THE ALEXANDRIA ORAL HISTORY CENTER
OFFICE OF HISTORIC ALEXANDRIA
CITY OF ALEXANDRIA

Oral History Interview

with

Harold Hughes

Interviewer: *Kerry James Reed*

Narrator: *Harold Hughes*

Location of Interview:
Lloyd House, 220 N Washington St, Alexandria, VA 22314

Date of Interview: *3/12/2024*

Transcriber: *J Orisha & Kerry James Reed*

Summary:
Harold Hughes discusses his memories of growing up in segregated Alexandria, his family history, the history of Alexandria, the history of the Elks Lodge, his time spent in the Marine Corps, and shares his feelings on the state of Douglass Cemetery and the progress of the Douglass Cemetery Initiative

Notes:

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General	Childhood; Segregation; Integration; Marine Corps; African-American History; Sports; Football; Sports; African American Neighborhoods; African-American Cemeteries; African American Elementary Schools; Racism; Public History; Television; Cemeteries; Funerary Rites; USO; Chitlin Circuit; Secret Societies; Elks; Child Rearing; Historic Sites; Family;
People	Harold Hughes; Raymond Green; Judge Irene L Pancoast; Bessie Webster; Harold "Sonny" Oliver; Michael Johnson; Jada Hughes; Francine Hughes; Candice Dixon; Earl Lloyd; Charlita Lloyd
Places	City of Alexandria; Gibbon St; Samuel Madden Homes; The Berg; South Side

	Alexandria; Uptown Alexandria; Patrick St; Henry St; King St; Queen St; Madison St; Montgomery St; First St; Alfred St; Charles Houston Elementary School; Oswald Durant Recreation Center; Cameron St; Pendleton St; George Washington High School; Parker-Gray; Wellington House; Franklin St; Saint Paul's College in Lawrenceville, Virginia; Coleman Cemetery; Bethel Cemetery; Mount Pleasant Valley Cemetery; Cherry Point, North Carolina; Saint Jospeh Catholic Church; Alexandria Elks Lodge; Lyles-Crouch Elementary School

Harold Hughes: *[00:00:01]* Hi, my name is Harold S. Hughes. I'm 71 years old. Today's date is March the 12th, year 2024. I'm at the Lloyd House in Alexandria, Virginia. *[00:00:14][13.1]*
Kerry James Reed: *[00:00:15]* My name is Kerry James Reed. I am 27 years of age. It is the 12th of March, 2024, and we are at the Lloyd House. So thank you so much for agreeing to do this interview, Mr. Hughes. It's been a pleasure getting to know you over the past few weeks. I'm very looking forward to this interview. I guess we can just start from the beginning. Where were you born? *[00:00:31][15.7]*
Harold Hughes: *[00:00:31]* I was born right here in Old Town Alexandria, right here at the old Alexandria Hospital, located on Duke and Washington Street. *[00:00:41][10.3]*
Kerry James Reed: *[00:00:42]* Duke and Washington Street. *[00:00:43][0.5]*
Harold Hughes: *[00:00:43]* In 1952. *[00:00:44][0.5]*
Kerry James Reed: *[00:00:45]* 1952. What are your first memories? *[00:00:49][4.1]*
Harold Hughes: *[00:00:53]* My first memories, to be truthful, was in the Samuel Madden Homes. My mother told me that we had just moved from Gibbon St in Alexandria, down to the Samuel Madison Homes. I think we were one of the first families to move in there. But that was in 1954, so I was two years old when we moved there and stayed there until basically 1971. 1954 to 1971. *[00:01:28][35.2]*
Kerry James Reed: *[00:01:30]* So, what are your first memories of the Madden Homes then? *[00:01:32][2.2]*
Harold Hughes: *[00:01:36]* I actually thought that it was a home, not, you know I didn't know any difference, you know what I mean? At that tender age, I only knew that everybody around me had the same type home. And all of them looked like me, you know, so I didn't know any difference. So, I didn't know that they were even projects, you know, until later on, you know, when people start talking. I thought it was a good life, you know? I didn't even know that we were poor until somebody said we were poor. So, you know, it was what we made it back then and there, since everybody lived basically the same. Like I say, you see what you see and you remember what you remember, you know. Like I said, I didn't know any difference. I was happy back then, things were simple. The stores were across the street. The school was across the street. Everything was walking distance, you know. I felt safe. And everybody I knew was right there. Those times were good times. *[00:02:57][80.8]*
Kerry James Reed: *[00:02:57]* When did you come to the realization that you were poor, as you put it? *[00:03:04][6.8]*
Harold Hughes: *[00:03:08]* When I got older. I guess I was round in the fifth grade, something like that. Then, we started going with the kids from on South Side or the Berg or something like that. But of course, that was during segregation. So you were kind of restricted to a particular area. Found out that the people on the on the South Side owned their homes, versus living in HUD [U.S.

