

HERBERT SULAIMAN–CHARLIE’S PLACE

MYRTLE BEACH, SOUTH CAROLINA

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My name is Herbert Sulaiman, S-U-L-A-I-M-A-N and I’m also known as Herbert Riley.

Well thank you so much for doing this. This history is so important to us and it’s amazing that you have this to share with us. It’s an honor to be here. So tell me when first heard about the Green Book or what his your history or your relationship to the Green Book.

I’ve known about the *Green Book* since I was a child. My father, my mother, they used to travel a lot. I remember the old Buick and when we moved around, he would take the Green Book with him. You know it was dangerous traveling in those days. I learned early that everybody didn’t treat everybody nice. And you had to know where you were going and you had to be prepared. Traveling in those days, meant the women would fix food at night. They’d fill the thermos jugs, you had eggs, fix ham sandwiches and turkey sandwiches and fried chicken...it was like a picnic. It was fun for a child.

About what year was this?

Ok, I can remember travel from the time I was four years old, so that was ’55 on up. I think we’d go down to Myrtle Beach, we’d go down to Asheville, we’d sometimes, they’d go long distances, I’m not sure where I’m just in there counting cars as they’d go by. I remember that. I know there was always a relationship with the Esso people. I still have some Esso artifacts, days ago when it was Esso before Exxon. Esso was the only place that the women felt comfortable using the restroom. When we were riding...we’d pull over to the side of the road. A lot of times there would be picnic tables were you could stop, there were places where you could stop on the side of the road and the young boys, we would go out into the field, go out into the high grass and play for a little bit. I didn’t know why at that time, but what it was, women were afraid there were snakes. And country boys, we were taught...[how] to deal with snakes. We weren’t afraid of snakes. So we’d go out there and the women would go out and relieve themselves. It’s a shame that we’d take a lady through that type of...I don’t even know how to describe it properly, but to make a woman to have to hold, and hold, and hold before she could relieve herself. And you couldn’t go anyplace but Esso Stations. At Esso, [it was] no problem.

I remember keeping extra gas in the car on long trips, if you were going where you didn’t know. Now mom and dad, they were pretty smart now and they knew people all over, so they would map things out so they didn’t have to do that all that often. But I remember doing that, because I remember the smell of gas coming from the trunk you know. You don’t forget smells.

I remember running into adversity on the road. I remember going through Klan rallies, particularly in places like Salisbury, North Carolina. And even in Myrtle Beach, when I was a kid. It was probably on Highway 501, not exactly sure 'cause I was small. My mother was very, very fair-skinned. She looked like a white woman. And we were coming to Myrtle Beach, in Conway or Florence, or someplace close. We got close to the beach and they had a large Klan gathering out the in a street. I guess it was a Klan parade. Anyhow, they stopped us. They saw Momma in there. I was too little to fear or think anything bad was going to happen. But my Mom was scared. I could tell that. Daddy got out the car and talked to one of them for about five minutes and we were able to drive on through and I remember how Momma was after that. She was shaking. They'd seen things that I hadn't seen, you know.

But the *Green Book*, even in Myrtle Beach, it's good that Charlie's Place was listed in the *Green Book*, because on Myrtle Beach on Ocean Boulevard, even in the 1960s and the early 1970s, if a black person was walking down there and they didn't have a card saying they worked at such and such and so and so, they could be arrested. They would be harassed. You ran into a lot of problems. There's one character on there, I'll never forget, his name was Carlyle Newton [assumed spelling], he was involved in the Charlie's Place Klan raid (see below) too. I was working at the Ocean Forest hotel when I was maybe fifteen years old as a bell hop and he came by once day, somebody said something because somebody was coming to get his money, because he actually came by every Wednesday. I can remember that vividly. He'd come by every Wednesday and he'd leave with a manila envelope. And somebody said, "He's going to get his money." And he didn't...we didn't even think he'd heard us and he came back, we were standing beside a brick wall, this fella took me...I guess he was going to make an example out of somebody, slammed me against the wall, pulled out his weapon, his firearm, sidearm, big gun, it looked like a Dirty Harry pistol or something. Jammed it in my stomach and said, "Nigger, if you ever tell anybody you saw me do anything I'm going to blow your goddamned brains out." That sticks in your mind for the rest of your life.

How old were you?

I was probably fourteen, fifteen. It was one of my early jobs. But if you didn't have the *Green Book*, say if a black person is traveling and going up to Atlantic Beach and they got a little bit confused and got to Myrtle [Beach] and went to the wrong place, they could have gotten hurt. They would have gotten harassed most places. Not all, there were a few, like the Kozy Korner that would treat you right, but in general you were going to be treated less than human. And that's the way it was. That *Green Book*...it wasn't just a...people call it like a AAA guidebook but it was more like a shield. It saved lives. Believe me. It saved lives, particularly in the South.

That's a nice metaphor [the shield], because it was so much more than a AAA guide. And then there were so many different kinds of businesses that were in it. So it really served so many aspects of the black community, both people who needed to go there and the businesses that needed the support. In terms of growing up...do you remember...when did you first learn about Charlie's Place?

[7:36]

I knew more about the *Green Book* before I knew about Charlie's Place. We had...there was an Exxon station in Myrtle Beach that black folk were running. In fact, the family that ran it lived right around the corner. But they were running it so, we knew about that and that was the only kind of gas...until I got old enough to start driving, when I got my first car, the only kind of gas would ever

buy was Esso. Because that's the way I was trained. And I wasn't thinking about no *Green Book* then, I was thinking about getting some gas. But I'd always get Esso. It served the Esso people very, very well. They made a lot of money. They had a captive market, literally.

I did a little research on Rockefeller at that time. And Laura Spelman was his wife and you know we wonder why Esso did more than just promote the Green Book. They hired black marketing executives, they had black people working in every part of that business. There were black chemists there. They went above and beyond, and people say that it was [about] money, but it was more than that. We think maybe it was Laura Spelman, because she was Rockefeller's wife and she grew up in a house, she was a white woman, [she] grew up in a house that was on the Underground Railroad in Ohio and her parents were big abolitionists, very intense political family, and Spelman College was named after their family.

I was getting ready to ask.

So I think, we don't if there was any direct...but I can't imagine that she didn't have a lot influence over Rockefeller.

She did.

So that's what we assume. And he gave millions of dollars in her name, in honor of Spelman College, and others...So I think there was a reason why Esso was there for black people, when they needed it. And a lot of other white-owned businesses of all stripes wouldn't have anything to do with black them. They didn't care that their money was green.

They treated you different. I know that personally. When my father died in 1975, he was the maitre'd at a hotel down here called "Patricia's"

Called what?

The Patricia Inn and Court. Now Patricia's still there, but it's not the same thing. The Patricia Inn and Court. They said every millionaire in the South ate there and they couldn't get a good seat if daddy didn't give it to them. He didn't have a good ending there, that's a different thing, but when he died, I assumed Esso, which was Exxon by then were the company...after he died about six months later we got a letter from one of the Vice Presidents, and there were several Vice Presidents of course, but one of the Vice Presidents saying that we didn't know he had died, this and that, here's a card, credits were still...they weren't new, but they weren't all that out there, you know, here's a card with around \$1,000 on it. I was amazed, I couldn't figure out why. We weren't used to that type of [treatment] from white folks. To put it bluntly. We weren't used it, particularly the ones with a lot of money, because they were some of the cruelest ones, they thought they could do what they wanted to do. Can I tell you a quick story?

Yes.

When daddy worked at Patricia's [Inn]. Patricia Diamond [assumed spelling] was famous. Richard Nixon ate there, Strom Thurman used to be there all the time, all the segregationists used to eat there and of course he played his role, I didn't see him do it, but of course he carried himself strongly, I guess he played his role, anyhow, there was a beautiful lady there named Clea Robertson [assumed spelling]. And she was what they called the "coffee girl," she served coffee. And one of the Caucasians, made a very lude remark, which I'm not going to say, to her and she was insulted and she walked away from it, and he said, "Can't you hear me? I told you I want to"... such and such

and so and so... “How much will it cost?” She told my father. And they guy came to my dad, when he saw Clea talking to him and asked him something to the point of, “What’s wrong? I’m trying to give that little Nigger girl some money.” The next thing he knew, my daddy’s hand was upside his head, and daddy knocked him down. Dad was fired after 39 years. The owner came over here and brought a bunch of money and tried to give dad, but dad didn’t want it. Dad had pretty good money. At Patricia’s you made a lot of money. His honor meant more to him than a few dollars. The owner was basically a good guy, but that was just the time we lived in.

What did your dad do again?

