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RAYAH LEVY: I am Rayah Levy, here with Herb Bradley, to talk with him for an oral history project titled "Voices from the African Diaspora: The Black Experience of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania," as part of the Lehigh Valley Engaged Humanities Consortium. We're here at the Bethlehem Area Public Library on Thursday, June 13<sup>th</sup>, 2019. Herbert Bradley, thank you for your willingness to speak with me. Can you please spell and state your full name?

HERBERT BRADLEY: My name is Herbert, H-E-R-B-E-R-T, Bradley, B-R-A-D-L-E-Y.

RL: And can you please tell us your date of birth?

HB: I was born on April 17<sup>th</sup>, 1942, in Easton, Pennsylvania.

RL: Herbert, what year did your family move to [00:01:00] Bethlehem?

HB: My family? Well my great-grandfather on my father's side was Hiram Bradley. And I don't know for certain, but from what I've been able to learn, he came here to Bethlehem with a man named Tinsley Jeter. And Tinsley Jeter is called the, one of the entrepreneurs of Fountain Hill. And from what I've been able to find out, Tinsley Jeter was sort of an aristocrat who came to Pennsylvania from Virginia. He started out as a lawyer, from what I've been

able to learn, and decided that he wanted to become an engineer. So somehow he ended up in Philadelphia, and I think he came here [00:02:00] because he'd heard that there were a lot of ores in the ground. So, so he learned about the geological structure, I believe, of, of this area. And was curious to come up here and exploit that to help start an iron foundry and later, a steel foundry. A steel business.

RL: And was he successful?

HB: Oh yes.

RL: So tell us about that.

HB: Quite successful. Well I can only tell you about what I learned, you know, through my reading and through my research. Mr. Jeter, I like to say he came here with a bag of money.

RL: Is there a reason why you call him Mr. Jeter? Isn't he --

HB: We're not related, you know --

RL: You're not re--

HB: -- just the family, the families, because they were some of the first families to settle down here, initially there was mostly farmers here.

RL: How about your [00:03:00] --

HB: My family?

RL: Your family.

HB: Well, my family got started, the reason why I'm telling about Jeter is because he had servants, and my great-grandfather Hiram was one of his servants.

RL: Oh, OK.

HB: And he drove his coaches. So he was basically a coachman. And he, while he was a coachman working for Mr. Jeter, he met a house servant, a woman named Emma Welch. And over the years they became associated with one another, and eventually became husband and wife, and started a family.

RL: So your grandmother's name is Emma Welch?

HB: Well her real name is Rachel, but she was known as Emma.

RL: OK.

HB: And it took me a long time to find that out.

RL: And she was already living here in Bethlehem when she -- did she move here, or she --

HB: I don't know for sure, I think she was living, probably living in [Kalasokra?], but [00:04:00] from what I've been able to find out, she was born somewhere around Norristown.

RL: Oh, I see.

HB: Don't know for sure why she came to Bethlehem, I haven't been able to find that out. I wasn't really that interested. But, the interesting thing about the relationship between Hiram and Emma was that Hiram was black, and Emma was white.

RL: OK.

HB: So, that's probably the most noteworthy part about that relationship, that there was a couple that started a family, you know, a biracial family.

RL: Right. And could you tell me Hiram, when did he, where did he move from? Where did --

HB: He didn't move, he was supposedly born in Powhatan County, Virginia. And probably as a slave. [00:05:00] And from what I've been able to read, Tinsley Jeter brought him with him to Pennsylvania. Probably because of the, you know, the -- at the time, there weren't even any roads to speak of, everywhere they traveled they either had to travel on foot, on horseback, or a horse-drawn carriage.

RL: About what year was this again?

HB: It was in the early 1860s.

RL: Have you heard stories about, what was it like, this interracial couple, during that period -- what year did they, roughly what year do you think they got married? Emma and Hiram?

HB: Well I have actually, in my bag, I have a copy, I was able to get a copy of their marriage certificate.

RL: Oh, that's wonderful. And [00:06:00] roughly, do you --

HB: Well I would say they got married probably around 1868.  
Because I believe he had to work for Jeter as an indentured  
servant for about seven years first.

RL: And do you know if that marriage was accepted here in  
Bethlehem at that time?

HB: Hard to tell.

RL: Have you heard stories?

HB: It's hard to tell. I doubt if there was many people that  
they interacted with. Because up on Fountain Hill, there  
was nobody up there.

RL: OK, so they lived on Fountain, that's where they lived  
(overlapping dialogue; inaudible)?