Department of Housing and Urban Development] Housing Authority homes. But it still made no difference to me, you know what I mean? Like I said, our life was simple. They had their style, and all that did was made us even madder at them, especially in sports. So, you know, sports was the equalizer back then to everything. So that's how they became the South Side and we became Uptown. So, if they hadn't said nothing [laughs], we probably be better friends. But everybody was friends. But what I'm speaking about is sports-wise. *[00:04:34][85.7]*

Kerry James Reed: *[00:04:36]* So was there, I guess, inter-neighborhood competition in sports? *[00:04:40][4.0]*

Harold Hughes: *[00:04:41]* Sure. And not only inter-neighborhood. As I said, I came from the 800 block. Matter of fact, I lived 821 N Patrick St. There's a 700 block, and there's a 600 block, and then later on, they built another block was 900 block. Competition became, even more competitive when they built a 900 block and guys moved in that we had known in school, that came from other parts of Alexandria that we never played against. So they moved to the 900 block. So now we had the 800 block versus the 900 block. They lived on Patrick St, Montgomery St, First St, and Alfred St. The 900 block, we lived on Madison St, Montgomery St, Patrick St, and Alfred St, that's a block over. And then the school, of course, Charles Houston [Elementary School] was in the 700 block. Then you had some old projects [The Ramsey Homes] across the street in the 700 block. So we're talking 700 block of Alfred St, 800 block of Alfred St and N Columbus St, 900 block of Alfred St and Columbus St. And then you got 900 block of Alfred St and Patrick St Then you had at that time, and this is where the difference is, another block that was on Patrick St because at that time there was no Henry St. So if you really wanted to call it, I was on the Patrick St side of Route One. And the house across the street was on the 800 block of Henry Street. Because Patrick and Henry were the same street. It was only two lanes. One lane going north and one lane going south. So even though you were across the street, you are on Henry St side, and I was on the Patrick St side. That stayed that way until about the fourth or fifth grade when I witnessed them put the homes on the Henry St side on a railroad ties and turned them. That's when they put in Henry St by itself. They separated Patrick St and Henry St. As it stands today, it's Patrick St going North and Henry St on the other side of the projects going south. So they actually separated the two streets. It was Patrick Henry St. Now it's Patrick St and you have Henry St. So that's how that happened. *[00:07:58][197.2]*

Kerry James Reed: *[00:07:59]* What was your reaction to that when it when it first happened? *[00:08:01][1.8]*

Harold Hughes: *[00:08:02]* I was amazed because I didn't know what they were doing. I couldn't figure out why they was digging under these homes and raising them and turning them. I actually thought they was going to pick them up and carry them somewhere you know. I was really amazed that at that young age, you know, and like I said, I'm 71 now, and that's something that I vividly remember. I never seen anything like that. You know, there was something a lot of people missed. They don't know what happened to those homes and why they turned out like that. But that's the reason, you know. And I do remember that, Patrick Henry St was a dirt road. I remember before they got street lights. And as I spoke before, them street life changed my whole life. Because that's what my father told us, that we had to be in the house before the street lights came on. It just changed everything, you know what I mean? Because before the streetlights came, we would be out there, we didn't know any difference. I guess they were innocent times. You weren't worried about nobody kidnaping you. Nobody doing this. Nobody doing that. You rarely even seen the police. So we just stay up playing football in the courtyard as they call them, or across the street at school