He was the maître’d. He controlled the dining room. And to this day, he’s been dead since ’75 and he still has influence in this town. I was over in Hilton Head one time, I’m a musician, I was playing an event over there and I was kind of ill and I was taking a long break, and this lady walked up to me and said, “Young man, you are one of the musicians, aren’t you?” I said, “Yes ma’am I am.” [she said] “You know we’re paying you to play music for us, not to just sit around.” I said, “I’m kind of ill. We’ll play, I’ve got to take care of my health, I’m kind of sick.” She said, “Where are you from?” real harsh, I said, “from Myrtle Beach, South Carolina” “Oh, Myrtle Beach” she melted like a piece of ice, like a cone of ice cream. “Myrtle Beach, we had some of the best times of our lives in Myrtle Beach.” I thought for a second, “Did you ever go to the Patricia Inn?” She stopped, she looked at me and said, “Patricia Inn? What do you know about the Patricia Inn?” I said, “My father used to work there.” She said, “Well what did he do?” I said, “He was the maitre’d.” [She asked] “What was his name?” “His name was Riley.” She said, “Oh my goodness. She said come over to the table. She was sitting at the head of the table. She made the guy sitting to the left get up. She said, “Sit down here. I want you to meet the family. We’re taking a vacation. We’re the Reynold’s family. You know RJ Reynolds, Reynold’s Wrap.” I was saying “Whoa.” And we talked. I took a break for as long as I wanted to. This was back in the ‘80s. She gave me her card and said if you ever need anything, all you’ve got to do is call. But I never took her up on that. She’s been dead a long time by now. But that’s a true story.

I realized the influence he [my father] had. He was a good friend to Mary McLeod Bethune. He’d go visit her. I didn’t know this until they put her in the Hall of Fame here. Mamma made me go up there because her son was there and talk to him about some things that only he would know, I found out that it was true, so we’d go down there and spend maybe a week every summer in Florida because she’s from South Carolina. Anyhow that’s off the *Green Book* but.

No, it’s a fascinating story and I think it tells...it give us the landscape, of what it means to live here, what it means to have family here, and what those roots mean. I think that’s really helpful.

It’s what made Charlie...you’ve got to realize Myrtle Beach was...the original tourist trade in Myrtle Beach, the hook was this Antebellum-type lifestyle. If you look at pictures of the old large hotels like the Ocean Forest and Patricia’s, or go by the Pine Lakes, way down here, you see the columns like you see in *Gone With the Wind* and all the service industry people...I never saw a white waiter or anything like that until the mid-seventies. I remember the first white waiter I saw and he was a Black Belt in karate and Bruce Lee was out at that time, so that was exciting. But black people, were all the chefs. Black people were all the waiters. Black people taught the rich down here etiquette, because you had to be that way, you had to know how to carry yourself in a place to be working at some of these...you work in white dinner jackets, sometimes white gloves, the stuff that we see and we kind

of get offended from where we sit but then you realize the elegance, the dignity that these men and women had to carry themselves. There are people, I'm told there are people that worked here that ended up working at the White House at the Augusta...one of the guys I know being the maître d down at where they play the Masters in Augusta National...so there's money to be made and the young doctors, teachers, would all work as waiters in the summertime. Doctors working their way through school. I knew several of them, they worked as waiters in the summertime. South Carolina's first Chief Justice a friend, he's gone now, Earnest Finney Chief Justice of the South Carolina's Supreme Court, he was a bell hop over at Ocean Forest. This guy's still got a picture of him...That show's what they had to do to get to where they were against the obstacles. They didn't allow obstacles to get in their way. They didn't cop out. They had to deal with the situation that, be thankful, that we don't have on our shoulders—particularly the women. The women caught hell. They were always perceived by not just white folks, but too many black men too, as something for pleasure. And that's it. You know.

Well you know my first book was on diner waitresses, and the stories about what they had to deal with and yeah it is extensive. But let's talk about Charlie. You set this up beautifully. There's so many limitations on really what was expected or what black people were allowed to do in jobs, and so how does this man, Charlie Fitzgerald, who runs this Green Book site, Charlie's Place... The first listing is in 1950,

[19:38]

I didn't know that.

So when we think about 1950. Who is this man that comes on the scene, do you know how long he'd had Charlie's Place? This was a nightclub that was very popular.

It was very, very popular. He built it in 1937. The tourist cabins were built in 1948, I believe. The club, because you had so many black people coming here from Georgetown and Conway and other places to work you needed some recreation for them. He saw a need and so he gave them a good club. A nice club, not some rinky-dink hole in the wall—where you'd be safe. Where you could take anybody even in those days. Too many people told me that for it not to be true. You could take anybody. As long as you carried yourself in a civilized, upright fashion and minded your own business and didn't harass woman and things, which was normal at that time, you were treated with dignity, and you could have a good time. He had some enforcers. One or two of them are still alive that if you tried, if you crossed the line, they'd escort you out, and the other people didn't even realize what was even going on, you know. But he saw that. And he took advantage of the fact that there was a market down here because there was no place else to go. Atlantic Beach was kicking. Atlantic Beach was established in the '20s I believe, but everybody didn't have cars in those days. Atlantic Beach is only...we don't think anything about it, we jump in the car, fifteen minutes later, we're up there, but in the 1950s and the 1940s, in fact in the 1930s because they built the place in 1937 it wasn't like that, so he was able to have this market and the type of entertainment he had would grab anybody. I mentioned the Ocean Forest Hotel a while ago, that was the first million dollar hotel in the South, it was built in the '20s and because of that you have the elite of the elite staying at the Ocean Forest. They owned the Pine Lakes Country Club originally. Henry Luce the founder at the time, the founder of Sports Illustrated and so many other things. Sports Illustrated was founded right up the street from here at the Pine Lakes Country Club. But you had these elites

down here and they wanted the best entertainment. Now they had some white entertainment but they wanted the best entertainment. So they'd have [Count] Baise, or they'd have [Duke] Ellington, or they'd have the Mills Brothers who were like the Temptations when I was growing up. Groups like that, you know, but they couldn't stay there and they couldn't socialize there so some of them would go up to Atlantic Beach. Maybe Duke [Ellington] would go up to Atlantic Beach, and he get an ocean front room, but many of them wanted to stay down here so Charlie built the hotel. So he'd get them, there was automatic money coming in all the time. After they finished playing the Ocean Forest, they'd do what we call nowadays...a midnight special. They'd do a midnight special at Charlie's Place. The word got out to the wealthy elite that were coming down from the North and the South, staying at Charlie's. [They'd say] *Oh, man guess who's playing over at I guess that nigger's place, Charlie's Place? So and so's over there, Duke Ellington's over there, Mills Brothers, Ray Charles...* Although Ray was playing back up for this other guy in those days. So they'd want to come, and they'd come over. And any old person in this community, any old person, they will remember this. I can barely remember it because I was a child at the heyday of this stuff, but from one end of Carver Street to the other end and Carver Street was a dirt road then, you'd have Cadillac's and Packard's on Saturday night, Friday night, white men in tuxedos, white women with jewels and gowns would come out there and you know black folk, I don't care how down and out we've been, we got our hands on a couple of dollars, we are not about to let somebody out dress us, so the black women would come out dressed like that and you could look at pictures in those days and you could see my father and all his friends there, many times, in tuxes. White tuxes...they were sharp, they carried themselves good...Old Spice would be out there, wearing their Old Spice and they had a good time.

[24:34]

The whites are the ones who really integrated the place now because Charlie had a segregated section for them but they wanted to get down where the action was. And they knew what went down in Myrtle Beach, stayed in Myrtle Beach. Myrtle Beach was not known. So they could party. They'd come down there and they'd dance and they'd party, their wives would dance and party with black folk, like it wasn't nothing. They'd have a good time. They'd go back to ...and say *Yeah, man. I can do the Charleston now see. I learned how to do it down close to Charleston.* That type of thing. Authenticity.

So when you say it was segregated, because I've heard stories about there being like an orange rope?

Not at Charlie's. I sent you some pictures one time, some news clippings of Charlie's Place, the night of the raid. Originally, it was large. It had a pavilion and it was large. You got to see the lot this and getting the whole idea of how big this place was. And he had a dining room beside it. He had a section up in the balcony area, you know where they used to put black folk in balconies in theaters when I was kid? You didn't have to go through that, but we did and he'd have a section for them. That was for them, but they wanted to get down on the floor because that's where the party was.

So the white people where in the balcony?

Yeah, he flipped it on them. And they decided they were going to integrate. And these were rich white folks and a lot of lasting friendships were made.

The elite area down here is Grand Dunes and originally the Dunes Club area. I was at a political event two years ago and a ninety-year old lady came up to me and you were the only one pushing Charlie's Place, right? I said, "Yes Ma'am." She said, "Did you know Miss Sarah?" I said, "Yeah, I

knew Miss Sarah.” She said, “I knew her too. By the time I was a teenager living in New York when we’d come down to Myrtle Beach to visit our family down here, we’d always go to Charlie’s Place and nobody ever messed with us. And she was really short and she was saying, “Nobody *ever* messed with us.” I said, “Yeah, I heard it was nice.” She said, “Yeah, it was nice. I’m glad you’re doing that son, thank you.” And moved on. But he was able to do something in a town with state sponsored segregation that really wasn’t common for another decade, or more. And he didn’t have any problems until the Senatorial race between Strom Thurmond and Olin Johnson, I believe his name was Olin Johnson and as Thurmond said, and you can see it on film today, it was about who could *out nigger* the other one. Who could say more bad things about black folks because they were mad because blacks were just coming back from World War II, and black men felt strong, entitled, they’d given their lives and Harry Truman who had problems himself recognized that and was integrating the military. Roosevelt had done some things before that to open the door to integrate the military. You know you always had black troops but black troops were Buffalo Soldiers, they were all blacks together. You didn’t have blacks and whites fighting together except when combat came. And see a lot of these Southern boys had to be in the same fox hole and black people were saving their lives many times. So although they wouldn’t just embrace it, they knew the truth in their heart. But anyhow.

