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CHARLOTTE NUNES: My name is Charlotte Nunes, and I'm joined here today by Lillian Robinson, project leader of this oral history project on African American migration from Cuthbert, Georgia to Easton, Pennsylvania. We're here with Clifford Ransom to talk about his life and experience for an oral history project as part of the Lehigh Valley Engaged Humanities Consortium. We're at Skillman Library at Lafayette College on January 31, 2020. Clifford, thank you for your willingness to share your story today. And can you please state your full name, birth date, and spell your name?

CLIFFORD RANSOM: Clifford, C-L-I-F-F-O-R-D, Ransom, R-A-N-S-O-M, Sr., 4-7-1951.

CN: I think we'll begin by asking you to talk a bit about where you were born, a bit about your childhood memories of Easton, your family, neighborhood where you grew up, all that kind of stuff. [00:01:00]

CR: Can I just say Cuthbert, Georgia?

CN: Sure. Yeah, start with Cuthbert.

CR: Cuthbert, Georgia. You're going to edit this, right?

CN: No, this is unedited.

CR: I was going to ask you a question.

CN: Well, go ahead. Because we can edit.

CR: I forgot the question.

CN: Why don't we just start, so tell us where you born, and a bit about your early life?

CR: Cuthbert, Georgia. Lived down there -- came here to Easton when I was probably around five, six years old, school age, when it's time to start school. Lived down there with my -- lived in Cuthbert, Georgia [00:02:00] -- actually I went with my grandparents mostly because my mother and father were up here with my other siblings. But I stayed down there.

CN: So, you stayed down there for the first five years or so --

CR: Yeah.

CN: -- of your life with your grandparents.

CR: Mm-hmm.

CN: Do you have memories of those early years?

CR: Oh yeah, I can still remember that. Yeah. I can remember the times when my -- because we used to -- my grandfather used to go to the different farms and stuff, and pick up cows, and he had a raggedy truck that he drove, and haul cows, or pigs, or whatever, on his truck to different

places. That's how he made a living back then. Or we'd haul like firewood, [00:03:00] he'd get firewood and have it dumped off in our yard, and we'd put it on the truck and haul it to different places. It was compared to -- the life down there, like I tell my kids sometimes, they don't know how good they have it, because we lived with outhouses. And if you never lived with an outhouse, it's something that you don't ever forget. There was a -- but back then it was a good life, we didn't know any better. We thought that's what it was, you know? We were poor. Came up here with nothing. And even after that, I came up, I went back every -- after school I would go back to Georgia. [00:04:00] Like school would end, I'd be back in Georgia.

CN: Yeah, so you were always back and forth.

CR: I was always back. I came up here to go to school, and go back to Georgia. When it was time to go to school I was back here. And I did that probably till I was, I want to say ten.

CN: What brought your family to Easton from Cuthbert?

CR: I don't know. From what I can recollect is a lot of my aunts and uncles were trying to get out of Georgia, they wanted to get out of that life. And actually they started

out in Newark. My uncle, my first uncle, one uncle came to Newark. And then I think they one by one they started [00:05:00] migrating to get away from the South. Because the South was bad. You know what I can remember back then? My grandparents were -- like insurance people would come, like life insurance people would come, and it always -- you'd have to say -- and you're taught this anyway when you're in the South that yes, sir, yes, ma'am. That's how you address your family, your parents, yes, sir, yes, ma'am. But they had to make sure that I said it, because if I came up here they thought I would forget it when I came back. Say yes, sir, yes, ma'am. And I remember one day we were downtown, which is they had a little circle in Cuthbert, Georgia. [00:06:00] And I remember the "whites only" water fountains. And I remember I went to take a drink out the water fountain, which was a "whites only," oh, today, to this day, I can still feel my grandfather jerking my arm, to this day I feel that. He, [makes motion] and he gave me a little bit of a lecture about, no, you can't -- because you caught drinking out of that, you got a problem.

CN: He was trying to protect you.

CR: Yeah, he definitely was trying to protect me.

CN: How old were you?

CR: Oh geez, I was probably around seven.

CN: So, that was at the time when you were going back and forth

--

CR: Yeah.

CN: -- during summers.

CR: Yeah. It might have been earlier. I'm saying seven, but it might have been earlier.

CN: Yeah, you were little. [00:07:00] And that memory, that physical memory really stays with you.

CR: I will never forget that. Yeah.

CN: Do you have other memories of those trips back?

CR: Yeah, I remember when I used to go back, my mother would bring me downtown, down to the train station over here in Easton, that used to be a running --

CN: Right, a passenger train.

CR: -- a passenger train. They used to put me on that train, and send me to Georgia.

CN: By yourself.

CR: Well, there was times when there was a lady, one of my mom's friends, we called her Sweetmeat, because her family's from Georgia. She would take me down with her. But other times when she didn't go, I would go on that

train. But see, that was back when they took care of kids. They didn't let kids get hurt. You know what I mean? You can't do that today. You might not never see your child today. [00:08:00] But I would go to Georgia. Actually, I would go to Georgia, but we wouldn't go to Cuthbert because my grandparents had to drive an hour or so to pick me up off the train, then take me back to the house with them.

CN: How long was the train ride?

CR: Oh geez. Back then I want to say a day, it was long. It was long. I don't know, I can't say a day. Yeah, it could be a day back then.

CN: Oh yeah, I believe it.

CR: Yeah, because I would get on that train in the morning, and when I got there it was dark. So, I'd say a day.

CN: Do you have any other stories from those trips back that kind of stay with you? [00:09:00] The way the water fountain story stays with you?

CR: Just knowing that -- what stays with me a lot, because I believe in closeness of family, and we were very close. I grew up in church. I was in church every day, seven days a week I was in church. Now, that's not saying like regular Sunday church is a little different, you'd go to -- during the week you'd be going to revival meetings. That's still

church, it's like revival meetings you sing, they sing, they have church but they do more singing than anything. It's just, it was what do you call it? It's just getting people together, [00:10:00] and pray.

CN: This was in Cuthbert or Easton, or both?

CR: Cuthbert. We didn't do that every day when we got here. We went to church every Sunday here.

CN: Yeah, but it wasn't a daily thing.

CR: But I grew up in church in Georgia singing all the time. And the other thing that I remember is just riding on the back of my grandfather's truck all the time. I was that boy that -- because I was close to my grandfather, and wherever he went I went. I would get on the back of that truck, and I'd ride.

CN: He took you with him wherever he went.

CR: Yeah.

CN: And what was it like [00:11:00] to compare life in Easton to life in Cuthbert? Because you were back and forth a lot. What was that comparison like?

CR: Well, I don't want to say it was better. Cause I don't want to diss my grandparents, because they did the best they could. But we were poor up here too. We lived, when we came up, we lived on Maple Street, and Maple Street is

that side street like you're going up Washington Street Hill, and just before you get to the top of Washington Street Hill, there's that side street?

LILLIAN ROBINSON: West? No.

CR: There was West Street, and then there was another street that was Maple Street. [00:12:00] When you come down over like you're coming down Washington Street Hill, you come down probably to --

LR: The Walter House area?

CR: No, no, that's way too far. The Walter House is at the bottom. Where I'm talking about, you come like a quarter of the way down the hill was Maple Street, and we lived in there. Then we moved across the street to, there was a store, and it was a high-rise, it was an apartment over top of the store called Sara, Sha-Sha's, store.

LR: I remember Sha-Sha.

CR: You know where I'm talking about.

LR: It now sits on the area of Our Lady of Mercy Church parking lot. [00:12:41]

CR: No.

LR: Sha-Sha was right on the corner. As I remember.

CR: Sara Sha-Sha was on the corner, coming down Washington -- this is Washington Street right here, okay? You would come



down a quarter of the way and this was Maple Street.

[00:13:00] Now Maple Street would go here, and would all the way around, and then it would bend over -- it would go as far back as Lehigh Street is, and then there was the steps to go down to Lehigh Street, and then you could turn left and go up to Sixth Street, or Fifth Street. Yeah, Fifth Street, go up to Fifth Street. But if you went down the steps, you just went down Lehigh Street, and you would meet West Street. You know what I'm saying? Over here, this side of Maple Street, was a dead-end. And there was a big like field where you would drop over to the railroad tracks.

LR: Because I grew up, of course as you know, on South Sixth Street.

CR: Yeah.

LR: And everyone in that neighborhood was from Cuthbert, Georgia.

CR: Yes, Sir.

LR: Except the Robinsons.

CR: Where you guys from?

LR: Well, my father's family is from Virginia, and my mother's family is from North Carolina.

CR: That's close. [00:14:00] My father, his family is from Dillon, South Carolina.

LR: Okay, I know that area. I went to school in Columbia, South Carolina. But yeah, it seemed like everyone, Ruby Walker, the Pratts.

CR: The Pratt's was from Cuthbert, Georgia.

LR: The [Alfrets?]

CR: Cuthbert, Georgia.

LR: That whole area, it seems, were cousins.

CR: Yep, everybody has a connection. At that time nearly everybody black had a connection with Georgia.

LR: I think so. Tell me Cliff, I don't know if it's folklore, people talk over the years, and stories get a little changed, Willy C. Alfret was really instrumental in bringing a lot of people north.