playing basketball. All we did was play sports. So, you play up until the wee hours in the morning. If nobody call you, they know where to find you at. You going to be at the one place, you're going to be over at Charles Houston playing basketball or you're going to be in the courtyard playing football. So that was life back then: sports. And then as we got older we went to the recreation centers. Durant [Oswald Durant Recreation Center], which we called Cameron St back then, or Pendleton St. And then we, of course, we got into recreational football or sports. Recreational sports, football, and basketball. And that was when life really took off, you know. Love sports. Matter of fact, everybody played sports. Everybody wasn't good at it, but everybody was good at something, you know? So that was the life back in the '60s. Of course we left there [Charles Houston Elementary School] and we went to high school. But life became even greater. Now as far as high school is concerned versus - Ok, I skipped a lot. Let me go back. Let me digress. Ok. We are talking about segregated Alexandria. That was grades 1 through 6 in Charles Houston. And the seventh grade. Because Charles Houston used to be 1 through 8th. When I got up there, they had changed it because they had closed down Parker-Gray from a high school to a middle school. And the middle school was seventh and eighth grade. So as I said, Charles Houston used to be 1 through 8th. And then you went to Parker-Gray grade 9, 10, 11, and 12. So, now I'm going to Charles Houston 1 through 6th, and I spent 7th and 8th in Parker-Gray. That's when I was introduced to the other side of life. That's when we got integrated. So that's when I first had my dealings with white students. Didn't really change anything, it was what it was. I had no problem with them, and they had no problem with me. So, it would seem that this segregated attitude is something that's taught. You don't come up, you are not born, with that type of mentality. Because, you know, people like Raymond Green and them, that's one of the first white guys that I knew and we hit it off real good. Matter of fact, I was the running back and he was my guard. So, you know, we hit it off real good. We used to go down there on Saturdays and Sundays early in the morning before football came on TV. And we would play football at GW [George Washington High School], Ok. Our first controversy with the white kids was that we went over GW [George Washington High School] to play football. And we wanted to play and they wanted to play. So the very first Sunday we had 1 side of the field from goalpost to goalpost. And then they had the other side of the field from goalpost to goalpost. Didn't work out that way. It couldn't because, you know, we got in each other's way. No fights but some name calling and some argument went on. So when we came back, the next one, we're settled on 50 yards a piece. Worked out every Sunday that way. Then what happened was, we sat down after a couple of beers. Mind you we still in high school, so, you know, somebody bought some beer. We sat down, we talked trash to each other. So we decided, "well next Sunday we're going to play y'all." So now we've got the whole field. And you got during that time colored kids versus the white kids. So that happened every Sunday from then on. I mean, every Sunday we graduated from, when I mean graduated, we moved from GW, we started playing the kids in Fairfax. We played Stuart [Justice High School formerly known as J.E.B. Stuart High School] on Sunday morning. Matter of fact I think I remember that it had rained the day before, and we said, "J.E.B Stuart," now we got white kids on our team. And we're playing the kids out J.E.B Stuart. They had one Black kid, you know what I mean? And that mentality was G.W., 'Ain't nobody going to beat us.' We went out there, it had rained the day before, and I love playing in the mud, there ain't nothing like playing in the mud. So, we played and we beat them in football, so they challenged us in basketball, so we left the football field, went around the corner to the basketball courts at J.E.B Stuart, beat them in basketball. And I remember this, we came back there next week and they had