[28:35]

After Thurman, [in his voice] “Segregation today! Segregation tomorrow! Segregation Forever! I want every white man who’s a white man to stand up and stand with me!” And Olin Johnson was worse than him. I knew Strom, I didn’t know Johnson, but Johnson was worse than him and this caused Klan fever to rise. Klan rises after the every war. You had the greatest Klan parade in 1920, that after the troops came back from World War I. The Klan rose and Charlie was targeted for several reasons. Some politicians, they contacted the Klan and said “You need to come down here and do something because these niggers are trying to act like they’re white men. They’re coming in here wanting me to register them to vote. That’s just documented, you know. People don’t know that, but that’s what started it. So this Thomas Hamilton, the Grand Dragon of the Ku Klux Klan, he wanted to be a super big shot. He started pushing this thing because blacks and whites were partying together and the young black kids were learning how to dance and taking it back to their community, calling it the “Shag.” Because the girl who taught them that, Cynthia Harold’s [assumed spelling] nickname was shag. Cynthia “Shag” Harold [inaudible]. Anyhow the rumor was spread that Charlie was running a prostitution ring over there, white girls and black men. It’s always...they always use the sex thing as a cat call to bring out the lowest elements in their own people. You know. They did that and he was able to get a crowd, they did a Klan parade at Myrtle Beach, first they went by [Charlie’s Place] and left and went to Atlantic Beach and they came back. They said...people always believed that they came back because Charlie dared them to. That’s not the truth. I’ve seen the files. What did happen was this. He called the Chief of Police and told him the Klan has been over here and they were coming back and the people were not going to sit back and be slaughtered like dogs. They will fight if they come back and they’ll be some bloodshed. In other words he was saying, *Do something about this before it happens*. But what he didn’t know was the Chief of Police was in the front seat, this was Carlisle Newton the guy I was talking about earlier, by then he was Chief and he was in the front seat with Thomas Hamilton in the lead guy for the Klan parade and in those days they used two-way radios like the military did and when it was radioed to him, Charlie said what Charlie said. For Hamilton, that was the excuse he needed to go back. He went back. This is something else people don’t know. This was when Charlie played hero. He went back and some people say it was 30 cars, I think Charlie said he thought it was around 17 cars, but the

same four or five in the cars and there was a confidential informant that the FBI actually had in place, because they were watching the Klan anyway. His code name was T-1 and he reported back he felt that there were 30 cars and there were four to five people, in other words you're talking about 100 people. They formed this skirmish line, and this is right after World War II, so you can figure a large number of them were probably in the military veterans because they knew how to use weapons. They started to move forward and of course they sent an advance team and when they did, the guy's nickname was "230" I can't remember his name right off, Curtis Perry [assumed spelling], I believe but his nickname was "230" because he always carried a 32 pistol. They grabbed him and there was fear and he didn't fight back and they started beating him and asking him where Charlie was. He wouldn't tell at first. I think he eventually did. And Charlie walked out. Charlie had a good crowd of people in his club that night, wasn't any white folk in there strangely enough, but he had a pretty good crowd of people in there. So he walked out there and he had his weapons on him, he had two weapons on him, and the three of them approached him, one got him from the back and hit him upside the head with a gun or something and knocked him down and hit him again and rendered him unconscious temporarily. Now he knew he could have been killed. But he also knew this was straight out gun fight because...there were black guys who were armed and ready to fight if necessary. He knew that if there had been a straight out gunfight with 100 men with shotguns and pistols it would have been a slaughter. So they threw him in the trunk and they came forward anyway and started shooting. Shot one of their own in the back, who later on turned out to be a policeman when they took his robe off. He had his police uniform on. They took him out to this area called "Pine Island" they beat him up, according to his testimony, he thought they beat him up with a bull whip, they said they used belts and things but I guess if you're getting beat and you're blindfolded, it felt like it was a bullwhip. They beat him bad. They mutilated him and cut his ears so they could always know. And it looked like they were going to kill him. But he fought back. It's like Harriett Tubman said, "If you're trying to get away and they're trying to beat on you, keep running, keep fighting." He kept running, kept fighting and he was able to get away from them. They fired some rounds in the woods and figured that they either hit him or he had learned his lesson or he had tired him out, one of the three. And they told him "you can't stay here, you gotta go, but wherever you go, you gotta go to church every Sunday, we don't want you to even see your wife and said more things. It's in the FBI files, this is according what he said in the FBI files. They went on about their business, he was walking toward the road. A guy named Ed Washington, who's nephew lives close to here...his nephew taught me a lot, and Ed said *if you get your hands on the files...* and Ed was one of Charlie's cab drivers, because Charlie had a lot of businesses, a lot more than the Whispering Pines and Charlie's Place and a motel and he had businesses in Conway and Atlantic Beach. Ed saw him. Ed went out looking for him probably, but he saw him, he picked him up. He took him over to the Sherriff, Carlisle Newton, because Carlisle was supposed to be Charlie's buddy. Charlie was paying Carlisle Newton so Charlie could sell his liquor. And it was the wrong place to take him but Carlisle, didn't try to hold him or anything. He took him to a doctor, I think, they took him to Dr. Chapman [assumed spelling] I'm pretty sure it was Dr. Chapman. My father told me this—some of the doctors are very sympathetic to blacks and some were not. There were some doctors in this raid with the Klan and my father told me who they were. But he took him to Dr. Chapman and Dr. Chapman fixed him up. He contacted Sherriff Sasser over in Conway who really was a good guy. He risked his own life to try to handle this thing. Sasser had him come over there, Sasser put him there to rest, but Sasser took him to his own house. He took him to his own house, from what I was told. I don't think the files said that but I've talked to Sasser's family.

[37:00]

And then he moved him to a cell, I think in Florence, or Colombia, or someplace, by then, it had made nationwide news the black newspapers...in a couple of days, you can check the dates on that, it was a couple of days after the raid and N.A.A.C.P., which was, they were real warriors back in those days, they were real warriors back in those days. Maceo Hubbard he was one of the first law grads from Harvard. He was working with the F.B.I. You had Thurgood Marshall, working with the N.A.A.C.P., you had Walter White with the N.A.A.C.P. You had people of that caliber, you know, I mean giants in our movement. And they took it to Hoover, Hoover got involved...Hoover never didn't care nothing about black folks from what I've been told, but he got involved, he told his people "Ok, these N.A.A.C.P. is in my case now. Give them the reports. Look into it." And they did. They made it sound like, I forget how they framed it. It was like...Charlie was the aggressor, when they wrote it up originally. But anyhow, they left a paper trail. The Klan received 14 indictments from Sasser within a matter of a week. The grand jury found all of them not credible, you know. Sasser was threatened. He had a daughter named Helen who black folk, I knew Helen when she was real old, and black folk treated her like she was a princess and I couldn't figure out why to save my life, I couldn't figure out why, until I met her son. He's a board patrol right now, but he was talking about how the Klan had threatened to take, meaning kidnap, his mother, and this was one of the tactics they often used. When he told me that it reminded me of something Miss Sarah told me years later. Because I asked Miss Sarah years later, I said, "Did your husband know..."

Just for the tape, Miss Sarah was Charlie's wife.

That was his wife. Yeah. His wife and his partner. But I asked, "Did Mr. Charlie know who those Klansmen were?" She said, "We knew every last one of them. Robin." She used to call me Robin, like Robinhood, because we used to play Robinhood. [Smiling] But anyhow, "We knew every last one of them." So I was like "Why didn't you tell?" [She said] "Because he was afraid that they would take me..." I think she said, "Take me again." But I can't swear to that. And that was...they did what they wanted to with our women. You know you're down here doing this tape right now, it would put your life in jeopardy, you know. They did what they wanted to with the men. If I...the kind of books I had in here as a teenager, my father would always say, "Don't you show anybody those books. You don't know how they are. You don't know." And he was right. So anyhow she was taken, just for a warning and let go. I believe, I'm making an assumption now, I don't know that. But she said, "they will take me" or "take me again", I don't know which. I had no idea what taken meant until I saw that movie called Taken. When I saw that it was like a lightning bolt, I thought "Oh, that's what Sarah was talking about." So they knew who it was and she told me something that stuck with me, and she told other people because I've talked to a couple of people and they've said the same thing. She says, "You know what? I'm not going to die, until I know every last one of them has died, is dead." I'm paraphrasing right now. And she wasn't playing, because I got a picture of her with me and she was 74 years old and she was still some eye candy, you know. Yeah, I mean she was 94, 94, and still eye candy. And she died about three years later from that and she was working the day that she died. And she didn't have to work. She had money, but she liked to work. When mamma got sick, mamma and her were tight, very, very, very tight. She came over here mamma had Alzheimer's, she said "Aw, you go back to your room. I'm not going to steal anything from you. I've got more than you've got anyway!" Mom, went back in the room, slammed the door, and she worked all day long. She was a special lady. My wife will tell you that too.