CR: He helped in that. Yeah.

LR: I've heard that.

CR: He helped in that, yeah.

LR: Right.

CR: I think how I got here, [00:15:00] I think my mother, if I'm not mistaken, she ran away from home. Yeah, because she wanted to get out of Georgia. She didn't want to be

there anymore, she didn't want to live that life anymore.  
And she ended up in Newark with my uncle.

CN: How old were they when they left Georgia, do you think?

CR: I don't know. My one aunt just passed this past year, I think it was. She was 103 when she passed. But I used to pick her brain about a lot of stuff. Because she told me a lot about me. I asked her one time, because I recently found out I was a -- well, not recently -- I found out I was a diabetic when I was 49. [00:16:00] I became a diabetic through medicine, steroids. When you got the flu they give you steroids, and I ended up -- I was on them too long and I became a diabetic. So, I asked my aunt, I asked her "Is there a history of heart attacks or diabetes in our family?" She goes, "Who? Nobody got that in this family." There was no history of heart attacks, and no history of diabetes in my family, which is great. She was a traveling nurse.

LR: What's her name, Cliff?

CR: Eva Howard. We used to call her auntie.

LR: She lived here in Easton? [00:17:00]

CR: No, she lived in Newark. Not auntie, we called her Annie. She lived in Newark. Her and my -- I had two uncles that lived in Newark, and two aunts that lived in Newark. And I

had one uncle, he was a mortician, lived in Jersey. But I forget exactly where he lived in Jersey.

LR: I can imagine something so essential as water being restricted as a young woman to realize that my life here is restricted. And it was probably a really noble and courageous thing for your mother to want to expand.

CR: For her, it was good because my uncles helped her get out of there.

CN: Were there any sort of stories [00:18:00] that were passed on to you about what life was like in Easton for new arrivals like your mom?

CR: No, not really. I just know what it was like growing up here in Easton.

CN: What was that like?

CR: Easton isn't -- at that time it was not the best place to live either. No, I shouldn't say that. At that time, I thought growing up in Easton was probably the best place to raise a family. But Easton at that time still was very racist. We grew up, we were close, we had close friendships, I had close friendships with a lot of Lebanese kids, and some Italians because they came, they had the same problems we had. A lot of them don't admit that, but

they were shunned like we were. [00:19:00] Lebanese weren't considered good people, and neither were Italians.

CN: Do you have an early memory, like as a child, kind of encountering discrimination in Easton?

CR: In Easton? As a child? When you grow up poor, nobody likes you. Sad to say that, but you get --

CN: It's like a whole atmosphere of discrimination.

CR: Yeah, you're not -- and all of us, none of us had anything.

I always say we came up from dirt because we were that poor. When I was a kid living on Washington Street Hill, we used to heat our house with kerosene heaters. [00:20:00] And I can remember walking down Washington Street Hill, snow this high, to -- there was a gas station right now, there was a gas station where McDonald's is now, used to be, I think if I'm not mistaken, it was a gas station there, and there was one on the other side. And we used to go on this side to the gas station, and I think it was a Gulf station.

LR: Was it Sunoco? I remember --

CR: Sunoco, which was on --

LR: I remember the logo. I think it was Sunoco. Like that horse, or whatever, griffin.

CR: Yeah. We used to go get 25 --then gas was, kerosene was, you get a two-gallon thing for 25 cents, [00:21:00] and bring it back up the hill. And that's what my parents could afford. When I tell you we were -- it was -- but you know what? We were poor, but we always ate.

CN: What did you eat?

CR: Whatever mom cooked. Because she could find something so that you didn't have to be hungry. She would make something from scratch. Or my mom would make pancakes, or biscuits from scratch, just so we had something in our stomachs. I have a pantry with all different stuff in there, my kids would say, I don't want that stuff. My mom would find something in there to make a meal. She would make a meal for us. [00:22:00] And there were nine of us.

CN: Wow, that's a lot.

CR: There were nine kids. Well, my two younger siblings, Val and Anthony, came later. But I grew up with -- I had an older brother that he died when he was -- at birth. Not at birth, but he was a baby when he died. Then I had a sister that was, I think, two years older than me. She had kidney problems, and that killed her. And then my brother, who was a year younger than me, was in a car accident in '74 with my mom.

LR: I remember that.

CR: You remember that?

LR: Rest in peace.

CR: And he got killed. And my mother was in the hospital.

[00:23:00] And my mother's chest was crushed because she was driving. And listen to this, this is going to tell you how bad -- to me, race is race. My mother was in the hospital, she went from the hospital to jail. She went from the hospital to jail because they said that -- they charged her with involuntary manslaughter. Larry Holmes said "Nah, mhm, not going to happen," and he got her out. He went to Spaz, Charles Spaziani, and got her out. I want to say Art Seymour had something to do with it because he was a friend of mine, and his mother, [00:24:00] she worked for Judge Franciosa. I don't know where he came in at, but I remember them telling me that you should write these people letters, thank you, and I did. I wrote Judge Franciosa a letter, I wrote Mr. Spaz a letter, and Larry. And see, Larry's family and my family were like this. We moved to the projects together.

CN: How old were you when you met Larry, do you think?

CR: When I came from Georgia. I met Larry when I was about five or six years old.

CN: Wow. So, you guys really grew up together.

CR: Yeah. We used to shoot marbles in the dirt together, when we were kids. Yeah.

CN: And so, did you guys -- [00:25:00] did he demonstrate his athletic talents very early would you say?

CR: I don't know if he demonstrated it then when we were that young. We were just running around the damn neighborhood doing whatever. But he was an athlete for certain because we played -- what I remember when we was in the projects and playing football, and basketball, and baseball, we did everything.

CN: Do you have early memories of hanging out with Larry Holmes and other friends of yours in the neighborhood?

CR: Yeah, mm-hmm. You mean over here? On this side of town, on Washington Street, it was the Pratts. The Pratts, Robinsons, Herbie Robinson and them. [00:26:00]

LR: My cousin.

CR: Yeah. The Pratts, the Robinsons, Fredericks, Meyers, they were all -- and they all had big families too. Bobby Pratt was another one I graduated high school with.

LR: He was a wrestler, wasn't he?

CR: Yep. He wrestled and played football at Easton.

LR: They lived directly across the street from us.



CR: Yeah -- Huh?

LR: On Sixth Street.

CR: The Pratts?

LR: Yes.

CR: I remember them living on West Street.

LR: They probably were there initially.

CR: Yeah. I know the Robinsons lived on Fifth Street, right?

LR: My uncle Herbie?

CR: Herbie. What was the name of the store that was up on top of --like when you walked up the steps?

LR: There was Sha-Sha, there was Haney's. [00:27:00]

CR: On top of Fifth Street, or Sixth Street? Fifth Street. I know Sara Sha-Sha was on Washington Street.

LR: Right, and then the next block Louis Haney had a store.

CR: You're right, they did. The Haney's had a store. Yeah, you're right.

LR: With the best Italian ice ever.

CR: Oh man, let me tell you something. There's never been any Italian ice ever like that anywhere. Swear to god, that's the truth.

LR: That's a fact.

CR: If you lived in Easton, that's where you went to get Italian ice from. This crap that they put in the cups and sell now. [laughs] It was real lemon ice.

CN: How about teen years? You were close with Larry through your entire life it sounds like.

CR: Yeah.

CN: What about memories from your guys' kind of youth?

CR: Teen years? [00:28:00] Well, Larry dropped out of school when he was in seventh grade. We weren't as close, but we were okay, because I hung out mostly with Bob, because we went to school with Bob. Bob Holmes, graduated high school with him too. I was with him, mostly, a lot. But I was still with Larry. We did some things that I don't want to mention about. Yeah, we -- Larry had problems with the law a lot. If you got marked, you got marked. If you're a marked man, you're a marked man. And Larry was a marked man, and Larry didn't take crap from them. [00:29:00]

LR: So, it sounds like the law had a problem with Larry.

CR: Yeah. That's the truth, they really did. It's not he had a problem, I don't think Larry was as bad as everybody -- I won't say he was as bad as everybody said he was back then. Because you look back on our lives back then, and you're thinking, what was that about? And it was terrible. It

was a terrible life that he lived when we were young. And to this day, I think whatever went on back then, however people felt about him back then, it's still haunting him today, because his businesses all went down because people didn't support him. That's black and white. And that's terrible, it's a shame. Here's a guy -- and Larry's such -- when I tell you the guy got a good heart, he's got a good heart. [00:30:00] Now, if you did something to him, he's going to be a different guy. He was a different guy.

CN: How old when he, and how old were you, when he started professional?

CR: Larry started boxing at 18.

CN: It was early.

CR: Yeah.

LR: Did he start in the Golden Gloves?

CR: Yeah, 17, 18 years old he started boxing. I was then in martial arts, because I started martial arts when I was about 15, off and on, off and on, off and on. But he started boxing. And then he stuck with it. And it just took him to where he's at now.

CN: And what was your role in his early career?