HB: Well they lived with Tinsley Jeter first, and then when he  
was finished with his indenture, they bought some property  
on the south side of Bethlehem.

RL: Do you know roughly where on the south side they moved to?

HB: Oh yeah. It's called Five Points.

RL: OK.

HB: And if go to Five Points today, one block behind Five  
Points, [00:07:00] you'll see Bradley Street. Which was  
named after Hiram.

RL: It was named after Hiram. Why did they give him that  
distinction, do you think, to name a street after him?

HB: Well I think probably just because that he had the perseverance, you know, to settle in a strange place, and start a family. He was roughly probably in his forties, and she was much younger, and it just wasn't a common practice anywhere to have biracial marriages. They couldn't, they had to get married in a church, in a place called Hokendauqua.

RL: And where is that?

HB: Oh it's the outskirts of Allentown, in Lehigh County.

RL: And tell me about who were their offsprings, Emma and Hiram?

HB: Well they had about nine kids. Or [00:08:00] in total, a couple of them died young.

RL: Do you know their names?

HB: My grandfather -- yeah, I know most of their names. I have them written down somewhere, but it's -- my grandfather was Frank. His oldest brother was Robert, he had a brother named Harry, the first two children were Tinsley and Emma Theresa, they both died. There was a sister named Mary. And another brother, I can't remember his name, and I think it was Harry. Harry, Frank, Emma Theresa, Tinsley, Robert, and Mary, I believe.

RL: OK. [00:09:00]

HB: Sometimes I have to, if I don't have a list in front of me,  
I can't remember a lot, so.

RL: That's OK, that's fine. So your grandfather, so tell me  
about your grandfather, Frank. Did you know him?

HB: Oh yeah.

RL: Did you know him well?

HB: Not well.

RL: Did you meet him?

HB: Oh yeah. Oh yeah. My dad would occasionally, when I was a  
little boy, my dad worked at Bethlehem Steel.

RL: Your dad worked at Bethlehem Steel?

HB: Yeah.

RL: What's your father's name?

HB: Herb.

RL: Herb.

HB: Herbert Frank.

RL: OK.

HB: We have different middle names.

RL: And he worked at Bethlehem Steel?

HB: He worked at Bethlehem Steel.

RL: OK, before we get to Herbert Frank, tell me a little bit  
about your grandfather.

HB: About Frank?

RL: Yes.

HB: Well when I met -- by the time I met my grandfather, he was disabled. I believe he was injured, he also worked at the steel. I believe he was injured in an accident in the I-beam yard. So his one leg was really [00:10:00] damaged. Most of the time we came to see him, he was sitting. So he was sitting on his back porch, he loved to sit on his back porch, surrounded by all these fruit trees. He grew grapes, and apricots, and several varieties of apples, and he had a big garden. I'm tempted to say why, I didn't know why, as a child. But that's where they held most of their -- he had this old, really old, small house. And they spent most of the time, my father, my grandfather, my uncles, whoever they were in conversation with, would be in the kitchen or on the back porch. They didn't really -- well he had a TV, but [00:11:00] it was like living back in the 1860s or something, (laughter) because they really were -- in fact, in his kitchen, he didn't have a regular faucet for running water. He had to pump it.

RL: And this is your grandfather?

HB: That was my grandfather. He was kind of a neat guy, but he talked like this, he had a real rough, gruff voice.

RL: Roughly how old were you when you first met, when you were cognizant of your grandfather?

HB: Probably about 10, 9 or 10. I don't know why it took that long, but we just didn't visit much. Well my dad was so busy. He had two jobs, he worked at the Steel during the day, and then on the weekends and nights sometimes, he worked at Hotel Bethlehem.

RL: OK. And your father, Herbert Frank, was he living in Bethlehem?

HB: No, we were living -- he was living with my mom and they had five kids.

RL: So they --

HB: We lived in Easton.

RL: Oh, so you lived, so when [00:12:00] did they move from Bethlehem to Easton?

HB: We didn't move. Grandpap stayed in Bethlehem. Dad worked in Bethlehem, and he spent a lot of time up here because he just didn't have much time off. So he wasn't home all the time. Sometimes he, you know, he'd work so late, he'd just have to stay at his dad's house.

RL: And that's your dad? Your dad had to stay at his dad's house?

HB: Yeah, at his dad's.

RL: Because it -- OK, OK.

HB: Because he worked so much.

RL: OK. And your mom, where was she, was she, is she from, was she from Easton?

HB: Her mother was from Easton, she's from -- well both sides of the family were from among the oldest black families in the Lehigh Valley. They've been here, and my mom's side of the family, her side of the family goes back before the American Revolution.