Mamma, when she had Alzheimer's, she had a cat and mamma had decided in her mind that I was eating the cat's pink salmon because I didn't see the point in getting pink salmon for a cat, you have no idea what kind of scent pink salmon has when it's hidden someplace for two or three weeks,

mamma would hide it places because she was afraid I would get it, you know. Sarah came and handled all of that. She was a wonderful lady. Some people around here thought she was kind of mean and hateful, but she had some...after the Klan raid, from 1950 until that place closed, she had to manage that place. He wasn't there but in and out. He was there often, but he wasn't the same. Everybody said, Charlie wasn't the same. But she had to be tough in a man's world. So she didn't take no foolishness.

[42:50]

So talk about Sarah's role...that you think she was a significant part of the success of Charlie's Place.

Yes. Absolutely.

So talk about Sarah.

Sarah Fitzgerald. She was a civil rights activist without even knowing it. Back in 1948, blacks hadn't registered to vote in South Carolina since reconstruction. Charlie and her did, though. Not another black over here would register. Charlie offered to put up money for them if they needed it, whatever. Not a one. Sarah was tough and hard to most people, but she was never that way to me. I couldn't see what people were talking about, but I got an understanding later on. She was tough and hard on the outside when she ran the business. And when they talk about...okay...it was in the *Green Book*, then Charlie got it in the *Green Book*. But that '56 [edition], that's her. Because Charlie was dead, he died on the fourth of July in 1955 or 1954, one of the two, he was dead. And she ran it, she ran it with an iron fist and a velvet glove, so to speak. Entertainers loved her. Ruth Brown and those, they loved her. Bill Pinkney, the last of the original Drifters, he died a few years ago, he loved her. Otis Redding, when cats like that would come and go [they'd ask] "How's Miss Sarah doing?" She had Charlie's old contacts. Some guy down in Texas, the called him "The Peacock." I think he was a gangster, a black gangster, but he controlled all the top black artists and he was a friend to her. I think she got them through him, but she had all the black artists there. She told me the only person that she didn't get there to play, and he'd come there was James Brown. And everybody said James Brown was there, but most of the people say that the people were really too young to get in and they'd see his bus outside. He parked the bus there and I think some of his players would stay there. James, most likely would go up to Atlantic Beach, because you could be ocean front up there. But she said James would come and he was just as nice as he could be. [She said] "He'd sit down and we'd talk and talk. But he just wanted too much money and I couldn't afford him." But everybody else...the first crossover artist was a guy named Johnny Ace. You may never have heard of him but sometime listen to "Pledge My Love" with Aretha Franklin singing or Curtis Mayfield singing, a lot of songs that you've heard are Johnny Ace songs that people did later. He played there. My dad told me about that. He was big, he was big. And there's still some people around here who have artifacts, have records, and autographs and pictures that got Ace in some of those. They won't give them up right now, maybe later on. Johnny Ace. She got all those great people there.

She could cook. She would make me sweet potato pies. Some people said she was color-struck. I know what that was about, too. I wasn't that she was color-struck, her best friend was a beautiful woman that Kentucky-coal black named Gail [assumed spelling]. Momma, Gail, and her hung together, you know, when they were young. Momma told me, you know. I knew Gail well. When we were living in Wilkesboro, North Carolina, momma and I lived in Wilkesboro for a while because something happened with one of our relatives down here and white supremacists, they did

something to them and she got disgusted and she moved. That's a story in itself. Linda Brown Vs. Board of Education, there was a case here, Briggs Vs. Elliot, watch "Separate But Equal" the movie. Rent it and watch it, starring Sidney Poitier, the first person they show on there, this guy named Joe DeLaine, that's our cousin and mom and him, evidently, they were close, or whatever, good friends...cousin on daddy's side. And they ran him out of the state for protecting his own property. They burned down his church, he was a preacher. They came, started to burn down his house he started shooting at them and they got him for attempted murder of a white man. They ran him out of the state. He never came back to the state. After he died, Congress gave him a Congressional Gold Medal, the highest medal you can get as a civilian, you know. Momma wouldn't come back. She used to tell me when I was a kid, "Why are you living up here and daddy's living in Myrtle Beach?" I knew they wasn't divorced... "what in the world was going on?" And she'd say, "I'm never going back there. You don't know what they did to your cousin." I said, "What did they do?" She said, "They took him to the border. Sound like you're going to Cabo, going to Mexico. But they took him to the [South Carolina] border and took a shotgun "Boom, boom, boom, boom! Run nigger run! Don't you ever come back." I'll remember that until the day that I die.

You know, this is what we lived with. And my family really lived through a lot of stuff because they were involved in a lot of things. Daddy was successful. A maître d' made more money than doctors at that time. A good maître d'. Daddy would have a bed full of money on Sundays and he split it with all the waiters. He'd take it apart, but he'd split it with all the waiters. If there's wasn't enough, he'd give that to them and because of that he won great respect. I've got a son that got caught up in that Clinton thing [crime bill] from '85 [95?] and he had to go to jail for a period of time. When he went to jail, one of the guys that had been there a long time said he'd seen them in the yard, scared him half to death. He told me this after he got out. He said, "He called me out there and said, 'Are you Herbert Riley's son?'" He said, "Yeah." He said, "I knew Mr. Riley. Mr. Riley gave me my first job. He really helped us as much as he could. I messed my own self up with this and that. So that's the kind of man my father was. Maître d's, Pullman Porters...people like that, they didn't have the academic status as teachers but they made a hell of a lot more money and they carried a lot more weight because they knew everybody. You know, that's what power is about. If you're not rich, it's who you know, not what you know. And if Strom Thurmond wanted to sit beside the window at Patricia's, he had to go to my father. And he wouldn't come in there unless he had his coat and tie on and he wasn't going to act no fool when he got in there. Nobody would...that's the way it was. And Miss Sarah was that way too. She had a couple of guys. Ruben Wineglass [assumed spelling], he died about two months ago, was very, very close with Miss Sarah after Charlie died. Him and guys like "Kidnapper Goens[???]", that was Shag's uncle, he's still alive. Porkchop Hemmingway, all these guys had nicknames. Porkchop Hemmingway...these people were nobody to mess with. Porkchop would put you in the ground, you know and Ruben was as strong as an ox. "Kidnapper" was a lover, but he knew how to get things done, you know, great man. I loved Mr. Kidnapper. So she...nobody messed up, up there, and I'm quite sure she probably knew how to use a weapon pretty well herself. She was small. She was about your size. She demanded respect and she knew she had to because she can't run a business like that without demanding respect. She never would let me get away with anything. When we got to be teenagers and older guys would get a room to take his girlfriend, or this and that. She never would let me do that, because her and my mom were friends and I guess there was that code. And I never could figure...somebody told me that the year before last. I said, "Why did she treat me like that?" They said, "Because she was your mother's friend." Regardless of what they did, they knew what was right and what was wrong and she didn't want you to get into no trouble." Whatever, you know. But she was as sweet as could be. And she got the best entertainment. The Marvin Gaye's, the Percy Sledge's, the reason they'd come there...the Red Fox's,

he spent a lot of time there, the reason they'd come there, some played, some stayed, some partied. That's the way I always said it because you get kind of confused about who played there, who stayed there, but they all partied there. That was more because of Miss Sarah. They heyday...the best groups, knowing that they're playing there and the dance, the Shag being taught in the white communities. The swing dance which became "The Shag?" That's in Charlie's time. And I miss her until this day. I think of Miss Sarah a lot. I often told her, "One day I'm going to do something with that property." She said, "I'd sell it to you, if you've got enough money." I didn't have enough money to deal with that, but that's why I worked and strived and when everybody said I couldn't do it. I never believe in the impossible. I'm not like that. I've hung with some people when I was young that taught me there's no such thing as impossible. I even hung with Ali a couple of years, a couple of days, not a couple of years, when he was in exile and everybody hated him. I left my school to go hang out with him, he was in Appalachia, he came up and spoke. I started talking to him and made good friends. I took off for a couple of days and hung around him, and met a lot of his friends. They influenced my life. He was different than what people think he is. He wasn't what people think...good guy all the way around.

But I say that to say, Miss Sarah, I made her a promise [to save Charlie's Place] and I was determined to keep it. I pushed and pushed and pushed and the biggest problem was getting people around here, the younger people, the ones that's 40, 50 years old. Getting them on board because they didn't know anything about it. That Klan raid scared black people. That's what terrorism does. This is how terrorism wins. It's not by killing somebody it's about putting fear into somebody. And it frightened the people in this community so badly that they didn't tell their children because they felt like their children, some of them, may want to retaliate, because they knew who they were. Don't think they didn't know who they were. I didn't ask them, but they knew who they were. So when I started talking about Charlie's Place, nobody knew what I was talking about, none of the young ones the 40 and 50 year-olds. I call them young, but until it got out there and people started hearing a little bit more and more, the tore half the place down before you even got down here the first time, I think. You just saw the half that was saved. One of the ones that wasn't for it in the beginning, a brave young man, skilled young man. He doesn't get the credit he deserved because he has to do things in a way that works, not always a showy way. A city councilman named Michael Chestnut, they were having a demolition party of Charlie's Place. They billed it as a "demolition party" that's valuable land up there and they wanted me to speak and I spoke and Michael spoke and I saw Michael go behind me. Michael had not been to this thing, Michael looking at me and shaking his head. Michael came up to me and said, "Herbert, they're tearing down our history." I looked and said, "Uh oh, something's up." He said, "I'm going to call everybody on the city council, because he was a city councilman and see if we can do something about this." I said, "Michael, if you do that, I guarantee you that they'll all support you because you supported them many times. They owe you. He did and they did. Thanks to Michael Chestnut.