CR: In his early career. [00:31:00] I came in as a trainer with him. I didn't travel with him at first. I didn't travel

with him when he was early, early years. I traveled with him from -- because he wasn't making any money then, so he couldn't take all the people he wanted to take. But as soon as he started making money, I was in.

CN: When did you start traveling with him? And what was the work you were doing with him?

CR: I was a trainer. I was assistant trainer. Then I started traveling -- as I started traveling with him, [00:32:00] one of the guys that was with him was one of the bodyguards there. And he said to me, he said, because I was into martial arts, and he said, "Cliff, you should go to school and be a bodyguard." And I -- ah, I don't want to do that. He said, "Listen, Larry takes you everywhere he goes, what do you think he's using you for?" Now I never thought of it like that. But he had a school, so I went to his school and became a bodyguard. Then I just kept fine-tuning my art, and I just made a career out of it.

CN: It was pretty much your entire career you were working with Larry.

CR: Yeah. [00:33:00] Actually I started out in the 70s, I was a teacher. I taught at Shull's School. But then you could start teaching at Shull School with an associate's degree. And that's where I started, before I got the rest of my

degree. But I started teaching there. Then, at that time you could go -- if kids didn't come to school, and the parents called, you could go to their house, and get them out of bed, and bring them to school.

LR: What was the truant officer's name?

CR: Jack Parr. [laughs] You remember Jack?

LR: Not me, because I was always had a couple times perfect attendance. But my friends knew him.

CR: I remember we were, when we lived on Washington Street Hill, [00:34:00] Jack Parr, I remember when we used to walk -- the regular suit jackets, was my winter coat. And I'd be walking to school sometimes, even my brothers and sisters too, all of us, and Larry and them, we didn't have nothing. And we walked to school and it was snowing, and freezing, with nothing. But Jack Parr used to take us shopping. I'll never forget that. He was the greatest guy. He was one of the first guys, white guys, that I really liked when I was in elementary school. Because I started out elementary school over on -- there was a school called Taylor, Taylor School was on Third Street. No, Taylor School was on Fourth Street. Like you come down to the bottom of Washington Street Hill, [00:35:00] you make that left, back there was Thomas's Store, and it was right

in back of the church. You know where the church is on Ferry Street?

LR: The Lebanese church?

CR: The Lebanese church. No, not that. Not that church, not the Lebanese. There was a church on -- it's right across the alley from the Social Security Office. You know that church there?

LR: St. Johns?

CR: St. Johns.

LR: Lutheran church.

CR: Right, that church. And where the Social Security office was Taylor School, elementary school. Yeah. And they had Thomas's Store. Thomas's Store used to have tunnels, that you went down in the tunnel, it would take you all over Easton. [00:36:00]

LR: What were they like fallout shelters?

CR: I don't know what they were. But I know that you listen to the -- I always used to sit and talk to old guys, and they'd tell you how Al Capone used to come here, this was one of his favorite places to come, because at Canal Street it was called the Red Light District, and he used to hang there. And there was a bar down on 611, I think it was the Black Horse Tavern, that they used to go there, and Frank

Nitti, and all those guys used to go and hang out there. Easton was a little gangster town back then. You listen to these old guys, they tell you everything. You do remember down in the circle they used to have bathrooms down in the circle. You remember them, don't you?

LR: I hear people talk about them. I know where they are.

CR: You know where the fountain is, the water fountains, like the water fountains here. [00:37:00] Like if you come down off Washington Street Hill -- off College Hill, you run right into the circle. Right there in the circles, there was a ladies' bathroom, men's bathroom, and women's bathroom underground. You'd have to go underground to it.

LR: They were basically there for people shopping down there.

CR: Yeah. Yeah, or anybody to use it. They covered them up. That was the worst thing they ever did. They never should have closed them up. I personally think they should open them back up.

LR: Then the city would have to maintain them, and that would be, you know.

CR: That's probably why they closed them because they don't want to maintain them. But listen, you hire -- they got people around sweeping the streets. You can't maintain bathrooms? And those are things that chased Easton, the

people out of Easton. When I was a kid downtown Easton was like walking down the streets of New York [00:38:00], bumper to bumper, it was that busy.

CN: Yeah, it was dense.

CR: Yeah, it was that busy. There was a shop where we used to shop at, was the main shopping places where, the Mohican Market was on Third Street.

LR: Fourth.

CR: Fourth Street. And Best Market. Remember Best Market?

LR: I do. I remember the big "B."

CR: Best Market was on Northhampton Street. The corner of Fifth and Northhampton, right next to the State Theatre.

LR: Right, which is now the gallery. The Alvin Butz.

CR: Art gallery, yeah. We used to go to State Theatre and we used to pay 10 cents to get in the movies. And still we used to sneak in. [laughter] When I was a kid, down on the bottom of Washington Street Hill to the right there, and this was before McDonald's and everything, there used to be a produce place. [00:39:00] And we used to go down there, Larry, and all of us, used to go down there and they used to pay us 10 cents to pick up all the bananas and stuff down there on the ground. We called it banana house, but it was produce, they sold everything there. But bananas



and everything, all the fruit. Not just bananas, anything that was -- clean up the fruit for them, get the 10 cent. Back then I used to be called the Cookie Monster.

LR: Explain the Cookie Monster.

CR: I loved cookies. They had a store, they had two stores downtown, one was Woolworth's, one was called H. L. Green's. And they used to sell -- back then they didn't sell cookies in packs. They were sold loose. Like you would go to the counter right here, and you'd look in there, and you'd say, I want this one, this one, and that one, [00:40:00] and they'd take out whatever you want. And at the end of the day, they would take -- there were a lot of broken-up cookies. So, they would take all the good cookies, and they'd take all the broken-up cookies, it didn't matter what they were, dump them in one bin. And they used to sell them 10 cents a bag. But whatever it was, the bag was about this high, about that wide like 10 cents a bag, a lot of cookies. They said scoop in there, whatever was in there was what you got. I was there every day. I go down there, pick up, get my 10 cents, go right to the cookies right there, H.L. Green get a bag of cookies.

CN: That's so cute. Good times.

CR: That was some great times. [00:41:00]

LR: They were simpler times.

CR: Yeah, that's the perfect word, they were simpler times.

You can't do anything like that now. They'll take the broken-up cookies and throw them away before they give them to anybody. They do that. I'm telling you, they do that today. They'll throw them away.

LR: They have to zero out their ledgers for tax purposes.

CR: You're right, it was very simple back then. Life was good back then. Even though you had nothing. Times today are difficult. It was difficult back then, but I think it's more difficult now to live than it was back then.

[00:42:00] For me I feel like it was more difficult.

Families were closer to each other. We lived -- that block that we lived on from Sixth Street to Fourth Street, Lebanese, everybody, nobody -- we didn't feud. Even the white families, because you were poor. Poor people don't feud with each other. Do they?

LR: Well, except for the Hatfield's and the McCoy's.

CR: Hatfield's and McCoy's, that's a little different.

LR: Understandably, there were families that came from Europe, the migration came, the Lebanese came of course from the Middle East, and those neighborhoods were blended.

CR: Right.

LR: Very blended. There were no cut-off point.

CR: They looked out for each other.

LR: There were blended neighborhoods.

CR: When we got to the projects, I can honestly say when we got to the projects, absolutely no racism. There were black, white, all kind of people living there. And families took care of each other. One of my very best friends that I grew up with was Sammy Thomas. He was white. I used to sleep at his house, [00:43:00] and I used to go there a lot because his mom always had cookies. [laughter]

CN: Do you remember the impacts of urban renewal, when that whole thing happened?

CR: Yeah. When we moved from -- redevelopment.

CN: Yeah, redevelopment.

CR: When redevelopment came in, and that's how we ended up in the projects because redevelopment came in over on Washington Street, the Pratts, [00:44:00] that's how they got their house. The Pratt house? Redevelopment. They gave them money, and they bought the Pratt house. Because I think they owned their house, or they were buying it.

LR: On Sixth Street?

CR: Fifth Street, the Pratts.

LR: Yeah, they lived across the street.

CR: Yeah. So, that's how we got their house. We didn't own our house, but they started tearing down. And actually Larry got to the projects before us because they tore down his side of the street first. They tore down his side, and then they tore our side, and that's how we got to the projects.

CN: We also wanted to ask about any, were they cultural traditions that originated in Cuthbert that continued to evolve in Easton? Were there ways in which so many of these people and families coming from Cuthbert impacted the culture in Easton? [00:45:00]

CR: Probably. I don't know. Because when I first came up here, we weren't around too many white kids to play with until I started, when I started going to school you were around them, but most of the kids we were around in our area was mostly blacks.

CN: The culture was the culture.

CR: Yeah, it is what it is.

LR: But you went to school of course with more diversity.

CR: Yeah. Can we take a break? I've got to use the restroom.

CN: Sure. [break in audio]

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CR: John Shelly, you remember the Shelly's? [00:46:00] We used to raise pigeons. We used to go down on the trestles, climb on the trestles, and rob the nests.

CN: Wow, the nest, yeah, the eggs.

CR: And he had a pigeon -- yeah, he built a pigeon coop for them. So, we used to go down and get the pigeons and put them in his coop. And we raised them.

CN: Wow, what would you do with them?

