecast? What's your dream?" I said, "Well, I want to go to college and play football, play baseball and maybe basketball, but I want to become a pro ballplayer," like all kids--we all feel like we can.

I said, "But, I've got to go to college to develop my talent," because I knew that I needed more, because I was a good athlete, but I was not the All-American, all-star athlete. I still had to learn more. Harvey still took time out to talk to me, even though I wasn't the All-American athlete. So, I said, "Well..." and he looked at me straight in my eyes and he said, "Charlie, not with these grades."

So, [for] the first time in my school history, I got a wake-up call, that my grades were insufficient to go to a college program. At that time, my grades were somewhere maybe around a "C-minus." Once Harvey shared that with me, instead of me leaving my books in the locker, I took my books home. I started to do my homework and I started to study.

HG: I started him reading.

CC: And, from my junior year on, I made the honor roll. My sister--I didn't share this with you and Jim beforehand--my sister went to Douglass College. She's a Rutgers graduate. My sister was the valedictorian at our high school. She made the honor rolls every semester.

SI: Wow.

CC: When persons and students looked on the board to the honor roll mentions, they saw "C. Coles, Charles Coles," they thought it was a mistake, because they're used to seeing my sister's name there. "What's your name doing there?" and, from that moment on, I had a "B-plus" average. I got nothing but "As" and "Bs," which is the reason why I was able to get into college to begin with.

SI: Yes.

CC: I went down to Rutgers and they told me that there's no [room], not this year, but, next year, I'd be able to come in, but I went on to Upsala College. [Editor's Note: Upsala College was a

private college in East Orange, New Jersey, that operated from 1893 to 1995.] After two years of Upsala College, I went into the chiropractic area, the Chiropractic Institute in New York City. I had a couple of motorcycle accidents, so, I didn't graduate from that institution.

I spent a few years working in insurance in the New Jersey area, and I decided to work for Johnson & Johnson Company as a rep for Chicopee Mills, which is a division of J&J. So, I went to Chicago and I worked there for ten years. I became dissatisfied working in the corporate American industry and I went back to school and got my doctorate at the Chicago National College of Naprapathy. So, that was my first doctorate. Then, I got another doctorate in naturopathic work and I got my third doctorate in divinity.

So, then, I went on to open up my center in East Orange, New Jersey, which was named the Rejuvenation Holistic Healing Center. So, I became a holistic doctor, and I owe all of this to my conversation, or Harvey's conversation with me, of, "What are you going to do after high school?"

SI: Wow.

CC: So, without that wakeup call, my whole life would've not been as what it is right now.

SI: Yes.

CC: Because, with a "C-minus" average, you can't go to college, you can't do this [or that], and who knows what the streets would've offered me?

SI: Yes.

HG: I thank you, Charlie, but the funny thing about it, it was always easy for me to tell somebody else instead of myself, okay. [laughter] I don't know, I've had so many people in my lifetime come up to me and thank me, because, when I went out to Illinois, as the Chief Council recruiter, our first opening day for classes, we only had five hundred students. We had to reach that mark before we could open up. We managed to get five hundred students to open up. Now, it's two thousand students, most of them female.

For some reason, during that time, being out there in Illinois, I learned how to reach more females than males. So, if you go back to Governors State University in University Park, you're going to walk in there and the first thing you're going to bump into is a female head, female deans, female counselors--everything is doggone near female. Now, when I first came there, I'm going to look for football players.

SI: Yes.

HG: My background, okay, or basketball players, but I recruited more women in my life [than] I ever recruited men. There are two thousand students at Governors State right now. Now, I'm gone, but most of it [was due] to my recruitment and counseling. They've got the same positions that men have. That's what I've seen in my lifetime.

SI: Yes.

HG: A school change from male domination to female domination.

SI: You said you were at Piscataway until 1970.

HG: Well, Piscataway, now, again, I had tenure there, but what happened is that Bob Sterling, I told you, I had played basketball for [him], was the Athletic Director at Piscataway. The two years that I gave him coaching for free, we played, when it came time for--no, no, what happened is that, in that, before we could start that fourth year, varsity, Taigia, Jim Taigia, the head coach at that time, that I came in under, and should've been second to, I guess, left. He went back to Rutgers.