[56:08]

And younger people started to hear more and more about it and then I started putting pictures on Facebook and people would see their father, and their grandfather, and their uncle. One young lady wrote, "Who is that guy standing beside Mr. Charlie?" I said, "I'm not sure." She said, "He looks just like my brother, he must be my father." Or "He could be my father." I don't think she'd ever seen her father. I said, "Ask your mama." And she did and her mother said, "That's your dad." When people started seeing themselves in it, all the sudden the wheels started moving. I went to a City Council meeting in Pinopolis where they're allocating millions and millions of dollars for this

and that. I was not on the agenda, but if you've got the courage to go, sometimes it pays off for you. Me and my wife went over there and they gave me some time on the floor. I looked out there I saw one guy whose father I know used to, when his dad, he was in the Marines, he told me that when he was in the Marines he'd go to Charlie's Place. I saw another City Councilman whose prom date in high school, who told me, she's an old lady now, that he used to go to Charlie's place. It's not just our history, it's your history, too. I said, in fact it's all South Carolina's history and it shows the best of angels in us. It shows the angels of diversity, it shows how people when they're around each other, and get to know each other in social settings can find out they have more in common than they have in contrast. And that's a message that needs to be out. [57:50]

South Carolina's got a bad reputation when it comes to race but this was before the Civil Rights Movement became known like it is. Before Martin Luther King, we had something happening, an experiment that was happening that was good. Yeah the Klan came along and messed it up, but it was good, and they heard it. And one guy said, "Just give that project the kind of attention that they give other projects." This is a City Councilman telling them this. And I didn't have to because he said it loud and they heard that. Michael was pushing it. The assistant city manager, who is the city manager now he was pushing it. And they came up, they gave up, what around...first the bought the land for \$150,000 which was a steal because it's worth a lot more but the people wanted to get rid of it. And they gave more than the people asked for it, by the way. But then they allocated of hundreds of thousands of dollars and now it's at about \$750,000 right now to renovate this thing. It's taking time, but something's are better when you do it slow. Sometimes when you do it slow, you get it right. You see the mistakes coming and you fix them. So it looks like this is going to happen and I'm going to see it. The little kids, the elementary school kids, they're doing plays about Charlie's now. I didn't have anything to do with that, as far as doing plays, that was other people, they saw it, the kids, especially after the ETV [South Carolina ETV], ETV came and did a documentary on it. I talked them into coming over to Michael's. We talked, one time, Bessie Newman [assumed spelling] from ETV, she got um...what's Debbie Allen's sister's name?

Phylicia Rashad?

Yes, Phylcia Rashad do the voiceover narrative, and they did it and when the children saw that, they realized that they had a history, too. See, one of the biggest things that I didn't know and Mr. Brown, Ed Washington's nephew, he started this thing with me, I can't leave him out. He started this thing with me, he knew more about it than I did. He just got ill down the road and I had to take it over. But he wanted to put some culture in these kids, and these kids were like plant's without any roots, they couldn't see what they're people had done. It had all been covered up.

[1:00:36]

I'll mention something else about Charlie, real quick. It wasn't known, a lot of the white businesses downtown, Charlie had money in them. Some of them he owned and had white people fronting them like white people usually do with black folks. Then these kids parents may have gone in that same direction because they were started to accumulate...black folks during the last days of segregation were accumulating money. Don't think people give up things, just to be nice. Just like the Negro Leagues, the Negro Leagues were pulling people into stands than the white baseball leagues, so they integrated the league. But black people...these kids saw that we did something here. Our people did something here. It makes you carry yourself different. [1:01:31]

You remember the song, “The Greatest Love”? Whitney Houston sang it, George Benson did it for a Hollywood movie before that. There’s a line...see if I can remember it, “Teach the children, let them lead the way, give them a sense of pride to stand on...” I’m paraphrasing, that’s not exactly it.

There is a line, but I don’t know it exactly either.

It’s the truth. You’ve got to give them a sense of pride to make it easier. You’ve got to give them, not just children. You’ve got to give people hope. And these kids, with these young, impressionable minds saw this, they really took the ball and ran with it. And so I’m not worried too much. I figure no matter what happens. [1:02:18]

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[1:02:18]

Talk a little more about Charlie and who he was in terms of his stature and you mentioned briefly about his financial power.

He had a lot of money.

Yeah, talk about that.

Well, the money part was impressive down here. According to, I think it was the Baltimore African American, they did a story on the raid, right after the raid and they were saying that the white business men went over there estimated at \$100,000 worth of damage. Now what kind of place was this? What kind of club was this? \$100,000 worth of damage in 1950? You’re talking over a million dollars nowadays in real money, you know. He was generous, from what I hear, he helped people, he loaned [to] people...he wanted to be paid back, but the people who couldn’t pay him back, couldn’t

pay him back, you know. He put a Sealtest ice cream freezer outside, you can see it one of the pictures, he gave ice cream to the kids after school, if he knew they went to the school. He wasn't to be trifled with and he had to keep...he had to have a strong demeanor, but at the same time he helped a lot of people in the background and he spent a lot of...in Atlantic Beach, if you ever get a chance to talk to the Mayor, or the Mayor's daughter who became the Mayor, or the Mayor's son who became the Mayor, they'll tell you that Charlie's money helped build Atlantic Beach. The first big patio club out there, and it was big and he used to go there, it was called "Punks Patio." And Atlantic Beach was jumping before integration. They say his money did that. He had places in Conway, South Carolina. When they had the demolition party, I was talking to one of the city council members, several years younger than me, and he said I didn't know anything about entertainment, all my life all I heard was about all this money that he had. In other words in the white community, because he lived with the elites in the white community, they knew this guy had money. At the Klan raid, after it was over, someone was [inaudible] and never repaid what the people owed him in that community and Miss Sarah used to always tell me...she'd talk about where a certain hotel was and said "we owned that land...that was our money, we had that from the original owner, had passed hands a couple of times." She said, "We never got one penny back." But that was all part of the effects of that Klan raid. It was a cleansing. It also forced black folk to move off Oak Street, I've been told. See this is King Street, next you've got Dunbar Street, then you've got Crawford Street, next street is Oak Street. Oak Street is where the convention center is and there used to be a horseracing track right across the street from that and a lot of black folks lived up there. At one point and time black folk lived on the boulevard on The Strand. When they realized, or they envisioned what they could possibly do with Myrtle Beach, they pushed black folks back. This was a way to do that. A professor at Coastal Carolina [University] said it was an ethnic cleansing, that's what it was. People don't realize it, but that was the plan, ethnic cleansing, it was done at a higher level. All we could see was the Klan raid, but there was a bigger picture than that. And you know, Charlie was the one...you kill the Chief, in those old cowboy movies, those old racist cowboy movies, the kill the Chief, the Indians run. Well the Indians ran.

Wow. Yeah I think so many of the things I've learned about Charlie, he almost seems like a mythic character almost...

Yeah, that's right.

I hate to compare him to Omar from The Wire, but he's got that kind swagger...

Omar was bad wasn't he?

Yes [laughing]. And he was on the fringes of...he was a bootlegger, right?

Yeah, he was a bootlegger. And his record didn't have nothing about prostitution, but plenty about bootlegging. I'll show it to you in a minute. Years and years of bootlegging and to me, it looked like, towards the end of his life, there was a song called Mr. Bojangles and Sammy Davis used to sing it a lot and it talks about this guy who was something very special in his day and time, he was a dancer, a tap dancer, evidently and at the end the only thing he was doing was going to jail and staying drunk and he danced and drank for tips. That's kind of like a symbol of what they did to him. They had to take his manhood away from him and they were able to do it to a degree. But it didn't crush him like people around here sometimes think it did because he stayed on the move but he'd be over at the Kozy Korner a lot, he'd be some other places, he had his friends.

So he did leave though after the [raid].