CR: Nothing, just raise them and just let them fly away. But they never -- once they lived there and you feed them, they don't go anywhere. They used to always come back.

CN: You'd just do it for fun essentially.

CR: Yeah, it was just a thing to do, a pet. [00:47:00] And we'd try to get -- and we'd try to breed them, crossbreed them. Because then we would get white ones, and then you'd get the ones with the crests, there were different types.

CN: You like birds.

CR: No, I'm allergic to birds. [laughter] But I did that when I was young because I didn't know any better. I forgot to tell you about when I would get the bananas, so I would eat more bananas than I picked up, I think. And one day I just

got sick. And my mom had to take me down to -- I don't know what they call the squad, the Mercy squad. [00:48:00] I know every time we went to the hospital my mom used to walk to 22<sup>nd</sup> Street to take us to the hospital because we had no transportation, we had nothing. But I ate so many bananas I got sick, they had to take me and pump my stomach. Yeah. And it almost killed me. So, I'm allergic to bananas. And I was stupid enough to go down there and do it again.

LR: One good turn deserves another.

CR: I went down and did it again, got sick again, had to go back and they told me that I could die. So, I'm allergic to bananas. But I'm allergic to every damn thing. Bananas, cucumbers, pickles, tomatoes, corn, cantaloupe, and I don't eat them either. I don't eat corn itself, but I'll eat corn chips. [00:49:00] Like Fritos, I love them.

LR: Fritos are amazing.

CN: Shall we turn to your career with Larry Holmes, and hear a few stories about those years?

CR: Whatever you want to do.

CN: Maybe just one.

CR: Where should I begin?

CN: Yeah, it's hard. Does a particular story kind of stick out in your mind? You were with him for 40 years?

CR: Mm-hmm.

CN: Yeah, exactly, where do you begin?

CR: I just know that as you grow and you learn things, and you're around people, you know more [00:50:00] -- you learn more about them. I think I learned Larry because I made a point to watch what he does. I learned one thing from Mr. Eddie Fletch. He said you can't be a good coach if you don't know the athlete you're coaching. So, I made it a point, I thought I knew Larry, but just because you grew up with somebody don't mean you know them. You have to be around them all the time to learn them. We know each other very, very well. One time we were in the corner, [00:51:00] and I was -- Larry kept dropping his left hand, and that was just something he did, that's the way he fought, he dropped his left hand.

LR: Is he south paw? No.

CR: No, he's right-handed. He kept dropping his hand down here. You wanted to keep it up here. And I'm yelling, Larry, because he was getting -- we were in the gym, and he was getting hit with right hands. You drop your left hand and get hit with a right hand. And Mr. Fletch said, watch

this. So, Larry comes back to the corner, and he says, "Larry," just like that, just tone of voice. Now mine was, "Larry!", you know? He says, "Larry, you have to pick up your left hand, you're dropping it, you're getting hit with right hands." And Larry said, "What?" [00:52:00] And he said, "You've got to pick up your left;" real, real low, and he made Larry hear him. And I learned that, and I took that with me when I started coaching football and everything, the more you yell, the less they hear, because it goes above them, it goes past them, they don't hear you when you yell. And Larry picked up his left hand. It was a lesson learned. And so, I started -- got to the point where I just knew Larry, and he knew me. He could do this [makes knocking sound] with his mouth, with his tongue, he could do it real loud. [00:53:00] I used to be so mad because I wasn't coordinated enough. You got it. I wasn't coordinated enough to do it. But he would do that and I would look up. Nobody else would look up, and he knew that. If he wanted something he'd get my attention. If he wanted to get my attention he'd do that. And he would just make a gesture, and I know what he wanted to do. If he wanted to leave, or whatever, I knew it was time to go. I was the security, and I always led our way out of



everywhere. He was a different type of guy. He was probably one of the greatest athletes I've been around.

[00:54:00] And not only is he a great athlete, Larry's a good person because he's very giving. Sometimes he's too giving, I think. And I don't think he is as respected as he should be. Look, you're talking about a guy who did it. You know what I mean? How often are you around somebody that becomes a heavyweight champion of the world and stays there for eight years? You're kicking ass for seven and a half, eight years. That's a long time to be on top, and you're beating everybody in the world, you're a bad man.

LR: Do you think Larry's a born champion? [00:55:00]

CR: Yeah. No doubt. Champions are born. You don't just -- you have that in you.

LR: Right, I don't think you can make a champ.

CR: You can't. You are a born champion. You have that in you. You just have to have somebody to bring it out of you. But you're born, champions are born. They're not just, you can't script that. You have to have somebody -- fortunately for Larry, Larry brought that out of himself because he quit school, and he just wanted more. He wanted more. And he went and got it. Kobe has that. I told Larry the other day, do you realize that you do a lot of the same things

that Kobe did. [00:56:00] I don't know if you knew that, did you know that Kobe used to go down to -- before they won the championship, the Eagles, he went and spoke to the Eagles, Kobe did. What's his name? The Eagle's coach name? I forget his name. But he called and got a hold of Kobe, and had Kobe come in and speak to the team. But back to Larry, he does some of the same stuff, he went and got it. He wanted that title, he went and got it. Listen, he was training for the Norton fight, for the title fight, tore the bicep right here [00:57:00] and it dropped all the way down a week before the fight. His bicep tore loose and dropped down there. And they were going to cancel the fight, he said, no, I'm not going to cancel the fight, never get another shot. So, he fought with it.

LR: I used to see Larry training very early in the morning.

CR: Yeah.

LR: Extra early. And you could see, you could ride by him, or whatever, and see the determination in his face.

CR: Larry fought Ray Mercer -- we were training for a fight in Jacksonville for the Sphinx fight -- no, we were training for the Ray Mercer fight. And he said to me one day, we were in the gym, and he said, "Cookie, turn the lights up." [00:58:00] I'm looking around, the lights looks pretty

bright to me. The lights are up, they're not down. He said, "Man, it's dark in here." Here he was training for this fight, and he got hit, and detached a retina. And we were going to cancel the fight, no, we're not canceling the fight. So, he fought Ray Mercer with one eye. Swear to god, and beat him. Fought with only one eye, and beat him. And then another time we were in the gym, we were training, and he came back to the corner and said, "Hey Cookie, man, my glove is really wet inside, did you dump water on the gloves?" Now, I didn't put water on the gloves. He said "It feels like it's real wet." I said, "Well, let's go change the gloves." "No, just keep working." When we got down, I took the gloves off, it was filled with blood.

[00:59:00] Here, when we wrapped his hands up, some of the tape stuck to his hand and it had tore all the way to the bone. And we had to go get stitched up. That's crazy, isn't it? Larry's career, me with Larry, I thought it was great. Working with him was great. I liked the job, I liked being his security. He didn't know when I was hired, Larry didn't know that I went to school to be a bodyguard. Because if I was going to be around him, I might as well do it. So, I did. And I got there, and I didn't tell them, I didn't tell a lot of people what I did. [01:00:00] I was a

third-degree black belt, and I worked, I used to -- one day Larry said, we came home from a fight, we'd been away for probably about -- every time we went away for four weeks, a month, we'd always go to someplace warm, depending on where a fight was. We went to Pittsburgh, we fought in Pittsburgh, and Pittsburgh was cold as hell. You go outside and running, and you're sweating, but your mustache is freezing. I lost my train of thought.

LR: Traveling. I don't know which fight it was, it was the outdoor arena, I think it was Vegas where the guy jumped into the ring by parachute.

CR: That wasn't Larry though.

LR: Who was that? I know it was a title fight.

CR: That was Lennox Lewis. [01:01:00]

LR: Oh, it was?

CR: Yeah.

LR: Were you there at the fight?

CR: No, we didn't go to that fight. That was a Lennox Lewis fight. Who would do that? Who's that dumb?

LR: Somebody told me that that guy was armed.

CR: I don't know, but it was a mistake for him because they beat him up real bad.

LR: I heard it was the [fruits?], fruits guy.

CR: They did beat him up real bad. Those guys were hitting him with the walkie-talkies and everything. That was a bad mistake for him.

LR: Well, he was armed.

CR: Yeah.

LR: I think Farrakhan was at that fight.

CR: Farrakhan, yeah.

LR: Jesse Jackson was there, there was some notable people there. He was a threat.

CR: I can't think of what I was going to say. It's your fault, Charlotte.

CN: Don't blame me.

CR: You put pressure on me.

LR: Do you remember how you felt though with Larry at the apex of his career, [01:02:00] the absolute championship, how that felt?

CR: That was like you feel a sense of pride, you're so proud of him because you're around the guy all your life, you grow up with him. We used to go to Ali's camp a lot, and Ali was that guy. Muhammed Ali was that dude. And then, first of all, you never think that you're going to be around Ali. And the only reason we're around Ali is because Larry was boxing, and he started training with Ali. And then when

Larry becomes the champ, then you think wow, you know what I mean? You've arrived. Or he's arrived. [01:03:00] And that's what I was going to say, he did it. And when you're around people that do it, you become -- you want to be the best.

LR: So you think, in your estimation, Larry brought all of the people around him as well up?