RL: And your mom's [00:13:00] name?

HB: Leila Merritt.

RL: I'm sorry?

HB: Leila.

RL: Leila, OK.

HB: L-E-I-L-A.

RL: So tell me, give me a little bit of information, tell me some information about Leila.

HB: About my mother?

RL: Yes, your mom.

HB: Boy, she was great. Excuse me a minute, I get overcome sometimes, because I miss her. Anyway, her father was a man named William Scott Merritt. He was a baseball player back in the Negro Leagues. And her mother was Leila Hubbard. My grandmother was a domestic servant for some rich families on College Hill in Easton, where Lafayette College is at. [00:14:00]

RL: Yeah, so --

HB: And Grandpa Merritt, like I said, was a baseball player. So he traveled a lot. He played for, he played and coached in the Negro Leagues for 30 years. Most of it with the Brooklyn Royal Giants. And his son, my uncle William, was also a baseball player. And sometimes they played together. They played on a lot of different teams, but my uncle William was, played for the Newark Eagles in the, probably in the late '30s, early '40s. So they were the baseball family. Did a lot of traveling. They traveled all over. The women were mostly at home, you know, taking care of the house, and the kids, and when they had time, doing domestic work.

RL: OK. [00:15:00] So is there any other important things that you would like to share with us, pertaining to your grandparents, and your parents, that you think that we should know before we move onto --

HB: Sure. My father's side, his mother died when he was young. His mother died 1925. He was only about 14 years old.

RL: And this is Emma? Emma died?

HB: No, this was, her name was Martha Sheldon.

RL: And that's his mother, you said?

HB: Yes.

RL: She died? OK.

HB: Yeah, Martha Sheldon-Bradley, of course. Frank's wife.

RL: OK. And then, any other information as far as they're concerned, that [00:16:00] --

HB: Well, I had a magazine article, I don't have it with me today, but there was a woman in Bethlehem that did some research on basically, the non-white population, the non-native white population of Bethlehem. The Italian immigrants, the Hungarian, and Lithuanian, Slovak immigrants. And she kind of put them all together. Growing up, I didn't know anything about any of this stuff, not really. Just stuff that I learned along the way. I mean, I would come to visit, and you could see, you know, the different people with the different, a lot of different languages, a lot of different activities going on.

RL: So I have a question also. So, [00:17:00] your great-grandparents --

HB: Yes.

RL: -- they were an interracial couple?

HB: Yes.

RL: Did that trend continue with other generations where --

HB: Oh yeah, we're all mixed up now.

RL: OK.

HB: We've got everybody in our family now.

RL: OK. And so, your father, did he, was he married to a black woman? Did he get married to a black woman, your father?

HB: My mother.

RL: Your mother?

HB: Yeah.

RL: OK, right. That's what I wanted to -- OK, all right. So let's go on, let's talk about you for some time now.

HB: Me?

RL: Yeah, let's talk about you, and --

HB: Yeah, I'm a lot of fun.

RL: (laughter) And how, why are you so still connected to Bethlehem?

HB: Well actually, so I studied history in college. I got a bachelor's degree in history. And I never really did anything with it. In other words, I know I would have needed [00:18:00] to have a master's degree at least to pursue a teaching, or any kind of professional work with that background. But, I got sidetracked while I was in college. I became --

RL: What college did you go to?

HB: Well, I went to a few. I graduated from University of California, San Diego. There was a lot of radical activity going on over there.

RL: What year was this?

HB: Nineteen seventy-one.

RL: That's when you graduated?

HB: Yes.

RL: OK. And continue, I'm sorry, tell us a little bit.

HB: Well --

RL: Why the connection to Beth-- why are you so fascinated?

HB: So I was always interested, because I knew so little about how the family came to be here, I didn't even know there was a street in their name, even though I've been there many times, we -- the family's address, mailing address, was on Ontario Street, which is one, [00:19:00] half a block over. So I was, I lived in California for about 17 years after I got out of the service. And I came back, and it was almost like coming to a new country, everything was so different from when I left. And I found myself like a stranger in a strange land.

RL: When you visited Bethlehem? Or just in general?

HB: In this area in general, but especially Bethlehem and Easton.

RL: And why was Bethlehem such a strange, even though your family, your father and your grandparents are from Bethlehem, why was it, wasn't, didn't you used to visit Bethlehem when you were a youngster?

HB: They didn't interact very much.

RL: And why do you think?