He left. He traveled around here and there, particularly in DC and New York, and Pittsburgh. He had friends there. I think he came from New York by the way of the Islands, I think he came from Jamaica or someplace as a child, he grew up in New York. But he moved around because...it wasn't so much that the men were afraid of the white man, it was that they were afraid for their family. And I understand what they mean because I remember I was doing the first, I was in the first wave of immigration [desegregation?] of high school in the '60s in North Carolina and I remember when I was Senior I had a very beautiful girlfriend, I'd take her to a dance at the Y and when we were getting ready to leave...I'd been kicked out of school a lot of times for fighting, but this time, this guy, I remember him well, I'm not going to mention his name, but I remember him very well. I was going by and he said, "I see you nigger! I see you niggers!" And I stopped, and I turned. I wouldn't have won that fight because he was a big guy and he was a better fighter, and he was known for prize fighting, fighting for money, bare knuckles and stuff. He would have beat me, but I would have fought him. Hell, I'd lost fights before, I'd been swolled up before, that's no problem. And I'm not the greatest fighter in the world, but I ain't no punk, ain't nobody just going to walk over me, but I had my friend with me and I loved that girl at that time. I had her with me and I knew good and well if I got into this, she was going to get hurt, because she wasn't going to take no foolishness anyway and she had been there...and I couldn't have protected her. So I walked in, she never could figure out why I did that. I guess, Charlie and people like that were in that situation too, you know. Sometimes it's harder to walk away than to stay there and kick somebody's butt or take a beating. But he...they beat him [Charlie] down. And he didn't try to retaliate. He went to DC, he named names in the meeting with the Attorney General, it's in their files, the F.B.I says that, I didn't say it, the F.B.I. says this. It in the files. He's naming names, Thurgood was there, Walter White was there Maceo Hubbard was there but when he came back he wouldn't name names because they'd already taken Sarah and let her go. And he could have maybe got away, but...here's a perfect example, you mentioned *The Wire* awhile ago.

[1:11:11]

Ten years ago, no about 12 years ago, right before Barack got elected, this community is like *The Wire*. There was a club up at the corner and it turned into a meeting place for drug pushers all over, South Carolina, New York used to come down, the DC group would come down, the Philly group would come down and they'd sell drugs because there's a lot of tourists out here, a lot of money. What they would do is get somebody who used drugs and use them as a patsy to sell while they laid back in the hotel and chill out. It got real bad and it was that way for years and years and years and you wouldn't even come over here to do this thing if it was like that, believe me. This is where, in my opinion the greatest line-backer in all of time, Lawrence Taylor got busted. He got busted right up the street in this place trying to buy some crack cocaine. That's what they said...he got busted, I don't want to get sued. Anyhow, my wife used to walk six miles every day and you know how women are when they walk and they're really walking they look good you know and it's kind of normal to look at them, you know, it might not be the most polite thing, it's kind of normal, you know, we're men, you know, we've got our...yeah, but anyhow one of the tourists, or one of the drug pushers or somebody trying to buy some drugs, he didn't live here, she's walking one morning and she came back and she had this...she was furious. I said, "What's wrong, honey?" And she said, "This guy asked me to..." do a certain sex act. And she was graphic and I didn't say anything I just, calm as I was at that time when I was with my girlfriend when I was young, but what I did do, I

went to the safe and I took out a weapon and I put it in my belt and I wanted to find this guy. She told me what kind of van he was in. She was kind of surprised it didn't look like I had a response. [I said], "I've got to go out for a minute." I drove around and I thought I saw the van. He stopped in a nice place to eat. I was going to walk up to him and slap him upside the head and fire the gun in the air. He got out. Everything fit the description. This back door slid open and two little kids came out. And I said, *Something's about this is messed up...it probably looks like...it's probably different. If it is him you can't do that in front of some kids, you know.* That's how bad it was.

See that little hole right there [pointing to the wall] and there's another one over there and there's one over here, too. When I decided I was going to try to close that place down, I took them to court. It was me and a friend of mine on one side and forty good people from around here on the other side, because a lot of money went to the...people paid their rent, people bought their medicine, I suspect, so the money probably went to the churches...[inaudible]...but it's the truth. One day, me and Mary were in here, we were standing about right there I heard "WHACK!" I know what incoming sounds like. I slammed my wife on the floor and I jumped on top of her. She thought, it was just like [snaps fingers] so quick that she didn't hear the WHACK. She thought I had lost my mind. She was getting ready to call the police on me for domestic violence and I got up and Mary somebody shot. She said, "You're crazy. Nobody shot in here." And it was summertime, the blinds were a certain way and you can't see the holes. The only reason they're still there is I like to remind myself of it sometimes. About a week later, she was cleaning up and the bullet had lodged over here in the 'sil [windowsill]. I came in, just the corner of the window, it didn't shatter the window. It came through and she saw what it was and we saved the bullets, you know. She saw then, but that's what we had to deal with. That's that Wire mentality. If you don't give the people hope in your community, you leave it open for somebody to give them a false hope. "Here, sell this, you'll have some money. You can buy you a new car. You can be fly with the girls. You can travel, you can do this, that..." And you can for a second, but you've always got to look over your shoulder. We shut that place down. That's that Wire mentality. Charlie was bootlegger, but the community was safe. Sometimes it takes somebody people fear as well as respect and the community was safe. My father, when my dad, his generation was alive, I told the police when that case came up, I said, "You know what?" I said, "If my dad and his buddies were alive, you wouldn't have to worry about somebody calling you about the drug pushers. You wouldn't have to worry about drug pushers because you about a bunch of crazy old men got them in the position where they might kill them, you know. You don't have that now." Hopefully we can put the spirit back into the people and teach them to do something for themselves.

[1:17:10]

You mention how before integration, we were starting to accumulate some money. We got a land of land at the turn of the century, a lot of land. Now we don't hardly have any land, as a people, you know. Our businesses were good enough where, they weren't always as the white people's businesses sometimes they were, but they were good. As soon as integration came, there was an old saying, "The white man's ice is always colder." And that's the attitude that we, as a people, took. We abandoned our schools, we abandoned our communities, we could find reason to get out and instead of trying to figure out how in the world can we stay, because you see we all lived together, you didn't have to worry about a bunch of thugs running around doing this or that because if the doctors daughter is walking those streets and the plumbers daughter is walking those streets and the preacher's daughter is walking those streets, they're not going to let those kids get to that point where somebody's going to do something. They're going to stand up to them, they're going to stop

them. And they're going to teach those boys how to be men. And that's what has to be done now. Hopefully, we've got a generation that will do that. Because see I'm getting old. I've been fighting for a long time. [sigh] Everything's got a term on it, and that's just a part of life, you've got to accept it. So I got a little fight left, but I can't do what I used to do. And I'm seeing some of these young people wanting to step up to the plate and I will support them when they do, but they've got to be prepared because they don't know...that's why I mentioned before that I'm glad that the climate changed politically like it did, so they could see what they don't want to go through so when we get it right again we can fix it where it's sustainable. Charlie would have.

They say Charlie went to hear Robeson, Paul Robeson was speaking against Strom Thurmond over at Charleston and Paul Robeson went to Georgetown. I know my father went, I heard that Charlie went and couple more...and it gave Charlie a different sense of courage. One thing about Charlie, he didn't grow up down here. He never saw "strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees." The black men that grew up down here, in the country, in the '20s it was nothing unusual at least once in their lifetime to see somebody hanging from a tree. That puts fear in you. That was the purpose of it. This is terrorism. They talk Islamic terrorism, they talk about the Hispanics coming over here and the terrorism. There's no terrorism, like white supremacist terrorism. Let me tell you. They will take you, they will kill your mamma in front of you, they will do all kinds of things. This is the history. I'm not saying they're doing that now. But we know, one thing about it, they keep records, real good and they write down what they did, and so we don't want to ever have to face that again. We don't want to get to the point where we're taking a hate attitude, because you judge people, like I said, people around each other they learn that they've got more in common than they do in contrast, but at the same time, we have to...especially when we're fortunate enough to get our hands on some money and power, we've got to try to help our own people. The same way the Jewish people tried to help their people. You know, same way the Irish people helped their own people. You know, we don't do that. We still...it's something that was put in us a long time ago, where we do the opposite. Charlie wasn't like that. They said...Charlie and Sarah were both really light-skinned, "high yellow" as they used to be called and they say they were color-struck, well I tell you what, if they were color-struck they did enough for the community from what I hear. I don't think it was that, but what I do think....

For the tape can you talk about what "color-struck" means? Because a lot of people might not know.

One of the problems that black folk inherited was we see people in a kindergarten lens. You know how in kindergarten you go to school and you say, "Ok, little Johnny, little Aaron, this is red, this is brown, and this is black..." And black has always been something synonymous with evil, something that's gloomy that you really don't want no part of. Well white is always been synonymous with something that's pure. So we, subconsciously, we're taught to look at people like that. We see a bright-skinned black person, he's pretty, she's pretty, you know. You see a dark-skinned...well they look good." Check out most of the leaders, it's changed, but check out most of the leaders whether it's Walter White who looked whiter than most white folks, he had blue eyes, Thurgood [Marshall], Charlie, most of them. They were what we call, "high yellow." The color yellow and they could rise high, you know. It's a bad thing exists, that still exists, it's a color consciousness that we've got to get over. We're not in kindergarten anymore. We're at least teenagers and we're working on being adults. As a people we won't be adults until we've got everything that any other civilized society has, the best in civilized societies. We're not adults as a people, but we're working on it and we're moving up. We would have been there. Integration was good. But you have to integrate when you have...have some power. You've got to bring something to the table, otherwise you just assimilate.

We assimilated. And we assimilated a lot of...we did a lot of good too, don't get me wrong. I'm not anti-Caucasian, I'm not that way. I hate to use a cliché, but some of my best friends...you know.