CR: If you didn't you know there's something wrong with you. Why would you not want to be as good as him? This is what I was going to say, we came home from a fight and he called me up, we were home for a week, and he called me up and said, "Cookie, we've got to go back to work." I said, "What? The hell you mean go back to work, we just came home man." He said, "You want me to stay champ?" I said, "Yeah." He said, "Let's go back to work." And that's what he did. And that taught me something. I thought that he said that, that told me that if I want to be a bodyguard, [01:04:00] I'm going to be the best bodyguard that you could be, and I went back to school. I went back to martial arts. I only had one black belt when I started working with him, but I ended up with three because I went to school. I went back to school, and I started learning the game. I went to bodyguard school. I learned how to do

defensive driving. I could drive -- probably not now, but back then, I could drive backwards as good as I could drive forwards because those are all things that you've got to learn. You learn if you're going to be a bodyguard, you do what you got to do. And I went back to work, and I wanted to be as good as he was. And it worked because it got me jobs. I don't tell a lot of people what I do, [01:05:00] but I worked for Frank Sinatra one time.

LR: Did you?

CR: Yep. Through Big Bob DiGiulio. Big Bob DiGiulio was the guy who had the school, but he was Larry's first bodyguard. Big Bob. And Big Bob said to me, he said, "Cliff" -- because he told me, he said, "Cliff, you should go to school and learn how to be a bodyguard." I said, "I don't want to do that." He said, "Well, Larry takes you everywhere he goes, what do you think he's using you for?" I thought about it, and I said, well, I went to his school, and he said to me, he said, after I graduated he said, "I've got a job for you." And Larry's one of these guys that if you work for him, [01:06:00] you don't need to work for anybody else. If you're with him, you're with him. Especially if we go out there, no, you're not going to -- so, I said, "Bob, I can't do that. No, it's at night, and

Larry's in at night. Larry goes in around nine." Larry didn't party, which is good. But when I said he didn't party, when we went to train, we went to train, it's like we were locked in. He didn't go out, we went to movies, that's it. And if he said, let's go to a movie, the whole camp went. Take the whole camp and we all go to the movies, like we have five sparring partners, and all the trainers, everybody, we all just packed up and wherever we were we went to a movie. We didn't do that all the time, but that's what we did. And so, like I said, Larry's one of those guys that when you're with him, you're not going to be working with nobody else. [01:07:00] And I told Bob, "I'm not working at night, I've got to get up at five o'clock in the morning to go run with this guy, how the hell am I going to work nights? No, we're not going to work that late." I said, "Well, who's it with?" "I'll tell you on the way." Get in the car, this is around ten o'clock. We get there, he said, "It's Frank Sinatra." I said, "You're kidding me?! We're not doing that, man." "You can work for Larry, you can work for this guy, you're good." Now, I go in the room, we're in a big suite like this. Say this is three times this size. I'm standing back by the door, and Frank Sinatra says -- now, they're



sitting down, they're eating dinner at 11:30 at night. He said, "Hey kid, come over and sit down, have something to eat, you're part of the family." [01:08:00] So, we were on the last end of our training camp, we were like two weeks to go, and we're done, and Larry's got to fight. I went for 14 days, I made \$2000 a night.

CN: Not bad.

CR: No, that's great money. So look, \$2000 a night now, after that, we came home and I went back. And I went back, and I worked with him at night, I made \$3000 a night, I never told anybody, because we had guys that were very jealous, his brothers didn't like me.

LR: Frank's brothers?

CR: No, Larry's brothers. Jake and Fede hated me. [01:09:00] They hated me. Because Larry made me in charge of the camp, and he -- because all the guys, I was close to all his sparring partners and if they ever needed something they'd come to me, hey, can you go ask the champ. So, Larry made me in charge of the camp, and they didn't like that. Not Mark though, Mark was cool. Actually, we were training for -- [phone ringing] we were training for a fight in Jacksonville, and Larry had made sure everybody knew I was in charge of the camp, and his brother Floyd,

[01:10:00] I stopped talking to him for about 10 years, threatened to blow my house up with my kids in it. Now who would say that? Who would say something like that? He said that. And it kind of, just -- I wanted to kill him, I tried to get him, and they wouldn't let me. And then Larry came out, and he told everybody, he called a meeting, and he said, "Listen, I want to say this, and I want to say this one time, and I don't want to have to keep telling everybody this, Cliff is at charge at camp, you want something, go to Cliff, Cliff will bring it to me. That's how we're going to run this camp." And I did, and that's what we did. Dick Lovell was the PR guy, so he was there at that time, [01:11:00] but that didn't -- I had no control over him, but all the other guys. And when this guy threatened to -- I was furious, I just wanted to hurt him. That's why I'm saying it wasn't good, life wasn't always good there in camp.

LR: It got kind of heated, came to a head. Thank god nothing -  
-

CR: Yeah, life was just not -- it should have been because when you go places as a group, you're all one, you're a family, and you go here, and we've got to all be together because there's so many people trying to destroy us. And we didn't

have that. And I couldn't count on them. They could count on me, [01:12:00] but I couldn't count on them.

LR: I see what you're saying.

CR: Although, when we fought Gerry Cooney, Jake, we went and bought -- I didn't carry my guns, I had guns, but I didn't carry when we traveled on a plane. You can't carry on a plane, and I didn't put it in the -- my baggage stuff. But things got so bad on the Cooney fight that we went and bought guns.

LR: When you say bad, what was going on at the time?

CR: They told us we couldn't go nowhere by ourselves. We couldn't go --

LR: Because of the defeat of Gerry Cooney?

CR: What?

LR: Because of the defeat? [01:13:00]

CR: No, this was before the fight, we were training for the fight. Listen, for years we fought in Las Vegas, right? And everything was, like you would go outside and you would see signs, Larry Holmes, and everything's red and white, you know what I mean, Larry Holmes? With the Cooney fight, it became green and white.

LR: Irish.

CR: Everything was Gerry Cooney this, and then they would start messing with the food. Yeah. Don King had to hire a gourmet chef. We stayed at Caesar's, but Don King went across the street to the Dunes Hotel, and he rented us a huge suite, and he hired a gourmet chef to cook all of our food in front of us. Every time we ate, boom, boom, breakfast, lunch, and dinner. They'd cook all the food in front of us because they were messing with the food.

[01:14:00] Big Bob used to go down in the kitchen -- I'll show you a picture of Big Bob. I think I have a picture of him.

LR: Is that the other security guard?

CR: That's the guy I went to school -- who -- yeah, he's the other body -- he's the -- come on. He would go out in the kitchen and watch them cook Larry's food.

LR: Where do you think that threat was coming from? From just the boxing community, that they were trying mold the champion out of Gerry Cooney?

CR: They wanted Gerry Cooney to be champ. And they really thought that he was going to beat Larry. They really thought that, I'm telling you.

LR: I remember the fight.

CR: Listen, but not everybody now. We had the night of the fight, we always had a pre-fight meal, [01:15:00] yeah, a pre-fight meal. So, every time we ate, you always walked your food off, so we were walking, and we'd be walking down the Strip, and these guys, these white guys pulled up, and they started yelling, and we thought, oh shit. The dude got out of the car, he had a -- you know the big shopping brown bag, shopping bags like this, he got out, "Champ!" he says, "I got this money," he showed us the bag of money, "betting every dime on you, Champ." Bet every dime on Larry. Because Larry was the underdog.

LR: It was the odds makers.

CR: This guy had hundreds, and twenties, he had a lot of money in that bag. He said, I'm going to be rich. [laughs]

CN: Can you set the scene back up a little bit? [01:16:00]  
What was the significance of this fight between Cooney and Holmes? How did it get organized?

CR: What do you mean how did it get organized? You mean, what made it come about?

CN: Yeah.

CR: Well, Gerry Cooney was an up-and-coming fighter, he wasn't champion, but he was undefeated, and he was "The Great White Hope." They tapped him as "The Great White Hope."

Now, mind you, that wasn't Gerry, Gerry wasn't that kind of guy.

CN: What kind of guy was he?

CR: A nice guy, he wasn't a racist guy. Matter of fact, him and Larry are best friends today. When I tell you they're best friends, they are really best friends. [yawns] Excuse me, wow, where'd that come from? [01:17:00] It had a lot to do with his people, because his people were very -- they were New Yorkers, and they were -- I thought they were very racist.

CN: So, like his supporters.

CR: Yeah, it was his trainers and managers.

CR: And them too, okay.

CR: Yeah. They had a lot to do with Gerry making this a racist fight. And Larry would say, "I'm not racist", and when we, every time we did a press conference or something he'd say, "My family's half white, my niece and nephews and my brothers are married to white girls. He said, you call me racist?" He said, "Come look at my family." That's how it got to be so bad because it was tabbed as, they made it a racist fight. And Gerry was not a racist. As a matter of fact, after the fight, after Larry beat Gerry, Gerry kind of quit fighting, [01:18:00] because they put so much

pressure on him. "Gerry, you're fighting for us, Gerry, you're 'The Great White Hope,' you're fighting for us." And Larry called him up a couple of weeks after the fight, he said, "Gerry, you've got to come out the house man, you've got to get up, come outside, go back to start fighting again." He said, "Look man, I was on top of my game, you're up and coming. There's nothing you could have done to beat me that day. But if you would have fought somebody else you would have won," and I think he would have. Gerry's 6'7", he's a big guy. Larry got him out of the house, and then they started talking, and they became good friends.