HB: Don't know. [00:20:00] No idea, don't know. Even today, the families, I think, that may have come here in the '30s and '40s probably interacted more with one another than the families that have been there previously, like there was only a few families that, from what I know, that came here in the 1900s. The Johnsons, the Lees, there was another family, I can't think of their name. The Bradleys. There was only a few families. And of course, don't know, don't know how they even, how my mother and father came to meet, how they became friends, anything. So I wanted to find all that stuff out. Wanted to know where they were married, you know. [00:21:00]

M1: (inaudible). (break in audio)

HB: By the time I was a teenager, um, the teens in the Lehigh Valley in general interacted quite frequently on the weekends. They had a thing called the Sweet Shoppe, where all the black kids would meet on a Saturday and a Sunday night.

RL: Where was the Sweet Shoppe?

HB: The Sweet Shoppe was in Easton. There was one in Allentown, too. But the Allentown guys weren't very friendly, they -- well [they were all?], were like that, you know, when you look back at it, everybody felt like

somebody was invading their territory, because there were so few of us.

RL: So, the kids from Bethlehem and Easton would go to the Sweet Shoppe?

HB: All of the kids. Easton, Bethlehem, and Allentown.

RL: And Allentown.

HB: The Bethlehem kids were always the best behaved. They hardly ever had any problems with anybody. [00:22:00]

RL: So, I want to stick on the Bethlehem connection, because you have such a rich history here in Bethlehem. I'm going to ask you a, actually, I just want to go back for a little, because I want you to tell me a little bit more about you, what did you do? What high schools did you go to? What high school --

HB: I went to Easton High School. Graduated in 1960.

RL: OK. So in the 1960s, what was it like around the Lehigh Valley area?

HB: Well I wasn't here very long in the '60s, but in the late '50s was my teen years. And as teenagers, well for me, I was involved in sports mostly. I played basketball, ran track, and played football at Easton. And we had very good teams. All of the schools were good, though. Always [00:23:00] very competitive.

RL: So I know you know Chappy, tell us about the relationship between you and Chappy.

HB: Well Chappy and I were competitors. But not so much, we're all -- he was on the track team at Bethlehem, and I was on the track team in Easton. We had really good track teams, our team won the district championship for about three years running. So there was always, there was only a few of us black kids on any of the sports teams. And it was usually the same kids. Chappy was, he was like a middle distance runner, and I was a sprinter. But I ran anything. They put me in (laughter) said, "Herbie, you want to run the 880?" "Yeah, OK." Yeah. But Chappy, I think he was mainly a quarter miler, and a half miler. And he was [00:24:00] very good. He was very good. In fact, I think he might have won the districts. But he competed with my cousin Bucky. They were both very good runners. They could run anything.

RL: And Bucky lived in --

HB: Easton.

RL: -- Easton also?

HB: Yeah, Bucky [Kaiser?].

RL: Tell me --

HB: But as kids growing up, we all, were all involved in sports. That was -- sports and church, that was pretty

much, school and church was pretty much our livelihood, and our neighborhoods.

RL: What church did you go to?

HB: I went to two of them, actually. (laughter) I went, I went to, my mother's church was Union AME.

RL: And where is that?

HB: In Easton. But we lived next to this Lutheran church, St. John's Lutheran Church. The church and the school were right, side by side, and we lived just behind them, on a side street. So we were kind of, well, Union AME had a big [00:25:00] fire one time, so we didn't have a church to go to for a couple of years. So my mom insisted that we go to church somewhere, so we started going to this Lutheran church.

RL: When you left college, and you came back to the area, to the Lehigh Valley area, roughly about what year was that? And what, and why did you come back to this area?

HB: Well it was a long time before I, I got out of the service in 1967, I didn't get back here until 1982.

RL: And how has --

HB: I came back because, well, my mother died. She was really sick, she died in '81, I came back home, I got divorced from my first wife, and I decided to come back here and resettle. And been here ever since.

RL: When you came back, how -- did you see any drastic changes?

HB: Wow.

RL: Tell me about that.

HB: Everything looked really small. Everything was condensed.

[00:26:00] People moved a lot slower. Everything was more -- no, excuse me, a little faster. California, everything was slowed down. But back here, it seemed like everybody was always in a hurry to go somewhere and do something.

RL: I'm surprised, California, big.

HB: Well, you know, the weather has a lot to do with that.

There's always something to do out there. And for me during that time period, a lot had to do with, it was pretty much sports and academics. People went to school all the time. Daytime, you know, you work during the day, maybe for a while, and took classes at night. Always something to do. Professional sports teams, a lot of music concerts, a lot of outdoor stuff.

RL: So when you moved here, moved back to the area [00:27:00] in 1982, did you used to be a regular visitor to Bethlehem that you are now?