SI: Okay.

HG: Rutgers recruited him back as line coach for them.

SI: Yes.

HG: So, he took more money. Now, that left the head coaching job in Piscataway open, see. During the summer, I used to drive for Rheingold. [Editor's Note: Rheingold, a New York City-based beer company with breweries in the Northeast, operated from 1883 to 1976.]

SI: Okay.

HG: Yes, I made more money driving for Rheingold than I did at Piscataway.

SI: Wow.

HG: Because driving a beer truck was good money, okay, but, anyway, during the summer, I worked, came back to find out I had a new head coach, okay, a young kid just out of college. Now, I've had two years of experience. I'm sitting up there waiting for it, and he brought in this young kid, over me.

Now, I think it might've had to do with the money, I think now, okay, five hundred dollars, okay. He's going to pay me five hundred dollars for being the head coach, and then, the assistant coach would be only making 250. Now, do you dare hand a black guy, at that time, the head coaching job, making more money than the lineman? That might've had something to do with it, I don't know, but I didn't get the head coaching job.

I did stay to coach for him, because it's so new and abrupt that I didn't have time to think about it. "So, yes, I'll go ahead and coach, until I find something else," and that's exactly what I did. I just knew, as long as I coached there, I'd never be head coach, okay. So, when I got the opening, they offered me the recruiter-counseling job at Rutgers--not Rutgers.

SI: Governors.

HG: Governors State University, I said, "I'm gone." So, I had gotten married. So, I brought my family to Illinois. Building a new type of education, a new type of curriculum, everything was new, and that was the best job I've ever had in my life, really. That was fun. You're just going around talking to people and, like what Charlie's saying, you encouraged people, "Come on and do something with your life."

It just so happened I was going to schools or junior colleges where a lot of women were, okay, and most of them carried nursing programs that we could top, easy. It was like handing it to me. [laughter] The only thing I had to do was hit junior colleges, make one round once every spring, and, hey, I got the numbers. I mean, they came.

What else were we good at? Our music program, that came out of just plain old music. We brought in a guy who created a jazz band on a college level. Now, most of these guys were recruited out of Chicago, our jazz band. They traveled, too. I wish you could've heard those guys. We had the best jazz band, I'm going to say--no, I'd better leave it at Illinois and not say the United States. [laughter]

SI: Yes.

HG: But, every summer, they would have a jazz band and, boy, people'd come from all over for that one event that day, okay. I'm trying to think of his last name, but can't pull it up right now. When he left, just crashed, just never heard of it again, okay.

Recruiting, to me, was a lot of fun. You meet more people. They used to have a weekend; it's almost like all the colleges across the nation, from Massachusetts to California or LA. If you wanted to have some new [presentation], they had seminars--whatever you had and you want to display--we had this weekend. What do you call it?--carnival-like, started on a Friday afternoon, into the night, then, all-day Saturday, then, a half a day Sunday and you closed down, okay.

That was always a good feeling, just to come and meet students and professors, and students came. They had seminars, all on the newest stuff, that you could go to each day, hear this lecture or that lecture and whatnot, beautifully done. So, hey, Illinois had a lot going for it now, other than the crime you heard about, but I enjoyed that job greatly, best job I ever had in my life.

SI: How long were you there?

HG: 1970 until--believe it or not, I didn't get tenure--1998.

SI: Wow.

HG: 1970 to 1998.

CC: Eighteen [twenty-eight] years.

HG: And it was a political move, again, too, okay.

SI: Yes.

HG: But, that's still all right. I was kind of tired of doing everything anyway, and I needed a break. So, I just let it go and retired. I didn't want to fight it. I had the time, but that was politics, all politics. That's what that was.

SI: Yes.

CC: What is very unique at this particular time in our lives is that Harvey and I both moved to Illinois in the 1970s. At that time, I was wondering was Harvey even where he was, because I never got a chance to thank him for that conversation, because I knew, at that time, my going to school and being where I was was because of that conversation. I never saw Harvey again until 2007 or '08, when he came here.

HG: Can you imagine that?

SI: Wow.

CC: So, for over fifty years, I did not even know the existence of my friend.

SI: Wow.