LR: I thought their styles were similar.

CR: Well, Gerry was a left-hooker, he was a big guy with a -- not much of a jab, but he could knock you out with that left hook. [01:19:00] His trainer, if you watch the fight, his trainer told Gerry to hit Larry low. I swear to god, watch the fight, "You've got to go low."

LR: He did it like about three times, didn't he?

CR: Hit Larry, Larry had to -- I remember he hit Larry low, and they were going to give him five minutes to recover, Larry came back to the corner and said, "No, I have to deal with the pain." He said, "I got him, I got him, he's ready, I

can get him now." And he didn't take the break. That was a tough time then, for all of us. [01:20:00] Very tough time.

CN: And what year was that fight?

CR: 1982.

LR: Do you still follow boxing? To me, I don't know --

CR: I don't follow boxing like I used to, because there is no good heavyweight -- the heavyweights out there today, I mean there's a heavyweight champion out there today, but it's not the same. This guy Deontay Wilder, the big guy, but he's terrible, he can't fight. But what he can do is punch, he will knock you out. If he gets a shot, he will knock you out because he can punch, he can punch like that. But other than that there aren't -- Larry Holmes, and George Foreman [01:21:00] are the last of the gladiators. You know what I mean? They're the last of the gladiators because when those guys were coming up, you have to -- it wasn't so much about -- it was about money, but it was about, they fought because they liked to kick ass, they fought four times a year. Guys don't fight four times a year now. You're kidding me, you're lucky you get them to fight once a year. But the difference is, they're making \$25 million a fight. But other than that, boxing is -- I



love boxing because I made a life out of it, I made a living because I was with -- if I weren't with Larry, I'd be still poor, [01:22:00] I'd be poor as hell. I'm still poor as hell, but he's the reason why we got where we were.

CN: And what would you say Larry Holmes's impact was on Easton? How did he interact with the town over the course of his career?

CR: I still don't think that they respect him -- I'll put it to you like this, he has a restaurant and bar and stuff, and he didn't really -- people didn't patronize it like they should have. Had that bar been in Philadelphia, or New York, or Boston, or Harrisburg, you'd have to beat people out of there. Here they didn't support him. Not just white people, black people didn't either. [01:23:00] And that's the sad thing, his own people didn't support him. That's the part that's bad.

LR: Why do you think that was?

CR: Because --

LR: Or still, kind of conceptualize.

CR: Number one, every time they came to the bar, they want something for free. If he has a five dollar or ten dollar cover charge, and Mothers has a five dollar, ten dollar cover charge, they would go to Mothers before they came to

Larry's. If Larry had -- Larry could have Earth, Wind, and Fire there, they would go to Mothers. You know what I mean? And that's a sad thing.

LR: You know what it was? Because I heard people talk over the years. I loved it when Larry became champ, [01:24:00] and I frequented all his businesses, it was exciting. A lot of people thought as though, well, Larry's a millionaire, do I have to contribute to this?

CR: Yes.

LR: It's weird. It's a weird concept.

CR: Exactly.

LR: But there were other bar owners, if you would, downtown, I swear to you, are also millionaires. Trust me. But they frequented those bars, not Larry's. It was weird. Larry made something from absolutely nothing. I respect that.

CR: Were you ever in any of his places?

CN: I don't think so. What are they?

CR: They were restaurants.

CN: Are they still open?

CR: No, not now, he closed them.

CN: I moved here like three and a half years ago.

CR: No, they were closed when you got here. Listen, I'm going to tell you this, we were upstairs, and the people that he

had working for him weren't on the up-and-up. [01:25:00]

You remember Jeff?

LR: I do.

CR: Listen, we were -- now, I don't eat meat, I'm not a red meat eater, every now and then I will eat some red meat. So, Larry said to me one day, "Cookie, let's go downstairs and get a steak." I said, all right, I'll go down and get a steak. I go down, he orders steak and fries for us. He's walking around, and he goes in the back in the kitchen, and he's looking in the refrigerator and he says -- oh man, [yawns] where is this yawning coming from? -- So, he comes out and he asks Jeff, he says, "Jeff, what the hell is going on, why we got so many steaks, how many steaks have you got back there." He said, "about 100." Larry said, "We've got 100 steaks, [01:26:00] why the hell do we got 100 steaks, Jeff?" "Well nobody's buying them." He said, "Well, are you advertising it? You've got to advertise it to sell food." He said, "No, you need to do something to sell those steaks." Listen, this is crazy. We got our steak, we ate it. Two days later, it was a Tuesday we were down there, we went back down on Thursday to get another steak, there was no steaks in the fridge. Now, are you

telling me that you had 100 people come in those two days and bought steaks, it don't happen. It don't happen.

CN: So what's the explanation?

CR: Somebody stole the steaks. Now, who else is going to steal the steaks? It has to be somebody working there.

[01:27:00] He was so bad that this guy, Diane picked up on this, Larry's wife, one of the girls was complaining because Jeff was making them give their tips up, half their tips. They had to give half their tips to the waitresses, and they said something to Diane. Here this guy was making the waitresses give him half their tips. So, Larry jumped on -- I thought he would fire him, but he didn't. No, he did fire him, but then somebody brought him back. But what Larry would do is -- because the waitresses, they don't make money on no regular salary, their livelihood is made through their tips. Larry, there was like three or four girls working, [01:28:00] at the end of the night, Larry would always give them \$100 after every night just to make sure they made some money. It's whatever tips that they made, Larry would give them an extra \$100. But the reason I'm telling you that, is he just didn't have the people to support him, including the workers. He was like, like Lillian said, people thought he should give them -- he

asked me one day, he said, "What do you think I should do, man?" "Fire 'em all. Larry, the name of the game ain't friends, it's about money, it's green. You've got a business to make money. You didn't get in business to give away everything. That's not what you get a business for. [01:29:00] Fire 'em. That's how I feel." He ended up closing the place down.

LR: I miss it. I miss that --

CR: I do too. I really miss it. It was a good place, and it wasn't like a raggedy place, it was a top shelf place. And it was clean. Larry always did stuff top shelf, he wouldn't do anything raggedy. People weren't as good to him as they should have been. I think that's very sad.

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[01:29:54]

CR: I mean, you're talking about the guy put \$30 million into a city.

CN: What do you mean?

CR: He spent [01:30:00] \$30 million in the city.

CN: On what?

CR: On businesses.

LR: Real estate.

CR: Real estate.

CN: Okay, so he was invested in --

CR: Yeah. You put \$30 million, that means you invest yourself.

CN: In the town.

CR: In the town. You're supposed to get something back, not --  
I shouldn't say get something back, you're supposed to be supported [inaudible].

CN: Is there anything we haven't spoken about that you'd like to talk about?

CR: I don't know.

CN: If there's anything we haven't covered. We went through a lot. Yeah.

LR: We did. Exhausted some battlegrounds here.

CR: Really?

CN: Yeah, we covered a lot of good ground.

LR: I have one more question, Cliff, if you don't mind. Do you think for any reason, I mean, you and I are both of a certain age, do you think you could move both to Cuthbert

to settle? Or are you pretty much settled here in Easton?

[01:31:00]

CR: I don't know. Now that I'm retired, I've been saying I want to go back south.

CN: To live or to visit?

CR: To live maybe. Because I don't like the driving here anymore. Driving is terrible. It would take from Southside -- it would take from Southside to here, it normally would take you five minutes without this traffic, now it takes 15. I would go to Shawnee Middle School, you know where the middle school is? I get up in the morning, go to work, it would take me not even 10 minutes to get from my house to the middle school for work. [01:32:00] Before I retired it was taking me 20 minutes. I don't want to live -- I don't want to drive, I don't like driving anymore. I don't want to drive around here because it's terrible. And then the city makes a damn mistake and narrows Third Street, Fourth Street, Third Street, why would you make the sidewalk bigger? Who does that? Why would you make the sidewalk bigger, we don't have any people. You don't want to walk around Easton like that. And you've got more cars. You turn a three, a four lane

into a two lane. They did that. You know they did that, right?

LR: Was it in anticipation of the Science Center?

CR: It still don't -- what Science Center?

LR: I don't know if it's still on the -- the Da Vinci, whatever.

CR: That's old, that's done.

LR: Right.

CR: That's over. I guess that was supposed to be a hall of  
[01:33:00] -- was it a hall of fame?

LR: Right.

CR: A hall of fame.

LR: High school.

CR: Listen, why would you put -- think about this. Do you think people are going to come from Boston to the high school hall of fame here? Are you going to come from Philly to a high school hall of fame here? Now, if you might have -- if this was a boxing hall of fame, different story. Football hall of fame, pro, different story. Not high school. Not going to happen. You don't have that many great athletes out of high school. I shouldn't have to say that, because there are some great athletes out of high school, [01:34:00] but not enough to make people come



from all over the world. Now, listen, the only thing that was on the map in Easton was Lafayette when I was growing up, and Easton Phillipsburg football game, Easton High School.