HB: Well no. What happened, another thing that happened is when I was in the Navy, one of my first liberties was in the Philippines. And I went off a base in the Philippines, I was crossing this little bridge, and I heard somebody

call my name. And they called me by my first name. In the service, you know, they always call you by your last name. So I was shocked, and I turned around, I looked down, there was my cousin from Bethlehem standing there.

RL: And what's your cousin's --

HB: Named Johnny Terrell. And I didn't expect to see him, I hadn't seen him in years. Didn't even know he was in the Navy. But he spotted me. And we sort of had like a little reunion, and kept in touch. He's still out there. So we had a little reunion for a while, but as long as we were -- in fact, I even ran into him [00:28:00] after I got out of the Navy, years later, I was a basketball referee, and I was refereeing a basketball tournament, and he was running the hot dog stand.

RL: Where was this?

HB: In San Diego.

RL: In San Diego.

HB: Yeah. So, yeah. It's really funny, because we're cousins because I think his, how'd it go? His mother and my father were first cousins, on the Bradley side. But like I said, they didn't really interact that much. The adults, they might have interacted when they were younger, but when we were kids, they didn't interact too much. I don't know why that was.

RL: So you didn't get to know a lot of your Bethlehem cousins -  
-

HB: No.

RL: -- when you -- how about when you moved back in '82?

HB: No, they changed by then. Most of them were gone. There was hardly anybody here then. A lot of the guys had gone in the service, [00:29:00] and had married, you know, and moved away. Had their own families elsewhere. So the only ones, the only people that were still around were the guys that either didn't go in the service, or didn't get married, mostly. So it was just a big difference from the time I was a teenager to the time, you know, that I came back here in my late thirties. Big difference.

RL: What were some of the adjustments you had to make?

HB: What to do with my time, first of all. The jobs was another big thing. When I was in California, I had choice, a large choice of job opportunities. I was mostly an adventurer, so I always wanted to do things, like I was in the fire department for a couple of years, [00:30:00] and -  
-

RL: Here in the Lehigh Valley here?

HB: No, in San Diego.

RL: OK. What did you do when you came back? What kind of jobs did you have here?

HB: Lousy jobs, really. But the best job I had, after a few years, I worked for Metropolitan Edison.

RL: I'm sorry, what?

HB: Metropolitan Edison. The electric company.

RL: OK. And where is that located?

HB: In the Easton area.

RL: In Easton. Did you feel disgruntled whereas you wanted to leave the area because you couldn't find work?

HB: No, because one thing I found about the Lehigh Valley, they like people that come from other places. Since a lot of people here don't travel very much, well they don't -- if they travel, their travels are like, brief. They don't go somewhere and try to see life from a different perspective, and stay for a long time like I did. [00:31:00] They pretty much stick close to home, and are used to jobs that don't require much education or training. So they kind of like their routine, you know, like a routine. Going to work, after work, play ball or go to a bar on the weekends, and just a very different lifestyle for me. It took a long time for me to get, get used to it. Just very different from California. Well for one thing, the weather plays a big part. You know, you can't go to the beach in October. But in California, you can go any day.

RL: Right. Right. I know you have a lot of knowledge about certain people that lived in Bethlehem, because again, your roots are from Bethlehem. Could you tell me [00:32:00] about Mr. Warner, I think you called him Pip?

HB: Yeah, Malloy Warner?

RL: Malloy, yes.

HB: One of my father's friends. Very interesting guy.

RL: Could you tell us a little about him? Do you -- any information?

HB: Well, he had his own trash business. He went around, I guess collecting trash from businesses. Not so much residential. You know, trash from Louisville. So he had his own business, and with that business he helped support, you know, he hired friends, and he helped, he helped support about five or six different families through that business. So he was very popular with his contemporaries. Everybody seemed to look up to him. He was a big man in stature anyway. [00:33:00] But they seemed to look up to him because of his, just his perseverance, I guess. He just had a commanding sort of personality.

RL: So he was a friend of your father's?

HB: Oh yeah. Yeah, they were good friends.

RL: And did he have kids?

HB: Yeah, he had two sons.

RL: And what were their names? What are their names?

HB: His oldest son was my age, I didn't know him very well.

His name was Ronnie. And he was killed in an auto accident right around high school graduation time. I think it was June of 1960. It was a shock, because he was such a nice fella, every -- the whole family was just really nice people.

RL: And what about the other, you said?

HB: And the other brother was Barry. He's still around, I think.

RL: Did you know him?

HB: He's a younger fellow, so I didn't really know him very well.