HG: And we wind up on a team to bowl. At that time now, I'm an old-timer now, okay, and Charlie was looking for one person to fill that gap. I'll be damned if I didn't join him and we won the damn thing.

SI: Wow.

HG: So, I was just getting lucky everywhere, I guess. Well, I'm in my nineties and come up all this distance and win a senior citizen's championship for the fall--can't beat that, can you?

SI: Wow.

HG: Yes, so, that's life.

CC: That's great.

HG: And, if you live it--and Charlie is not the only one I talked to. I've talked to so many kids. You'd be surprised how many females would come back to me and say, "Oh, Mr. Grimsley, I want to thank you for bringing me down," because some of them, I'd pick up and bring them, let them see the campus, drive them around, show it, okay, because it was a new kind of experience.

There were no grades--"A," "B," "C," "D," gone. You get what you call a competency. When you take this course, you get a printout, "Student capable of," whatever it was, "Student knows

how to do Pi-square," okay. You had the skills, okay. Now, how good they were from "A" to "B," it never said, but it was a new kind of thing we were trying out--didn't make it, because anybody that wanted one of our transcripts wanted to see, "A," "B," "C," "D."

We were too far ahead of our times, okay. We had to drop out [of that policy], but I think it worked out okay, okay. It's back to "A," "B," "C," "D," because you've got scholarships now and financial aid due to your grade point average.

SI: Yes.

HG: And they need that. So, too bad we had to give it up. We couldn't get any support, and I think he got this from--I forget where he got this from--competency-based instead of grade-based, but it was a great experience, okay. It was worth something, picking up your family and going all the way to Illinois. Believe it or not, I don't know how much you've ever been to Chicago, but they've got "The Hawk" out there. You know what "The Hawk" is?

SI: No.

HG: The wind, the wind that comes off that Chicago lake [Lake Michigan].

SI: Oh.

HG: Boy, if you're up there in the wintertime and come around a corner, boy, that wind, they call it "The Hawk," it can be fierce now, but it's really not that bad, because, turn it around, you go to that lakefront during the summer, you'd be at one of the most amazing places in your life.

CC: Yes.

HG: You can go down there and take a boat ride all over the lake and whatnot. They've got a walking place. See, I used to go down there and just take my bicycle and ride down the boardwalk.

CC: They call it Lakeshore Drive.

HG: Lakeshore Drive, boy, or, if you want to jog it, you take your car down there and park and jog about twenty miles and come on back, beautiful.

JS: Harvey, let me ask you, you had an honor bestowed upon you. Charles, I think, and Marcellus, who was involved in the nomination, perhaps, Charles, that was at the City of Newark, right, the Athletic ...

CC: Yes.

JS: Right. Harvey should talk about that. That was a very nice tribute, right?

CC: Yes, New Jersey, the Hall of Fame for New Jersey athletes. [Editor's Note: On October 22, 2015, the Newark Athletic Hall of Fame honored Mr. Grimsley with their Lifetime Achievement Award.]

HG: Yes, that was a beautiful thing. Now, I wasn't [expecting it]. When Charlie was telling me about it, I thought he was talking about a group of athletes, now, coming in and having breakfast together. It was a free breakfast.

CC: No, we're not talking about the hall of fame that I put together. That's the hall of fame for your work as a life coach. I have an organization, that I had made Harvey Grimsley the first inductee into our Life Coaching Hall of Fame, because that's who Harvey is--he's a life coach.

The Hall of Fame that Jim is mentioning about is the New Jersey Athletic Hall of Fame, which we did down in Newark.

JS: Right.

CC: And there's certain athletes that [had] gone to high school here in Newark, gone on to college, start them, and they were nominated to become Hall of Fame members, and in 19--what year was that?

JS: Maybe '16?

CC: 2016, 2015, somewhere around that.

JS: Yes.

CC: We have the book here someplace on his shelf, so, we [can] get the precise year.

JS: Right, right.

CC: So, we can get this precise year, but Harvey is inducted into that Hall of Fame. Lisa came down, his daughter came down, and other persons. I think Russell was there, and I think--did Jimmy Graham come?

JS: Yes, there were a lot of Harvey's former players.

HG: Yes, right.