[1:23:55]

But we have to help ourselves, we've got to put our hand out and we've have to protect our women. I mean I know how chauvinistic things can sound, I'm not trying to sound chauvinistic, but we have to have a...if a people don't have the heart or men that are willing to protect their women if necessary with their life nobody's going to respect them, nobody's going to respect them...but if somebody trying to mess with you then they're messing with me, I'm sorry if it's Chauvinistic or not. I'm going to kick their backside if I can and I'm going to give you time to get away if I can't. That's the way I was raised. That's what my father did in that restaurant, that's the way I was raised. Like I said, I ain't no great fighter, but I know what duty is and I'm old school, I can't help that. I was taught that a man has a certain duty and if he doesn't do his duty, if he doesn't do whatever he has to do to protect his family, to protect the women, protect the girls particularly and to teach the boys to act like men and not act like a lot of them do now, you know, not act like clowns. Don't have your pants falling down, you know. Sometimes it's cool, it's cool, I understand. I used to have a big afro. I've got pictures of me with a big afro when I was in college and I did all that kind of stuff. I had shoes, about four, five years, there was a time when we all wanted to be tall in the '70s and they had these elevated shoes for me. I had elevated shoes and daddy would look at me and say, "What kind of fool are you?" You know, so I understand that you've got to let the kids grow but at the same time you've got to teach culture and culture has lines to keep you going in a certain direction. Sometimes they're not always as good as they can be so you modify them as time goes by but you don't just settle or erase the lines....

My stepfather is from the South...

Yeah, he's going to open the door for you...

Yes, very similar

...he's going to hold your coat when you put it on.

Yeah, a lot of heart, yeah I think it's something...we can use more pride.

That's what it is. That's what it is. We had pride. We had pride when we didn't have no money. We had pride when we didn't have no education. We had pride when we had nothing but ourselves, our family, and God.

[1:27:58]

Not necessarily in that order, but we had that pride. And one of the biggest tricks that was played on us, we got hoodwinked, we did get bamboozled, as Malcolm said, was to take that away from us, they substituted it with things. I've got a Jaguar outside, it's an old Jag and I'm restoring it. I like having a Jaguar, so I get a material thing. But that can't, that can't, that's not equal to my legs. I lose that Jaguar, I can get me a piece of car that can get me here or there, but I lose my legs that's something else. That's the way it is with this pride thing. A lot of the things that we had before...we got things, more modern day tools for this and that but that good old fashioned sense of self and

value and community, it's not like it was when I was a kid. It's true that everybody was your mother and everybody was your father when I was a kid and you respected everybody. I don't care if it was the drunk on the corner, he was named Mr. Thomas, it wasn't "Old drunk Tom." You didn't say that. And if people trusted each other enough, and you're really cutting up and you're about to do something that could hurt yourself and you're down by Mr. Abraham's place and he saw you he might take you and give you a quick little pap you know. He hit me, he hit me. Before mommy and daddy...and you might get another beating after that if you deserve it. Nowadays, even in the schools, I'm not saying I'm for beating kids, I'm not saying that, don't get me wrong, because it gets twisted. But even in the schools, the teachers, if they have to discipline their child in the school, now if they're cussing or fighting or something and they get in the way to stop it, they better not put their hands on them and sometimes that's right because some...you've got some crazy teachers now. But when I was growing up, if Ms. Gritten [assumed spelling], Ms. Gritten did spank me. She called home, told my mamma, daddy was in Myrtle Beach, thank God he wasn't home. Mamma tore my butt up when I got home.

I used to wait tables in grad school I'd see how people would let their children run wild. And we would never [laughing] there would be consequences.

No, No. That's why you've got the character you've got today. It put something in us.

Yeah, and it wasn't that I was afraid of my mother, but it's that I didn't want to upset her enough to bring her to that point because it affected me that I brought her to that point.

It's called respect.

And yeah, she wasn't playing. And she didn't have to raise her voice in public to us, she'd just give us a look like...that's it [laughing]. It's not nostalgia, I don't think. I think that something's shifting in the culture. When I think about Charlie...they never had kids, right?

Well, that's questionable.

Oh, ok.

He may have had once son, who may not realize is his son. That's a deep story. I don't know the whole truth of it. I think I understand it, young fella, he's not young, he's just as old as I am. And then there was another one, his oldest son, he did take this "light, bright and almost white" [colorism] thing to a degree. People hated him in school. And when he died, Miss Sarah told me, she said, "You know, he had good things in life, the way you did." She said, "But, I'm glad that..." Mom and dad were dead by then... "you outlived your parents. And you're trying to do good things, but I'm glad I buried him because he couldn't have survived without me." That's the way it was. He would stay in his room, he didn't want to get dark. It was strange.

Colorism is a very real thing. Even in the Green Book...I had to write in one of my chapters about that, about colorism because even all of the images of people, and clip art and things that were used in the Green Book primarily could pass for white, or very, very fair skinned. And it wasn't until the 1960 edition that would could see the first decidedly looking black figure on the cover.

Black is beautiful.

Hmm mmmm. It was also with the times, but as we were saying earlier, it doesn't matter, regardless of your race. White supremacy, those lessons are in the DNA of this country and it doesn't matter what race you are, we are all affected by it.

Hmm mmm. I'll tell you, now this does relate to the entertainers that would come through town at Charlie's Place. What used to fascinate me, the white folks they'd come down here and get as dark as they possibly could. Sometimes they'd get burnt like...they'd turn red, you know. If anybody's colored, white folks are colored they turn all kinds of colors, but they turn red or green, the sun did strange things to them. Then in the '60s they tried to make their hair look wooly. At the same time, black folks would come and get some "Bleach and Glow," lighten their skin. They'd get a conk. I used to love to watch guys get a conk. I'd see people right in front of the barbershop, across from Charlie's Place, literally get up and run out of the chair, because you're putting lye in somebody's hair. In other words, the blacks were trying to be white and the whites were trying to be black. They wanted to dance like the black person, they wanted to get the mannerisms...that was hip, even before the '60s. Elvis and those went into that. These kids that wanted to learn the Shag and some of them in their nineties talk to me today and they'd copied everything they can. Check out Dino [Thompson], Dino dresses...he's got mannerisms like a black man, more than a lot of black folk do and he's one of the best gentlemen you could be around. He dresses...he's got that fly look and he's older than I am. When I talk it's one thing. This guy's a storyteller, he will have you enthralled with what he's talking about. Whatever it is, it's a good story, believe me.

So it was like a role reversal, you know, it was strange. I'd watch these performers. I remember when Percy Sledge was getting his hair conked one time. Remember Percy Sledge, "When A Man Loves A Woman." I remember when used to get his hair conked. And that stuff had to burn him. He didn't jump up or anything, he dealt with it. But you'd see him. Jerome Thomas [assumed spelling] he's dead, his wife Darla [assumed spelling] she's still at the barbershop, Jerome conked his hair. Jackie Wilson used to get his hair...Jackie Wilson used to be up there...

[1:35:18]

Sam and Dave, the real Blues Brothers. Come up to the House of Blues Gospel Brunch in the morning and have breakfast. I already told them, so come on up and have breakfast. You'll enjoy it. We're playing. Gospel Brunch 9:00 in the morning.

Ok, thank you.

Sam and Dave...I remember a good Sam and Dave story from those days. When I was at the Ocean Forest, Sam and Dave were playing at the Beach Club. The Beach Club was like a white-owned copy of Charlie's Place. That's probably where they got the idea from. Mr. Corbett [assumed spelling], he did it, and it was segregated most of the time but things changed before the end. The rules were kind of relaxed anyway, I mean when Junior Walker played there, I remember going there then and nobody bothered me, I went where I wanted to go at that time, but not all the time. But I wanted to get close to Junior Walker because I was a saxophone major in school so I wanted to watch him play and nobody said anything but anyhow at Corbett's you'd see the best black groups. Sam and Dave were playing there and they were staying at the Ocean Forest, but I never saw them there at the Ocean Forest I was told that they can't...when they leave there was a certain elevator close to their

room that they had to take to go out of the building, they can't walk through the lobby, you know. Blacks really weren't supposed to be allowed but Sam and Dave were superstars right then, so it was a strange time to grow up in, but I tell you what, I'm glad I did. I got to see 1,000 years of history in a matter of years. I got to see everything from "colored" to "negro" to our women being abused by them to "black" to our boys abusing their women, which is not good, you know. But I got see the whole thing and I don't know what it's taught me but if it's some great lesson in this life, maybe I'll figure it out when I'm here, I'd like to. But there's something. We saw Jackie Robinson, I remember seeing Jackie Robinson play on TV. Fortunately we had a TV which was rare. I remember when a color TV cost as much as a car. I remember Nat Cole being on TV, he had his own show, which was super rare, he only had it for a few episodes. I think he had a soap sponsor...you know black folks couldn't use soap, that was the stereotype, especially somebody as dark as Nat King Cole. It's crazy.