RL: OK. Tell us about [00:34:00] Lilian Robinson.

HB: Lilian?

RL: Yes.

HB: We call her June.

RL: Who is she?

HB: She's the daughter of my aunt, my father's sister's nickname was Penny. Right? Penny. And Lilian's mother was Mag Robinson. They were good friends for life. Mag was married, her maiden name was Johnson, I believe. I'm pretty sure she was a Johnson. And she married one of the Robinson brothers. I knew two of them, I don't know if

there was more or not. There was, I don't know her father's real name, but we called him Dunk. And he had a brother, Herbie. It was a big family in Easton. So there was a number of those [00:35:00] couples, you know, that I don't know where they met or how they met, but you know, there was some kind of connection between Easton and Bethlehem, certain families intermarried. And the kids became friends, and like these friendships have been going on now for close to 100 years, I guess.

RL: Also, tell us, tell me about, are you familiar with Fred Milton?

HB: Freddy Middleton?

RL: Yeah, Middleton, sorry.

HB: Oh yeah, Freddy was, he was a really nice guy. Didn't know him well. But again here, we're talking about the relative ages. I think he was a little bit older than me, not much. He was a football player. So all the athletes had mutual respect for one another.

RL: Oh, so you got to know him through sports?

HB: Mainly through sports, and the Sweet Shoppe, but you know, you always wanted to win -- [00:36:00] we played these, when we were on these teams, the teams were so competitive, and they were so successful, you always wanted to know who else was on the team, because there were so few of us. And

to make any of those teams in those days, you had to be good. Like before I got into high school, I think I never, I always played on the championship teams, I don't think I was ever on a team that either didn't win a championship of some kind of league, or tournament, or was, you know, a runner up. And we were -- so it was a competitive thing, and it was a basis for forming, you know, relationships with one another. You'd see these guys somewhere, and you know, you compete against them in the sport, and then the next thing you know, Sunday night they'd be down at the Sweet Shoppe. You know, so there was always some -- or maybe even interacting in churches. Sometimes the churches just interacted with one another. So.

RL: How do you feel not knowing [00:37:00] your family's side of Bethlehem? And have you tried to, you know, connect to them any time? Have you ever tried to connect with them?

HB: Well, kind of difficult, really. Because I remember the first time I ever seen my cousin Beverly, I thought, "What a beautiful girl this girl is."

RL: I'm sorry, what's the cousin's name?

HB: Beverly.

RL: Beverly? And what's Beverly's last name?

HB: Terrell.

RL: OK.

HB: She was beautiful. But there's just a certain thing about that among the teenagers, you know, it's kind of hard to explain. The really, really, if you will, the really good looking people were sort of distant, you know? I mean, they just didn't, [00:38:00] they weren't openly friendly. Don't know how to explain that.

RL: So did you say Beverly Terrell wasn't friendly towards you when you met her?

HB: No.

RL: Did she know that you were her cousin?

HB: Probably, yeah. Probably. Well she had a boyfriend, and this guy was another one of those, he was a standout type person too, and she was really closely attached to him. So, you know, you thought of the two of them together, and that's how a lot of couples were. And when you think about it, it's like, that's how the parents were, too, so. I never really understood all of that. I'm not sure I do either now.

RL: How about when you got older? When, you know, everybody, they're no longer teenagers, but adults now, have you tried to reach out later on?

HB: Well for me, [00:39:00] I stayed involved with sports. I always had something to do with sports. Either I was a softball coach, or a softball player, I coached basketball,

I even had, I was CYO director for a while. I worked at the Boys and Girls Club. So I was always involved in something with kids and sports. Or I worked as a teaching assistant in the school district. So I always had some involvement with the kids through either sports, or school. But not really much time to interact with adults, because I got married a second time, and had a family of my own, so I was pretty busy almost all the time. I had very little free time.

RL: Tell me, your family, do you -- how many kids do you have?  
You have kids?

HB: Yeah.

RL: How many kids?

HB: From which family, the first family? Second family?

RL: It doesn't matter. It doesn't matter.

HB: Six.

RL: You have six kids? [00:40:00] And what are their names?

HB: Well there's Herbie Jr., Theresa, Edward, Jeffrey, Christopher, and Susan.

RL: And do they live in the Lehigh Valley area?

HB: Two of them do.

RL: And who are they?

HB: Christopher and Susan live in Easton.

RL: OK. Why do you, and again, you -- this might be difficult, why do you think that a lot of the younger people moved out of the area?