JS: Former players that he coached.

HG: The one in Newark.

CC: The one in Newark.

JS: Newark, right.

CC: At the Robert Treat [Hotel].

HG: It was for my coaching at South Side, well, now, Malcolm X.

CC: Yes, the coaching you did at South Side, the football playing you did at Rutgers, and all that counted towards your admission into the Hall of Fame, the Athletic Hall of Fame.

HG: Right, okay, okay.

JS: Shaun, do you recognize the name Donald Payne?

SI: Yes, I think so.

JS: He's a Congressman whose district was Newark. [Editor's Note: Donald M. Payne, an Essex County politician and Newark councilman, served New Jersey's 10th Congressional District in the US House of Representatives from 1989 to 2012. His son, Donald M. Payne, Jr., was elected to the 10th Congressional District seat after his father's passing in 2012.]

SI: Yes.

JS: Now, Harvey was very good friends with Donald Payne, right, Harvey?

HG: That's right.

JS: And he was a very prestigious Congressman. Harvey, how did you first meet Donald Payne?

HG: Substitute teacher at ...

CC: South Side.

JS: South Side?

HG: I don't know whether it was South Side, but I guess it's because I was at South Side, right, okay, I met Donald Payne, but he's a Rutgers grad, also. [Editor's Note: Donald Payne graduated from Seton Hall University in 1957.]

JS: I believe he is.

HG: Yes.

JS: What was he doing back when you met him?

HG: Well, he was a student at first, but the last time I saw Donald, well, he was a commissioner, also, and passed away before I could get back here.

JS: Right.

HG: Because Don and I were kind of tight, too.

CC: Donald Payne, at that time that Harvey met Donald Payne, he was a teacher.

JS: He was the teacher, okay.

CC: He was a substitute teacher.

JS: All right.

CC: And he assisted, a volunteer football coach.

SI: Okay.

JS: Right, right.

CC: So, he worked with some of the athletes, and Donald Payne is the gentleman that was the, not a faculty member, he helped to form the Omega Fraternity, because what Donald Payne stood for was athletes getting in school and graduating.

JS: Right, right.

CC: And moving from high school, from the streets, to moving into college.

JS: Right, right, but, back in the day--he died sooner than he should've--but, back in the day, very well-known Congressman.

HG: Oh, he was well-loved.

JS: He was African American.

HG: He was well-liked, but his son took his place, I believe.

CC: Yes.

JS: Right, right.

HG: So, he's commissioner now, yes.

JS: Right, right.

HG: Hey, I remember going back to visit him, because you and I went down to visit him.

JS: We went down to visit Donald Payne, Jr., yes, because Harvey was so tight with his dad.

HG: Yes, I remember that. I haven't been back.

CC: That's good that you got a chance to meet his son.

JS: Yes, that was terrific.

HG: Hey, believe me now, Newark has produced some great people now, believe me.

JS: Yes, oh, yes.

HG: I'm thinking of the other two brothers that used to come to South Side also, but winning that championship that year, that was a pleasure, first time, I think, they'd won the City Championship in football. They could do it in basketball now. They had the basketball players. [laughter]

JS: Yes.

CC: They had good--Cleo Hill was the first.

HG: Oh, man, he could play.

CC: Big-time basketball player to come out of Newark, and then, South Side also had Lonnie Wright, and Lonnie Wright was good enough to play football. [Editor's Note: Cleo Hill (1938-2015) graduated from South Side in 1957, then, played for Winston-Salem State before being drafted by the NBA's St. Louis Hawks in 1961. Lonnie Wright (1945-2012) attended South Side High School, and then, Colorado State University. In 1966, he was drafted into the American Basketball Association and the American Football League. After two years of professional football with the Denver Broncos, he played basketball for the remainder of his career, mostly with the Denver Rockets.]

HG: He was a big one, boy, anything.

CC: Pro football and pro basketball.

HG: That's right.

CC: For Denver. He played guard for basketball and safety for the football team, for the Denver Broncos.

SI: Wow. Did you teach courses in addition to the coaching or were you a full-time coach?

CC: He taught English.

SI: Oh, you taught English, okay.

JS: But, Harvey, you taught a very interesting course out at your university, right, at your college? What was that course? Something about ...