uniforms and we was a ragtag bunch of kids, you know what I mean? So we sat on the sidelines and actually took our magic markers and put numbers on our t-shirts [laughs]. Really, it actually happened. And, we played them, we beat them real good. Beat them bad. And I remember one of the guy's father says, "Y'all let them n's beat y'all." You know, of course then, you know, been used to it. Been used to being calling all kinds of names. So it really didn't bother. The son came over and apologized and we told him it wasn't necessary, you know. I mean, it's sports, we're used to people calling us all kinds of names because that happens in sports, you know, it's us being competitive. But when somebody's parents gets involved in something like that, brings a whole different texture to the whole conversation, you know. That just threw me back to, as I was saying, that when I first found out about the railroad tracks. About how it separates white Alexandria from Black, colored Alexandria. Excuse me, I'm going to use the terminology of the times, ok. My mother carried us down to King and Washington St where there was J.C Murphy and J.C Penney's and all that. That was the very first time I had witnessed segregation in its totality. When I didn't know any difference, I guess I was about seven, eight years old, and my mother was taking us to Murphy's, and I first saw the water fountains for whites only and for coloreds on it. Never had been introduced or used to that before. Like I said, I went to Charles Houston, of course, there were all Black teachers. Didn't know anything about this segregation or whatever. And a matter of fact, I don't think I even heard the word integration. We were used to having what you had, sharing what you had. And, you know, you had your own stores, you had your own doctors. We didn't go to white doctors, we went to Black doctors, you know what I mean? Went to Black schools, the Black church. So, everything during my childhood revolved around the colored section, ok. Then, like I said, when we got to the 7th grade, then here comes integration. That was about '65 in Alexandria. That's when I ran with Raymond. We had good times with them, you know. Because kids going to be kids; it only changes when adults are around, you know. Of course there are some spoiled or some rotten apples on every bunch. Some came with this prejudiced attitude from the beginning, but most kids aren't like that, you know? *[00:18:59][657.2]*

Kerry James Reed: *[00:18:59]* Right. So, when you did experience these, you know, controversies around integration, when you were playing, you know, the kids at Jeb Stuart or, you know, you were first starting to integrate with your friends at GW, how did your parents describe segregation to you? *[00:19:20][20.7]*

Harold Hughes: *[00:19:24]* I don't think they did. I don't think they did. I think they chose to let us find out on our own. And I guess this is the reason why and I'm only guessing, ok. My mother was born in 1930 and my father was born in 1931. That was in the midst of segregation. I guess slavery hadn't been too far from that. So they really didn't have any dealings as far as on the same plateau with white people. My mother, was a domestic, she cleaned homes, ok. I mean, she went to white people's home, cleaned their homes. And my father worked at the Wellington House up here on Franklin and Washington St. His bosses were white. So, their dealing with white people was different from mine. They were being supervised by white people as they got older. Never went to school with them, you know what I mean? So, they didn't come through, "Separate but equal," they just came through, "Separate," ok. That's a simple way of putting it. We dealt with the separate and then equal or what was supposed to been equal at the time, you know. We, of course, we did know that we had left over books that we were not on the equal plane with white kids, you know what I mean? We understood that their stuff was better than ours. We knew that we had hand-me-down books in school. We did realize that, but we made out of what we had, ok. And what I did learn--see

I'm jumping around now, we talking about segregation and integration--but what I did learn was this: even though I may have mastered the books that I had during that time, when it came to the SATs [Standardized Test for U.S. College Admissions] or a higher learning, they had the advantage. I only learned what I learned that dealt with my particular environment. And what I mean by that was there was no Black history. There was nothing about the Black inventors, the painters, you know? My book consisted of George Washington throwing something across the Potomac, or the cherry tree, you know. There was nothing in my book that looked like me, you know. We had world history, talking about Mussolini and all this, the wars and all this. It's as if we were not part of history, when I'm talking about the Black race or the colored race at the time. Everything that we learned about "people of color" as we use today, back then when colored people were Negroes, was when the teachers closed the books and they talked about the city of Alexandria and the marches and because you must remember, also during that time, a lot of us didn't have televisions when we were coming up, you know. We were one of the lucky ones, my father had a television that was black and white. Eventually either your sound went out or your picture went out in. And in most homes you would find two TVs, one on top of the other because one had the picture and one had the sound. And that was in most homes that I know about. Then my father came home one day with this screen that was green at the bottom, orange in the middle and blue at top, effectively made the TV color. But the only thing with that was that no matter what picture came on, the bottom was green and the top was blue. So if you were in a submarine or something like that, that was grass there, you know? But you had two distinct within yourself what the different was. Like I said, life then was simple: there was the early show, the afternoon matinee, the evening show, and then the late night show, and then TV went off and they played the national anthem and all that, you know. Life was very simple. *[00:24:51][327.4]*