HB: Well I think it's true most places, I mean we're a nation of immigrants, you know? And immigrants or migrants, we move around all the time, I think probably out of either curiosity, or looking for different opportunities. I know, like I said, for myself, the first two years I was out of high school, I couldn't get a decent job, so I'm like, I'm not hanging around here. I mean, I always could go to college, because of my, you know, playing ball, but I wasn't ready [00:41:00] for college up here. I wasn't prepared. So like, I went to Muhlenberg College for about two weeks. All I had to do is go up there and talk to the coach and say, you know, I want to go to school, and he said, "Go get a room." You know, he knew me as a ball player. But I wasn't ready academically, and I didn't want to go to a school where there was almost all white kids, it was just like high school all over again. So I didn't want, I wanted to see something different. And for me, the service was the place for that. And going to California, because of the difference in the weather. The winters, I was sick a lot as a kid. I had rheumatic fever twice. I had whooping cough, and a lot of the kids were like that.

It seemed like, you know, somebody was always sick because of the weather, and people, they had enough but not much, you know what I mean? So it's just, I wanted to see life [00:42:00] from a different perspective, you know?

RL: OK. Tell me, do you have, do you currently have aunts and cousins living in Bethlehem?

HB: I don't think there's --

RL: No aunts, right?

HB: No aunts. They would all be deceased.

RL: How about cousins?

HB: In Bethlehem?

RL: Yes.

HB: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, my -- well, my cousin Eddie Dennis died a few years ago, but I'm pretty sure his kids are all still here. I don't see them, but occasionally, I see one of the boys. But I'm pretty sure they're still around. Oh, I did, I did meet, now that I think about it, I went to a funeral a few years ago, and I met a cousin, got to try to think [00:43:00] who --

RL: Was it Margaret Bradley, or Martha?

HB: Oh, well Martha's my first cousin.

RL: Martha is your, OK, Martha is your first cousin.

HB: (inaudible) yeah, my Uncle Frank's daughter.

RL: OK. And does she live in, she lives in Bethlehem? Does she live in Bethlehem?

HB: Well she lives in Allentown.

RL: OK.

HB: Oh now that I think about it, her -- yeah, her sister's kids, her sister is Myra. Myra has, her son Chuckie, Charles Stonewall, he's a photographer, and good friends with Lilian Robinson. Very good photographer, they have lot of -- I'm not a --

RL: And they're living here in Bethlehem?

HB: No. They both live in Easton, I think. I'm pretty sure they live in Easton.

RL: OK. So again --

HB: I don't see them too often.

RL: So you, to your recollection, you don't have like any immediate cousins that you can, that you're familiar with, and that you can talk to [00:44:00] and so forth, that lives in Bethlehem?

HB: No, not that I'm aware of, no.

RL: OK. So, you visit the library quite a bit, the Bethlehem Area Public Library. Could you tell us what brings you here to the library practically every day?

HB: What happened to me at first, the first time I came to Bethlehem Library, I was starting my family history

research. And in the history room, I found the records of the, I guess it's the Trinity Episcopal Church, and that's where I found the record of Hiram Bradley and Rachel, you know, Emma, and their kids.

RL: In our local history room?

HB: Yeah. So that, prior to that, I've never been here. But that just, that really got me interested, and it changed the focus, changed my focus on [00:45:00] really, what I do with most of my spare time. As my kids were growing up, I didn't, you know, I didn't really have much free time. So once my son and daughter were graduated from high school, I had all the free time in the world. So I just started spending a lot of time in the library, because there's so many interesting things to learn about.

RL: What have you unraveled with your discovery and research at the library?

HB: Well I discovered I had some little bit of artistic talent, so that brings me in, you know, to explore art, and never stopped wanting to learn about family history. That's one of those subjects that's just, it seems like there's no end to it. Because you never know what you're going to find.

RL: Are there any fascinating tidbits that you've learned with your family here in, about, you know, while doing your research here at the library?

HB: Well some things that I'm not too free to talk about, but  
[00:46:00] --

RL: And why is that?

HB: Well I'm just not, I don't feel a sense of pride about them. And I think that's one of the things you want to get, you know, when you're researching your family. Oh there's a lot. I mean there's a lot of things.

RL: Could you share with us one thing that you're not proud about?

HB: No, no. I don't know, there's some things I just don't feel good talking about.

RL: Could you give us a little hint?

HB: Well I found one family member who fathered a number of children with a woman, and never got married. And I didn't understand that.

RL: And this happened in Bethlehem?