HG: "Stress in Modern-Day Life."

JS: There you go.

HG: Yes.

JS: What was the name of that course? "Managing ...

HG: Just managing your life, so that you can take the stress off you.

SI: Okay.

JS: All right, right, right.

HG: Now, Jim, I still can't bring back the name of the author that I used.

JS: Oh, okay.

HG: There was a certain author that I read, told about stress in America.

JS: I see.

HG: And I used that book for the content of that class.

JS: Right, right.

HG: Yes.

CC: Was it by Han Selye, *The Stress of Life*? [Editor's Note: Hans Selye, a Hungarian physician and pioneer in the study of stress, published *The Stress of Life* in 1956.]

HG: Well, "Stress in Modern Day Life," that's what I gave the title.

JS: Right.

HG: Okay, that was the title of the course. Name of the book, honestly, I wish I could pull that back, because I'd like to know, "Who was it I read that I got some of the information from?" See, I'd read books.

CC: Because Han Selye was the expert, just like Dr. Howard was the expert in enzymes. Hans Selye was the gifted author of *Stress of Life* at that time.

HG: Yes, and remember now, I wasn't an expert on anything. All the people being hired ...

CC: I'll bring that book to you, so [that] you can get the title, okay.

HG: All the people being hired in Governors State, at that time, were people who they wanted to come think and build, and, in the main body, you had to teach one course a year. Like me, the periphery businesses, like recruitment, we had to teach one course.

CC: Oh, okay.

HG: Okay. So, if I was only going to teach one course, what do I write about, recruitment? So, I just happened, used to read this guy, and I can't bring his name. I've read so many books, I forgot him, okay, but I'd learned lessons from him and took him to teach a course, that I [used him] for a lot of it.

CC: Yes.

HG: And it went fairly successful.

CC: Right.

HG: People came, they took it, and I hope they learned something from it. We even included dancing.

JS: Right.

HG: You want to break some stress? Take your wife and dance with her.

JS: Yes, right.

HG: You know that. It's so many little simple ways of making your life [good], to make it happy and [to] make other people happy. Women love to dance. If you want to make her happy, grab her and take a couple steps with her.

JS: That's right. Hey, Harvey, there's something we talked about in the car, so, it didn't get on to the tape, but, of course, you came down, along with Charles and your daughter and some of your friends, to be at the Paul Robeson dedication ceremony, Paul Robeson Plaza dedication. Now, I'll tell you, Shaun.

SI: Yes.

JS: I've never seen someone as motivated, as absolutely motivated, to be at that ceremony as Harvey.

SI: Yes.

JS: And, Harvey, why don't you talk a little bit [about], because we talked in the car, but not on tape, why were you so motivated to be at the dedication of Paul Robeson Plaza?

HG: First of all, Jim, you know how I felt about you.

JS: Yes.

HG: Okay. [laughter] Boy, I saw you digging and pushing and pulling and everything. Now, how in the hell can I help my buddy, okay? That's why I tried to get Marcellus [King] and Charlie and whoever else ... [Editor's Note: Mr. Savage and his classmates in the Class of 1971 conceived of and led the effort to build the Paul Robeson Plaza.]

JS: More so than me, Robeson, okay. What was it about Robeson that you so respect?

HG: First of all, his great talent, okay, Paul Robeson.

JS: Right.

HG: He was a hero of mine, I know, okay.

JS: Right.

HG: Then, just the idea of how you wanted to put it out there.

JS: Yes.

HG: I got caught up in some of your emotions.

JS: Okay. [laughter]

HG: Okay, and so, now, how can I help this man, okay? So that that's why I wanted to pull in Charlie, pull in Marcellus, pull in whoever wanted it.

JS: Right, right.

HG: Spread the word, that's all we wanted to do.

JS: Right.

CC: But, why was he your hero?

JS: Robeson?

CC: Yes. Why did you like Paul Robeson? What did his accomplishments mean to you, personally?

HG: Just his name, that's all, just the Paul Robeson name is magic to me, okay. I knew about Paul Robeson.

CC: What did you know about him? Good.