Kerry James Reed: *[00:24:52]* What was your favorite show? *[00:24:52][0.5]*

Harold Hughes: *[00:24:54]* Twilight Zone. *[00:24:55][0.3]*

Kerry James Reed: *[00:24:55]* Twilight Zone? Good choice. Good Choice. *[00:24:57][2.2]*

Harold Hughes: *[00:24:57]* Absolutely. Yeah. Twilight Zone, you know. Hey, it showed something different every time. Let me say this, a lot of people don't think TV can influence one, but it can. I saw on TV that, like on Bonanza or something like that, somebody would die on this episode, but tomorrow he be alive, you know what I mean? Or like The Three Stooges. Something like that. No one ever says, "don't try this at home," like jumping off the roof, you know. I've seen kids do it. I was so influenced one time I actually stayed in house a whole summer because I thought something was going to happen to me. And I was so naive, that in the fifth grade is when I found out that the years change. Never realized that, born in '52 and now it's '63. And I didn't realize that until, I think we had an exam or a quiz one day, and she asked me, "what year were you born in and what year is it now?" And I remember that I never even knew that the year changed or never put it together, let's put it like that, ok. So, I don't know. At life and times man, like I said, I didn't care. That's all I wanted to do was wake up in the morning and go play football, you know. That was it. *[00:27:17][139.4]*

Kerry James Reed: *[00:27:19]* So, you mentioned just a while ago that you would learn about Black history when your teachers would close the books and actually start to talk to the students about your history. What did it feel like when they would do that, when you would actually finally learn a bit about Black history as opposed to just George Washington or whomever? *[00:27:36][17.8]*

Harold Hughes: *[00:27:38]* Well, I mean, it felt like I could be anything I wanted to be. But it felt like that we are doing something in society. People who look like me can be somebody, ok. We can invent this, we can invent that; it gave you a little pride, you know. I never could have thought that we would be president of the United States, or a four star general. Those things just weren't possible through my eyesight, ok. Of course there were wars that we had heroes, but we didn't have any colored heroes. Never heard of a colored hero. A matter of fact, you really didn't see Blacks on television unless they was domestic or they were naive, or they was put into this minor role talking half crazy, you know, how they portray us. Like Buckwheat [Black character from shorts film Our Gang] and stuff like that, amos 'n' Andy [Minstrel-styled TV show], you know, always doing something stupid. "Yes, mammy," Mammy this and Mammy that. That's the way they had us on television. That's the way they see us. You know that was it. Aunt Jemima, and then we start calling each other names, stuff like that. That was the life, ok. You were what you were. Didn't even think about going to college. Matter of fact, I may have been the first person in my family to go to college. And when I say family I'm not talking about my siblings, I'm talking about cousins and everything else. Didn't seem possible, you know? And of course, like I said, I went to two colleges. When I graduated in 1971, I had a four year scholarship to Saint Paul's [Saint Paul's College] in Lawrenceville, Virginia. And when I got there, a tornado had came through there and just wrecked the place. And before my father left, my father and mother carried me down there, and before he left, he told me, he said "Boy, you sure you want to stay here?" I said, "Yes." Because I wanted to play football. I didn't per se want to go to school for the learning. I went for the sports, ok. But the place was so bad, I had wrote a letter. Now mind you, Lawrenceville, Virginia is a one red light, and a one bus terminal place. And I mean that literally. There's nothing there but the college. I wrote a letter on that Saturday. I caught the Greyhound back home Sunday. The letter got there Monday. So my father sat me down and talked to me. And so I went back over to GW and talked to Coach Futrell, who had graduated from Virginia State College at that time. And at that time, if you went to that school or you graduated from that school or if you was alumni from that school, you could give somebody else to use your name to get a scholarship there. So, I got another full year scholarship for football going there. Got there, stayed for a while, then did the same thing. I left there, came home. My father sat me down again and said, "Boy, you is a mama's boy." Said, "You can always go somewhere where you can leave. That you've always had things too easy." And then he says, "Well, sit down and have a drink with me." And, at that time I, you know, like I said, I might have had a beer or so, but nothing hard. And he knew what he was doing, I just didn't. So, he got me intoxicated because he knew I wasn't going to do anything on my own, and if I knew what he had in mind, I wasn't going to be a part of that either. So he carried me right on down here to the [unintelligible] station. Right down here next to the hospital is a recruiter station right here on Washington St. And he carried me on in there. And when I woke up, I was in Baltimore getting ready to get on the bus. I had been inducted into the United States Marine Corps. Next thing I know, I was standing in Paris Island on the yellow footprints. Best thing he could have done for me. I stayed there for 15 years. I got to go around the world twice and I never looked back. Man, that was the best thing. I wouldn't have done by myself, you know, because when I was in school, mind you, Vietnam was going on, and people were coming back in all kinds of shape, you know, legs missing, if they came back. So during that, when I was in school, my draft number, they had a selective draft going there, and they had drafted numbers to 300. My number was 369. And I was classified as 1-H because I was still in school. So I missed the draft and ended up being volunteered