LR: It's pretty infamous. And Larry.

CR: And Larry. That's all, yeah. Lafayette really was the big key. When I was a kid, I didn't tell you this, this used to be an all-boys school. So, we used to, when we were in high school, we used to walk over here, and we'd walk up, it's probably about seven, eight of us from the projects, [01:35:00] we'd walk up there, and there's a -- where you go down to come up Cattell Street, not Cattell Street, to come up the hill? There's the big frat house there? We used to have snowball battles there from the street. We'd be on the street, they'd be up there, having snowball battles. And I swear to god, we'd be out there for three, four hours throwing snowballs, and they'd tell us to come in and eat.

LR: Really?

CR: Swear to god. They'd tell us to come in. And whoever was running their kitchen would cook food for us.

CN: How old were you at that point?

CR: 16, 17.

CN: Like a teenager.

CR: Yeah. That was great. That was great back then.

CN: You stopped going back to Cuthbert when you were about 10  
you said?

CR: No, I went back, I stopped going there to live. [01:36:00]

CN: But you'd go back to visit.

CR: I would go back and visit my grandparents, yeah. But I  
didn't go back to stay.

CN: When was the last time you went to Cuthbert?

CR: Jesus, well, I think when my grandfather passed. That was  
back in, in the 70s. I was in college then.

CN: Do you still have relatives there?

CR: Yeah, I think so, yeah. But my grandmother -- no, my  
grandfather passed in the early 70s, then my grandmother,  
she died in the mid to -- she died in the 70s too, but I  
don't know exactly what year, I can't remember exactly what  
year. Later, she passed. [01:37:00] But I stopped -- I  
didn't go, after I got to a certain age I didn't go back  
down to live there. Things were -- I started getting --  
you know how you grow and you start getting friends.

CN: You get rooted.

CR: My mom used to always ask me if I want to go back, but then  
I never went back. But I would go back and visit my

grandparents all the time, and they were good with it. My grandmother came up here, my kids are biracial, and I don't know if I ever told you this, you know Cliff, he has problems with the law. My grandmother said something to me, and it just stuck with me, and I always said to my son, [01:38:00] "Cliff, you messed this up, you messed up the dream, man." My grandmother said, she came up, and we were living in the projects when Cliff was born, and she was holding Cliffy on her lap, and she said to my mom, she goes "He's fay." That means he's white. And she said, "Yeah." But she hugged him and kissed him, she said to me, "Don't ever let this boy go to jail, because you'll put us right back in slavery." I'll never forget that. Because my grandfather's father was a slave. I forgot to put that in there when I was talking. Sorry about that. My grandfather's father was a slave. [01:39:00]

LR: Primarily the area around Cuthbert is agricultural, is it cotton that grew in that area?

CR: Yep, cotton, they got peanuts in Georgia, peaches. I picked some cotton when I was down there, some peanuts. More cotton than peanuts.

LR: That's amazing. A little prickly plant.

CR: That is crazy, right? But you know how much you've got to pick to get anything? I can't imagine being -- living back in those days and having to pick cotton all day, sunup to sundown, you know what I mean? It's just amazing.

[01:40:00] Just amazing.

LR: The world has changed.

CR: Thank god. The world has changed. Well, I don't know, Donald Trump is putting us behind times, I think. Are you a Trump fan?

LR: No. [laughter]

CR: You can tell us.

CN: I certainly am not.

CR: What an idiot this guy is. You know what bothers me about this, everything is? It's that he's not going to get impeached, because the House is not going to impeach him, because there's too many.

CN: The Senate won't impeach.

CR: They're not going to impeach him. But the thing about this is, he has brought back racism. Whatever people felt, they might have forgot it, but they left it alone, but he's brought it back. And people don't care what they do now.

LR: He kind of weaponized it. [01:41:00]

CR: Yeah.

LR: I think people did try, I think people were literally making strides forward.

CR: Yes.

LR: He's like, oh no, use this as a strength, but it's a weakness. Not just for them, but for our country as a whole.

CR: See, I know -- listen, here's a guy that -- we fought in his hotel. And we were walking and Larry tried to speak to him, he acted like he didn't see Larry. And look, we were fighting in his hotel. He acted like he just dissed Larry. Donald Trump -- listen, you know what the other thing that bothered me, he got mostly voted in through women, you know that, right? He raped a 13-year-old girl. You knew that, right?

CN: Well, yeah, he has a lot of assault charges.

CR: But a 13-year-old? And he got voted in? Come on.

[01:42:00]

LR: We have to work towards getting a --

CR: Where are we at? And this guy -- first of all, this guy, all he wants to do is, he wants to be a dictator. He wants to be like the guy from Korea, and Russia, and all these other people. And they don't like him. He thinks they do. They don't like him. But he's going to hurt this country.

If he gets voted back in, because he's going to run again, and if he gets voted in, we're going to be in a lot of trouble, I think. Because he's -- think about this, I don't care if you're a Republican or not, if you're abusing your power, you don't belong in that place. He's abusing his power. He's doing things he shouldn't do. And if he gets away with this, you watch out. [01:43:00] And the thing about it, he doesn't care about you. It's not about -- it's just about Donald Trump, it's not about anybody. And the people -- plus he's good friends with David Duke. [laughs] David Duke and his dad was a wizard. Wasn't his dad a wizard?

CN: I don't know. Trumps' dad?

LR: I heard something about --

CR: Yeah, I think his dad was a grand wizard. I think we're in trouble. The nicest thing that I've seen him do --

LR: We've got to work hard on voter registration, and get the word out.

CR: -- in all the times that I've ever known him, the nicest thing I've ever seen him do, when he texted that thing about Kobe. They texted a good -- well, he probably didn't do it.

LR: You think it was him?

CR: He didn't do it. Somebody else did it.

CN: Well, [01:44:00] anything else we should cover? I think that's good.

CR: Did I do all right?

CN: You did.

LR: Perfect.

CN: You did.

LR: Perfection, Clifford.

CN: Thank you very much.

LR: Thank you, Cliff.

CN: Yeah, we both really appreciate it.

CR: Did I do okay on my migration?

CN: Yeah.

CR: From Georgia?

CN: Absolutely.

LR: You're a piece of the migration fabric. [break in audio]

CN: Cliff, can you tell us maybe some childhood memories with Marvin Boyer?

CR: I don't know, we all hung around as a group together. Sundays was a big day for us. When we were kids, we walked everywhere. And we played every sport year round. If it was summer, we played baseball. [01:45:00] When we had the playground up in the Delaware Terrace, it was probably

about a quarter mile around, and we used to have track races, like quarter mile runs, teams. And Marvin Boyer, it was Marvin Boyer, Marvin Tyson, Donnie Lockhart, Larry wasn't in that. But Marvin was the only guy that had a car when we were young. And we used to go --

CN: Marvin Boyer?

CR: -- yeah. He got a car. And it cost 25 cents for gas. [laughs] Could you imagine that? 25 cents a gallon, and we'd all scrape up [01:46:00] enough to get 25 or --

CN: Just to get somewhere.

CR: Yeah. And Marvin used to take us when we went. And Terry was, again, Terry was -- he's actually my brother-in-law, my sister. He was married to -- well, I don't know if he's my brother-in-law. His brother is married to my sister. Does that make him my brother-in-law?

CN: I think so, yeah.

CR: Yeah. His brother is married to my sister.

CN: Are you talking about William Terry Gibson?

CR: Yeah. William Terry Gibson, his brother was married to my sister Pat. And actually, Larry, his brother is the one who ruined Pat's track career, [01:47:00] she got pregnant.

LR: Some things are meant to be.



CR: Yeah, because they're still together. From high school to now, they're still together, they still live together.

LR: Great couple. They're iconic Southsiders.

CR: Yep.

CN: So you and Marvin, and William Terry Gibson.

CR: It was all of us.

CN: You used to hang out a lot.

CR: Yeah, every day. Every day. We'd get up in the morning, and leave our house, and we wouldn't come back till it's dark. Yeah, till it was dark.

CN: What would you do?

CR: Like I said, we walked everywhere, we went and played ball, we played basketball. We would go over in Jersey and challenge people over there. Larry played on the football team with us. We had -- our football team was like a semi-pro team, and we used to challenge, [01:48:00] swear to god, we used to challenge Bethlehem, during the winter months, during football season, ever Sunday was a game. We'd either play Bethlehem, played Allentown, Pen Argyl, Washington, Wilson, we played everybody. Washington, New Jersey, every day we had a game, every Sunday we had a game. And Larry was a running back. Larry could have played pro football too. Yeah, he was that good. He was

that good. Marvin Boyer was a running back. You know, Marvin played for Notre Dame. He went to high school in Notre Dame, was a great running back. He graduated from Moravian.

CN: Can you tell us a bit more about William Terry Gibson?

CR: Terry? Like I said, [01:49:00] he was a great wrestler.

Terry Gibson Memorial is named after him because he won the first -- he was the first to win that award when it came out. They took it from him. I don't know if I should say take it from, should say took it from him, but they made it the Brad Weaver. And Brad Weaver was a great champion too.

LR: Was that Bobby's --

CR: Bobby's brother. Yeah, Brad, he got killed in a car accident.