HG: Well, now, again, Roselle, New Jersey, there was a doctor out there, and I've forgotten his name, okay. Paul Robeson was good friends with Doctor--I almost said his name. Now, the Doctor out there in Roselle, his daughter married Henry Pryor. We played football.

JS: Oh, okay.

HG: For Rutgers. So, they were tight, and one of the football players on the team married his daughter. That kind of tied us together with Paul Robeson and whatnot. Otherwise, I've met--so many ways of how people met Paul Robeson and they know about him, even, like, Henry Benkert. Who would ever think that Henry Benkert would recruit me? And he was a good friend of Paul Robeson.

CC: Oh, okay.

HG: Otherwise, his name keeps coming back.

SI: Yes.

HG: Okay. Now, how little they wrote about him, I knew about the scam they ran. "He was a this, he was a that," and how they spoke about him. Here's a great athlete, great talent--you couldn't beat that talent. That man was so talented, boy, it came out of his ears. Believe me, if you ever saw him play the role that he did in--what was the name of it?

SI: *Othello*? [Editor's Note: Paul Robeson played *Othello* in the Shakespeare play *Othello* in a Broadway production in 1943 and 1944.]

CC: *Othello*?

HG: *Othello*, you would love it, if you could see how he spoke and talked about the possibility of killing his wife. [laughter] That's what it was about, a jealous husband, and he wants to murder his wife because his friend is telling him lies. He's getting ready to kill his wife, okay, but it's just the way he did it. He was a great actor. Now, did he ever receive anything from the cinema or the movies or anything [for] how great he was? I don't think he did. Has he?

JS: He's received certain [honors], like, he got a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Grammys.

CC: Oh, okay.

JS: But, if you're saying, did he ever get what he deserved? He did not.

SI: Yes.

JS: No, he did not, because, thanks to Senator Joseph McCarthy and his ...

[Editor's Note: US Senator Joseph McCarthy's accusations of Communist infiltration in the US government led to a nationwide witch-hunt to unearth alleged Communists, an era of persecution lasting from 1950 to 1957 known as McCarthyism. Due to his support for Stalin, the USSR and the Communist Party during the McCarthy era, Robeson was blacklisted and had his passport revoked from 1950 to 1958, which prevented him from traveling to perform during those years.]

HG: Kept below, wasn't it?

JS: Yes. Well, as people say, he was erased. He was erased.

SI: Yes.

CC: He was blacklisted.

JS: As I said, "He was torn from the pages of American history."

SI: Yes.

JS: People have said that if Paul Robeson had been a white man, there would've been much more clamor about him, but, certainly, they said Robeson had two things going against him--he was black and, as they say, he was red, red as in [Communist]. Now, Robeson refused to say anything about whether or not he was a Communist.

SI: Yes.

JS: But, he certainly enjoyed being in the Soviet Union, because he was treated without prejudicial behavior, without racism.

HG: Right, right. They welcomed his acting.

SI: Yes.

JS: But, the Americans, at the time, they were very cynical toward the Communists and the Cold War and all that. So, they were thinking there was a spy at every corner, and so many people were labelled as spies. Robeson suffered the consequences, inappropriately. So, he was erased from history, but we're trying to restore his place in history.

So, Harvey, listen, man, with all that you've done in your life, what do you feel--what are you most proud of?

HG: Isn't that something?

CC: That's a good question.

HG: My thoughts went to my uncle.

JS: Monte?

HG: To see them erect a statue.

JS: Right.

HG: Of my older uncle.

JS: Right.

HG: He'd been run out of the South, but he never stopped.

JS: Did he show you his picture?

SI: Yes, yes.

JS: Right. Yes, I mean, clearly, Harvey reveres his uncle.

SI: Yes.

HG: Right. Again, now, I don't know what else he could've been in life, okay, but not only was he a great athlete, he was a great person, okay. Now, had he been any other color, okay--I don't know what the hell that could've been.

JS: Yes.

CC: That's a nice one.

JS: He would've been in baseball from day one.

SI: Yes.

HG: Yes.

JS: In the pros.

CC: Just like Mickey Mantle.

JS: That's right.

HG: Despite all [the] pushing him aside and whatnot, there's a statue in the park, right down the hill.

SI: Yes.

HG: Will be there as long as that statue is there and Orange is there and Green Hill is there.