in. So when my father drafted me into it and, like I said, never looked back onwards from there. *[00:34:24][406.0]*

Kerry James Reed: *[00:34:26]* Could you describe your father? *[00:34:26][0.8]*

Harold Hughes: *[00:34:30]* [Laughs]. My father was about five foot six. But he had a seven foot stature, you know what I mean? In other words, in my mind, that's how I saw him, you know. Strict, disciplinarian, ok. He had five sons and I guess we weren't the easiest little people to keep up with. He had his way with things. In other words, my father was, how do I say it, he might as well been in the military as a drill sergeant. Everything was on schedule. You get up this time. You get dressed this time. You go to school, you come back, you do your homework. He gets off from work from a Wellington house at 5:30. No, he got off at 5:00. You ate dinner 5:30. If you're not in the house at 5:00 and you haven't washed up, and you haven't sat down at that table when he said to the Grace at 5:30, you didn't eat. If you sat down at that table, now mind you, he didn't play about, as they do today, 'Little Johnny wants spaghetti, and he wants tuna fish, and she just want a salad.' Whatever my mother prepared and put on that table is what you ate. It wasn't no variety of things, everybody didn't eat something different. My father's thing was like this, you sat down, we ate together. Whatever my mother prepared, if you didn't like it, or you didn't want that this night, you go to bed hungry. His thing was like this, "You don't want this? Then you go to bed and you dream about what you want." I remember that statement. I ate every day so it made no difference to me. But my brothers were something else. That's when I realized that he meant what he said, because when we came down and my mother was preparing a different dinner, you know, because on Fridays, which was chicken, no, I mean Saturdays was chicken, Friday was fish, you know, because we were Catholic. Catholic don't eat meat on Friday. So my brother came downstairs to eat dinner, my father put that same plate that he didn't want to eat the night before in front of him while we had something totally different. And he meant what he said, "Whatever you dreamt about is what you ate when you was hungry. And you're going to eat what she prepared. Or you ain't gonna eat nothing." And he meant that. That's when we learned that the family values were sitting down to eat and pray together. So that's what we did, you know, and man, when I got of age, couldn't wait to stop going to church [Laughs], you know, I got a choice now. But then again what happens is those whoopings that we got because of one brother did something, all of them got beat, you know. My father, like I said, I don't know, we stood in line and got that whooping. Half the time, like I said, I didn't even know why I was getting beat. Then I consider myself the black sheep of the family because he treated me real bad, you know, 'You too hard on me.' So, one got beat, I was in the middle, I have two older brothers and two younger brothers. And one brother didn't cry, one brother did cry. He beat that one who did cry until he stopped crying, how are you going to stop crying when you're getting beat? So, I go in there and I noticed my oldest brother, he didn't cry, he got off easy. But my father beat me because I wouldn't cry. And then the brother that's under my older brother, he'd beat him because he was crying , and he beat him until he stopped crying. So I didn't know what to do. But I taught myself to taking it like a soldier, you know. But by the time he got to my other two brothers, he was tired. So that's how I always got the worst of everything, you know, 'darn if you do and darn if you don't.' Because one brother, older brother ain't crying, next brother is crying, I'm gonna get beat because I ain't gonna cry because I think I'm a man now. No, I ain't. I've been watching. [Laughs]. So, you know, like I said, you know, I guess he was teaching me a lesson. And as I got older, of course I understood why. I understood why. And then we get this attitude, a little thing about, 'when I have my kids, I ain't going to beat them. I'm going to give them