I remember we got to see Dr. King, we got to see Malcolm [X], we got to see one end of the spectrum and the other end of the spectrum. We got to see the leaders that came after that and I got to see Barack Obama become president which was very, very special. I helped him win South Carolina and it was very special. So I've had a good life. I got to meet you. I'm fascinated, really, you...what you're doing is going to live longer than you. You're going to live a long life but what you're doing is going to help people. This *Green Book* thing, all this travel that you're putting in you're going to get dividends from it, you're talented, you're gracious, your beautiful, that's the way it's supposed to be. And yet I can tell that you don't take no stuff, you know. And that's the way it's supposed to be.

Thank you. That's very kind of you to say. I'm grateful that I get the opportunity to do the work, but yeah...

It's a big thing. It's something bigger than you.

I know that. I do believe that.

Yeah, it is and it's going to be paying dividends for a long time because the *Green Book* is a great, great story. I still haven't seen the movie.

I haven't either.

Everybody talks about it...it's Driving Miss Daisy in reverse. But they don't understand. If they want to see the horrific side of it, there's a horrific side of it. But you don't introduce people to that that's never heard of something before. You go to college, you take a nuclear...when you start taking upward [courses] like you do in grad school, not grad, but like you do in college, you're gonna do Physics 101, not Physics 501, you know. See you've got to start off, you've got to...as Malcolm [X] would say, "You've got to put some Novocain on it before you stick the needle in there." So this will introduce them, and if the roles were reversed and this brother who's playing the musician had a thuggish attitude.

Dr. Shirley

I saw that in politics, you remember when Barack was running and the first debate, if you don't remember, you can find it, he was debating Dole? Not Dole, the guy, the Mormon...

Oh, Romney

Yeah he was debating Romney. Romney ate him up in the first one.

Hmm mmm. I remember that.

Yeah and then you had Biden with a guy who's getting ready to retire right now, young fella. Oh, the head of the Republican Party in Congress, the Senator. And Biden came in there sounding like a drunk Irishman. He was out of bounds, no etiquette and Biden's got plenty of etiquette, you know. No, no...he just beat him up and I was watching it and everybody said, "What's wrong with Biden, why is he acting like that?" I said, "You're gonna get it, if you are." And if he came out tough in the first place they'd say, "See, that's the angry black man. We can't let him be President, he's the angry black man." But see Biden's changed the rules now, he's raised the ceiling, you know, I don't care how tough...you can't touch what Biden did. I figured that was theater. I figured they planned it out. I figured Biden did that on purpose, Biden figured he'd survive. That's the way it is with the movie [Green Book], if people hear some of the things that I've forgotten from some of those times of why they did have to have a *Green Book* it will turn them off. Because nobody likes real evil and there was a lot of evil going on, or they would never have had to have the *Green Book*. {1:42:54} So put the Novocain on it and in turn all they've really got to do is listen to you speak about Route 66, they'll get an idea. You just got to cut me off of Facebook because I was saying some good things about the movie that I hadn't seen. So I sent... you speaking, a couple of hours on something. And he wrote back and said, "Right on!" [laughing]

Thank you. Tell me before we end, because I know we're wrapping up. Was there a story that that Charlie would go...I remember reading about this, that he go into these prescribed places that were mostly for white people but because he had this financial power and because he had this respect from the community he could just sit where he wanted...

Yeah, yeah.

Is there a story when he went to the Kozy Korner and the kids would come and look at him through the window.

Hmm mmm. This was after he got his ears clipped. Yeah they were looking at the mutation, because they [the Klan] clipped his ears. Yeah he would do that. He would go where he wanted to go in general. He was a different kind of...he knew his money was as green as anybody's so when he'd go to the movie, he'd take Miss Sarah to the movie and they'd sit downstairs, you know black folks would sit upstairs and the color consciousness played a role to because he was light-skinned and she was light-skinned. So it wasn't as offensive to the white...that played a role. But people knew Charlie was black, because Charlie knew he was black. He did what he wanted to do and this...that white supremacy mentality could not allow that to foster and grow because all of the sudden you'd have other people. Black folk were making some money over here for that time. What if five or six of them got together and said, *let's go buy this in the center of town*. So they had to stop it. This was how hateful it was. This was after that, after daddy got fired from Patricia's, and Patricia was a good woman, I still respect the Patricia people in general. I look at things in context of time. I actually do. But after that, on Highway 17 the main drag, about three blocks from the ocean you'll see an Arby's. Daddy wanted to put a restaurant up there, he cash money to do it. He had money. He had cash money to do it. And they said, "Riley," This is what he told me. And I've never know him to lie or exaggerate, he was a different kind of fella. He said, "Riley, we'd love to sell this to you because we know you're a good guy but we can't because of covenants and restrictions say you can't sell to

colored people.” And that was true because when I was on the planning commission that stuff has changed but I saw all that old stuff. I looked it up. But they were afraid of us getting the land down there. I’m going to tell you now, it was not because they thought we’d do something wrong with it, they thought we’d do something right. [1:46:18] Because Strom Thurmond, I’ve mentioned him a couple of times. Strom called here and told my father. I hear you’re getting ready to get a piece of land close to the ocean, I want you to know now, you get it, and you open your restaurant, I want to be the first person in there. Now, I want you to seat me first, that ok? But Thurgood Marshall was involved in that, too. By then, Thurgood was on the Supreme Court, he couldn’t come out and open it and be involved but he made it clear that if daddy pushed that case, if he wanted to sue them that no matter how much money it took to take it up the channels, they would be available. And when it got to the Supreme Court it would be handled, you know. My uncle Billy Fleming [assumed spelling] was close to Thurgood Marshall and he’s related to my father, but daddy did not do it and the reason he did not do it was because mamma had just moved back down here after all those years I was in college and she moved back down and he knew if anything that reminded her about what happened to Joe DeLaine she’d go back up to Wilkesboro in a heartbeat, she was an independent-type woman. So he didn’t do it. But white folks were afraid that he’d steal their business and he would have. That was going to be his get back. Had a lot of black folk over here afraid to work for him, there was about four or five young excellent waiters, one of them ended up being the maître d at the Dunes Club, they were willing to take a chance. If he’d got it you’d have all these wealthy people that had been coming there for 30 years just to see Ron [?] who’s kids had grown up, still got pictures of Ron [?]. There’s a book called, “Dancing in the Low Country” by a guy, one of the editors or Southern Living. My cousin called me and said, “What you doing?” I said, “Sitting here.” Get up, go out to the bookstore and buy “Dancing in the Low Country.” I said, “I’ll...” “No, get up now. Go buy ‘Dancing in the Low Country.’” I want you to read it. I said, “Ok. I’ll go.” I did. They knew more about my mother and father in that novel...so I wrote the editor. I said, “That sounds like the Patricia Inn.” He had a website. He said, I used to go the Patricia...when I was a kid my grandfather would always take us there, a lot of it is like the Patricia...” I sent a picture of my father. I said, “Well that’s my dad.” He didn’t write back anymore.

So daddy was respected and he wasn’t the only one. Mr. Kidnapper, Rueben Wineglass [assumed spelling] a lot of these guys...Hook, Hook Anderson [assumed spelling], they could have opened businesses that could have rattled...Sonny Kid [assumed spelling] went down to Augusta and Nashville and became the maître d down there. If he’d opened a business up here and he would have drawn the millionaires because they already knew them, you know. So all of this is a part of this white supremacy thing. They look out...they make...they realized that they have a spot and they’ve not going to give it up. Power does not give up except to other power. You know the phrase, I might miss the phrase but you know what I’m talking about. Power secedes to power and that’s it. And Charlie was an example of power. They had to crush him and they had to do it in a big fashion so black folks would know we didn’t need no more Mr. Charlie’s here. And they did it so well, and you talk about terrorism. That was in 1950, even up until three years ago, three or four years ago, that was a secret among here among people 50 years old. That was a secret. People didn’t talk about it. That’s scaring somebody. That’s putting fear in them. Now it wasn’t that our ancestors were afraid to fight, in fact there’s another section of the community used to be called Harlem, it’s called Canal now. They were in the trees in the next day and they were putting the word out, “Please tell the Klan to come back by. There’s going to be a slaughter.” They would have lost in the end because the police probably would have helped the Klan but. But our Klan....

Well that’s the true definition of terrorism.

Yeah it's terrorism.

And then when you have a system that's not going to be there to support you...

And speaking of the system, you can't go out without saying this, we when we went to the Justice Department, the whole trail was based on the premise of the whole investigation was built on a premise that the police had violated the people's rights, Charlie's rights and the people in the club's rights because they were in Klan unif... they were in the Klan, yet at the end of the day, you'll read in the beginning of those files, "well we couldn't find any evidence that the Klan was working under the color of the law and the police were there to protect them." How can it be that the one person who was killed had a police uniform on? That the Chief of Police was in the front seat with the Grand Dragon of the Ku Klux Klan? How can it be that they're not under the protection of the police? If blacks had really had risen up, police would have been there on the Klan side. At least that's the way it looks. But that was then and the day is now, you know. And all we can do is make it better. You don't get bitter, you get better. But when you think about it, all you can do is shake your head and say, "What in the world?" And when you get the opportunity to read what they say, with their own hand, you'll see how they knew.

[1:53:11]

[END]