JS: Yes.

HG: You want to know the truth.

JS: Yes.

HG: Now, for somebody to put a statue of you that's going to stand that long, now, I don't know how long it's going to be there, but it'll be a long time, won't it?

SI: Yes.

HG: So, I think that's it. There are a lot of things that I like doing, Jim, but just making it every day.

JS: Right.

HG: And then, just seeing other people in success--that's been my push.

JS: Right.

HG: Take whatever you got and run with it, make it better, okay. You'd be surprised at what you can do with a dollar sometimes. You think you're broke, but, sometimes, you can do something magic with that one dollar that's much better than a thousand dollars would've done.

SI: Yes.

HG: It's the little things in life that are sometimes just as important as the big things, okay. So, mine was just everyday living, earn some money to pay a bill--one thing, stay out of debt.
[laughter]

JS: Yes.

HG: Mine is just typically, I guess, American. Isn't that what you do in America, find a job and work for it? just that simple.

SI: Yes.

HG: Now, I may be underpaid, but that's still all right--and because I did not want to ever see another white man put his fingers in my mother's face.

JS: That's right.

SI: Yes.

HG: That has followed me all my life. Now, was it racist? I don't know, but I just didn't like to see it. It made me so mad that, when it came wintertime, here's a white Polish man walking down the middle of Wallace Street, my street, okay, whistling. I went outside, got a snowball and let that snowball go, and knocked that hat off his head, boy, and ran back behind the house. [laughter] Now, I think I was about nine years old then.

SI: Wow.

HG: But, that's what pushed me.

JS: Yes.

HG: Little things like that. I hate bullies, okay.

JS: Hate what now?

HG: Bullies.

JS: Oh, bullies, right, right.

HG: I hate to see people get bullied, okay.

JS: Right, sure.

HG: Yes, but I guess that's life everywhere now.

JS: Yes, I'll tell you, man.

HG: Where we are today, man, with Trump, man, I don't know.

JS: We've got to work it out.

HG: He bullies everybody, doesn't he?

JS: Yes, there you go.

SI: Yes.

HG: We've got a perfect example up there, and they think it's all right.

JS: Well, Harvey, you're a man of tremendous wisdom and I respect you, man.

SI: Yes.

CC: Yes.

HG: No, it's just experience, analyzing how to react to it. I think Charlie thinks, must do, the same way as I do, because we talk and bicker back and forth every once in a while, but it's mainly from our life experiences.

JS: That's right.

SI: Yes.

JS: Right.

HG: All this, I did not learn in the classroom. [laughter]

JS: Yes, I hear you, Harvey. Harvey is, if I can say this, Harvey is a deep thinker.

SI: Yes.

JS: Harvey wants to know, like, "What is the purpose of life?"

HG: That's right. I want the answer.

JS: Harvey explores.

SI: Yes.

JS: He doesn't want to just talk about the baseball game.

HG: Yes. [laughter]

JS: He wants to talk about things that matter.

SI: Yes.

HG: Yes, "Why?"

JS: Why? There you go, the question why.

HG: Or, "How?"

JS: Right.

HG: Yes, that's what I'm [about]. All right, if you can't ask a person a question, look out.

JS: Right.

SI: Yes.

HG: That's my thing, okay.

JS: Yes.

HG: If they can't explain to you what it's about, stay away. That's what my experience has taught me, okay.

SI: Yes.

HG: So, it's just the idea of meeting the right people, trying to stay on top of it and just keep going.

SI: Yes.

HG: I never in my life thought I'd be sitting here in this chair, ninety-seven years old.

JS: Right.

SI: Yes.

HG: Okay, but here I am, okay. Now, where will I go from here? I don't know, but I'm glad that I can still meet with people like you, okay, and that I've still got something up here to offer. I can express myself.

SI: Yes.

HG: And I hope I'm able to do that to my last breath.

SI: Yes.

JS: There you go.

HG: That's all I ask.

SI: Yes. That is maybe a good note to end on today, yes.

JS: I think so.

CC: Yes, it sounds great.

SI: Thank you.

JS: I think we covered a lot of ground.

CC: That's the epitaph.

-----END OF TRANSCRIPT-----

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