LR: He did?

CR: Brad, yeah. Yeah. He was good too. He was very good.

Then they named it after him, [01:50:00] and then Barry Snyder brought it back to Easton and gave it to -- made it to -- and I was happy because my sister's grandson, I think it was Tevin, Tevin won it one year.

LR: That's nice.

CR: That made it all worth it, you know what I mean? You said full circle? Yeah, that made it all worth it. Because he

won it one year. I was always saying somebody's got to bring that trophy back to the family. And he did.

CN: Can you talk about the legacy of William Terry Gibson? I think Pat, she has a memorial poster that she sort of --  
[01:51:00]

CR: My sister Pat got memorial everything. If you want anything about Easton, and black history -- did you talk to her?

CN: Yeah, I've talked to her. She's the one who gave us the William Terry Gibson, that poster thing to digitize to include in the digital archive.

CR: Oh, she did?

CN: Yeah.

CR: She's got everything. She's got pictures of me that I didn't know existed. She showed me a picture one time of me, and I had on a -- back then I used to wear a beard, and I had on a cowboy hat, and they started calling me Teddy.

LR: I was going to say, I swear to god I was going to say.

CR: Huh?

LR: I was going to say oh, Teddy.

CR: You know who Teddy is?

CN: No.

CR: Teddy Pendergrass. You don't know who that is?

CN: No.

CR: You don't know who Teddy Pendergrass. [01:52:00]  
Charlotte, please, help me out with this, okay?

LR: Wow. You know what though. She might -- kids -- I'm not  
calling you a kid. [laughter]

CN: I'll take it.

CR: How old are you?

CN: 38.

CR: You're a kid. My son's older than you. You're a kid.

LR: Teddy was definitely before her.

CR: But my kids know who Teddy is.

CN: I don't know who he is.

CR: Only because I played it. I played the music.

LR: Teddy Pendergrass is a Philadelphia R&B artist. And once  
upon a time, there was a ton of music coming out of -- it  
was the label was TSOP, The Sound of Philadelphia, and  
there was a ton of music that was filtered through that  
label. Leon Gamble, Gamble and Huff, so they produced a  
lot of music in Philadelphia. So, Teddy was their guy.

CR: He was that dude. [01:53:00]

LR: Trust me, he was.

CR: He was that dude. Oh man, was he that dude.

LR: Until as ill-fated accident on Kelly Drive in Philadelphia that didn't end his career, but it slowed it down.

CR: Well, it slowed it down to almost an end.

LR: Slowed it down.

CR: He's gone now, isn't he?

LR: He is. I went to his funeral.

CR: Did you?

LR: Yeah, it was probably the best show in town. And I say that because all those Philadelphia artists came back, and they were all in one building, Harold Melvin, his kids.

CR: You know, Harold Melvin, he used to play with Harold Melvin.

LR: Right.

CR: Right over at the Paradise Club.

LR: He did?

CR: Yes. Teddy Pendergrass was in the Harold Melvin and the Blue Notes, and they used to come to the Paradise Club.

LR: I heard that before.

CR: Yep. Teddy Pendergrass. Next time you hear something with Harold Melvin and the Blue Notes, listen for Teddy's voice.

LR: Yeah, he had a really distinctive -- [01:54:00]

CR: Because he was the lead singer.

LR: Right. I met Sharon Page who sang with them. It was just a ton, like, R&B music, at the time, was all coming from Philadelphia.

CR: Yep.

LR: And then it disappeared.

CR: I was telling you guys about Terry and Larry. I don't know what prompted the argument, but they got into a fight. You remember the community building that was right where the boys club was?

LR: Yeah. I remember.

CR: Before they tore it down and everything. They fought right there in front of that. Listen, they just wouldn't back down from each other, they must have fought for an hour, literally. Fist fight. And they wrestled too, they were wrestlers. Larry was a wrestler too. [01:55:00] So, they were wrestlers, and they'd be up on the hill and they'd be wrestling, they'd roll down the hill, and back up the hill. We were just standing back watching. And we didn't want to break it up because we might have got hit. [laughs] Yeah.

LR: I'm glad they named that street over there Terry Street.

CR: Yeah.

LR: I'm glad that -- great honor. There were a lot of young men from Southside that got killed in world wars. A lot of families affected.

CR: I'm really especially proud of Marvin.

LR: Boyer?

CR: Yeah. Because he's very active. He followed his mom's legacy.

LR: For sure.

CR: And he's still doing it. But he's doing too much, I think. I told him Marvin, [01:56:00] you're killing -- you're burning yourself out, man. You've got to slow down, dude.

LR: He's doing a lot. It's good. I think he's able. Some people are just able.

CR: Yeah, he's able. But I think he gets frustrated sometimes because they call him, and he'll say, no, you guys can do this. But they don't want to do it. But Marvin is good at what he does, he's very good at what he does. I would probably call him too, because he's good at it.

LR: He sure is.

CR: Listen, he's my friend. I call him, like when I retired, I called him to get some advice for insurance purposes. For like retirement for insurance, what is it?

LR: Like your 401K?

CR: No.

CN: Medicare.

CR: Medicare, yeah. Yeah, I had to call him and say, get up on that. Because he's so sharp. [01:57:00] He's extremely sharp. I'll tell you what, listen, if you ever want to know, if you ever want to know where a good restaurant to eat, Marvin knows all of them. Every restaurant in this valley, Marvin can tell you where to go.

LR: He does.

CR: Listen, I'm telling you, if I want to go to -- if I don't want to go to the same restaurant, I'll call him up and say, hey, man, give me a good restaurant. And he knows them, and they're good.

CN: I'm going to ask him for some recommendations.

CR: You've got to, swear to god, you've got to ask him.

CN: I definitely will.

LR: He could write a restaurant blog, or something like that.

CN: I wish he would.

LR: That would be cool.

CR: I'm telling you he is good. Yeah, I swear to god, he's very good. If I want to know where something -- because he knows where all the good places. You like pudding?

CN: I love pudding.



CR: Did you try the place downtown?

CN: I haven't tried it yet, have you tried it? [01:58:00]

LR: I should have brought you some.

CN: It's really good? I have to go there.

LR: It's beyond.

CN: Great, I'm so excited to try it.

LR: Beyond.

CR: You've been down there?

LR: Of course.

CN: Maybe I'll go this weekend. Yeah, I'll make it happen.

CR: Call me up, I'll treat you. I've got the card.

LR: Are you a frequent flyer?

CR: I'm a frequent flyer, look, two of them. [laughs] I don't mess around.

CN: That's fabulous. All right, well, anything else on Marvin?

CR: I can't think. I don't know what to tell you, he's one of my best friends. Absolutely one of my best friends.

CN: Yeah, and you've known him practically your whole life too.

CR: Yeah. Marvin lived on Washington Street. [01:59:00] Yes. Because you know where his family is from, right? New Orleans.

LR: Right, I knew his mother was from New Orleans. Because they were like the only other black Catholic family I knew beyond ours at the time.

CR: Yeah, Marvin lived on Washington Street. Everybody that came up from the South came here.

CN: Yeah.

CR: Everybody I know that came up from the South came here.

LR: Why do you think?

CR: I don't know. I have no clue why.

LR: It just happened.

CR: Yeah, I think maybe one person came and then they just -- you only need one. But then Easton was probably, I've got to tell you, honestly, I've been a lot of places in my life, when I was growing up, [02:00:00] Easton, Pennsylvania, was the absolute best place to raise a family, I thought. Absolute best place.

CN: How so? Or why?

CR: Because it was close-knit, people, where we lived, people looked out for your kids, they looked out for you. We didn't -- when we lived in the projects, do you know we never locked our doors? We didn't lock our doors. We didn't have to lock our doors. I raised my kids on Southside, my kids, I had a house on Wilkes Barre Street, I

swear to god, I never locked my doors of my house. My doors were never locked, and I never had a problem. That's what Easton was, you didn't have that crime that was going on. [02:01:00] You didn't have to worry about people messing with somebody's kid, or somebody assaulting your child.

LR: Or get beat up.

CR: Yeah. Molesting your daughter, you didn't have to worry about that. It was one of those -- the closest, when I watch movies like I watch the old Andy Griffin Show, it reminds me of Easton. When I watch Remember the Titans, it reminds me of Easton High School. Because back then Easton High School was football, am I right? Easton High School was the biggest thing, other than Larry Holmes, with football. It was all about football.

LR: It is the high school football town.

CR: Yeah, I mean really. This is the closest thing to Remember the Titans. [02:02:00] You ever see Remember the Titans? Watch it. It's a town in Virginia.

LR: Is it a true story?

CR: It's a true story. It's a true story about a coach that coached a team in Virginia.

CN: I've definitely heard of it. Yeah.

LR: I have as well.

CR: Yeah, look it up on Netflix, Remember the Titans. Good movie, great movie, if you like football. You don't like football? [laughter]

CN: But Andy does.

LR: Does he?

CN: Oh yeah. Yeah, and his dad played football for Nebraska.

CR: And you don't like football?

CN: No.

CR: Are you kidding me? Nebraska, come on.

CN: I have respect. I have respect.

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