HB: Yeah. Both, Bethlehem and Easton too, [00:47:00] you know, I mean there was a couple of them that, you know, and the women allowed the men to do this. I didn't, couldn't understand that. How they could have like, a family based on this kind of relationship. I still don't get it. I don't know. Like I said, it's -- I just don't, there's certain things I just don't understand. So I don't really know how to talk about them.

RL: Tell us about the Smithsonian, and your cousin.

HB: Oh! My grandmother's nephew, my grandmother was Leila Hubbard, no, Leila Merritt.

RL: I'm sorry, Leila?

HB: Leila Merritt.

RL: OK.

HB: Her maiden name was Hubbard. She had an older sister whose son, Edward Jackson, [00:48:00] was in World War I. And I don't know if you're familiar with the Harlem Hellfighters, have you ever read that book or seen that book?

RL: No.

HB: It's a story about the black World War I veterans. And in the various wars the United States has fought over its history, there's always been black men that wanted to fight for the country, and show their, you know, their dedication. And usually, they got turned down. I found in both sides of the family that we had people that fought in the Civil War, and were associated with Frederick Douglass, were good friends with him. [00:49:00]

RL: And how did you discover this information?

HB: It's kind of funny, one day, somebody slipped a magazine under my door, and it was *Civil War* magazine. And there was something in one of the, like a note in the pages that said, "Read this article." The first article was about the

making of the movie, *Glory*. I'd seen that movie, and felt really good about it. And in fact, before I saw the movie, I was traveling in New Jersey one time, and I stopped by this flea market, and I picked up this, it's not a photo, but it was like a, sort of like a poster. And it was these black fighters fighting in the Civil War. And the name of the unit [00:50:00] was the 54<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts. So I did some research on them and found out who they were, and found out that I had relatives that fought in -- (break in audio)

M1: Ready?

RL: Yeah. So tell me, let's continue --

HB: Well you were talking about Ed Jackson. So Ed Jackson was in the, I think it's the 369<sup>th</sup>, oh God, I can't remember the exact. But in Easton, we were really proud of these black World War I veterans, in my neighborhood, they have a real high acceptance, and people used to love to see these guys there. A lot of them worked on the railroad. And like I said, growing up, our parents didn't, they didn't talk a lot to us about their past, or [00:51:00] where they came from, or anything like that, you know? We just, I was surrounded with relatives. You know, my uncle lived next door, my godmother lived three doors away, my aunt lived

around the corner. So every, our neighborhood was almost, a lot of our relatives.

RL: Right.

HB: So we knew them, just because of the closeness. So it was easy to know them. And I suppose in Bethlehem, it was the same thing, but there wasn't that much interaction between the families in, you know, at that time. So, you know, it was easier for me to know the Easton people, but the World War I veterans have a special place.

RL: Right. So --

HB: There was a Legion, the American Legion was right in the neighborhood, too. And whenever these guys would come -- well first of all, these guys were imposing, most of them, imposing figures. [00:52:00] So everybody liked them, and they were very respectable guys, a lot of them worked on the railroad, and they always had money, and they were always smiling and happy, and everybody just seemed always glad to see them. Ed Jackson, my grandmother's nephew, lived with us. And he had a picture, he had a couple pictures on his mantel, on our mantel, of his unit when he was in the Army. Except they didn't talk about it. But one day, I was watching a program, a history program, and it mentioned his name, it said that his uniform was in the Smithsonian Institute. Now I haven't been down there to

check it out. But like I said, I had, my uncle lived next door, he was in the Navy in World War II, and a lot of guys -- growing up, we just seemed to like, I did, personally, anyway, I was very impressed [00:53:00] with the guys that had been in the military.

RL: Right. So, I just want to wrap up a bit with this discussion. So, you have unraveled so much about your connection here to Bethlehem. Do you have intentions of perhaps discovering more when it comes to your -- because you're disconnected from your relatives and you don't know them. Do you have, in the future, to connect to them possibly?

HB: Well I tried several times. In fact, I tried to start a family newsletter. And I, you know, if you've ever done anything like, you know there's a lot of expense to it, you know, so what I would do is I would use the library computers to compose a short newsletter, and I would send it out to my sisters. And I would say to them, I would ask them [00:54:00] to make copies and give them to their kids, and at least have periodic discussions with their kids about it. The Easton group, we had a lot of family reunions, every year, we have a big family picnic. And we had, I had an older cousin who had done all the research way before I got interested. So most of those relatives

knew about the family history through her. But I never was able to establish that type of relationship with my Bethlehem cousins.

RL: OK Herb, thank you so much for joining me today, I appreciate your time.

HB: Thank you so much, and I hope the project goes well.

RL: Thank you.

END OF AUDIO FILE