everything they want.' Now mind you, the difference between us then and them now, is that when we seen an older person, not necessarily going to say elderly, but somebody's parents, or my father's friends or elderly people coming down the street, you got out the way. You spoke, "Good evening. How you doing?" whatever. "Can I help you with your groceries?" That's what we did because we had manners, we had respect. These days, if you come down the street, you're lucky if the kids don't take your groceries. Most people you'll notice will cross over the street, across the street, even though they're almost at their door. So what I'm saying is this: when we was in school teachers ain't play around. Because most of them were some kin to you anyway. Like I said, they had that, what I call, the old black telegraph system, you know, they beat you in school, they call your parents on their jobs and let them know that they beat you, send you home to get beat. Your parents send you back to apologize if the parent didn't come to the school and beat you in front of the class. Oh, man, we had all kinds of ways. But we understood. And that's how you got that respect. Because you don't want to see all your friends laughing at you because your mama came over and beat you in front of the class, you know. And those days we didn't have any problem kids fighting teachers. *[00:42:28][477.7]*

Kerry James Reed: *[00:42:29]* Yeah. *[00:42:29][0.0]*

Harold Hughes: *[00:42:30]* But these days, man, hey, the teachers scared of the kids. The principal scared of the teacher. Parents scared of the kids because kids ain't scared of nobody. They just run rampant. When I was in school they chased you into the classrooms. These days, they don't care whether you go to class or not. Just come on in the building, spend your whole day in the restroom. They don't care. I know we had this judge, Judge [Irene L.] Pancoast, hard but fair. We was up there messing up during the summer we was in a Boys Scouts. I had my brother there. And school was closed and they got to throwing things out the window. We had to go see Judge Pancoast on December the 20th. And we had to learn the Gettysburg Address by the 23rd. I didn't know whether she was serious or not, but I took her seriously because she said, "If you don't learn the Gettysburg Address when you come back here on the 23rd, if you miss a word, you're going to spend Christmas in jail." Of course we were, what, 12, 13, 14 years old. I don't know whether she meant it or not but I took it as if she meant it. And the only thing that saved me was that we were learning the Gettysburg Address in school, so that was a life saver, ok. But at that time I had speech impediment because I did a lot of stuttering. And so my parents put me in this speed reading class. So I learned to talk fast. But you see, when I slow down, it always happens. I get to stuttering again. So, when I went in front of Judge Pancoast, and I did the Gettysburg Address, I was, I mean, I was ripping it off [laughs]. So, I was scared anyway, so, you know, and I was making sure that I wasn't going to miss anything. Then she said, "Listen, son, I know you understand what you're saying but I don't. You said it so fast I can't understand nothing you're just saying. Could you slow down and say it?" Now I already know what's going to happen. I can't get through it, you know. Now I'm crying and I'm snotting and everything else because I'm stuttering, you know what I mean? And I'm trying to get it out, but it won't come out. You know what I mean? So she said, "I understand." And she let me go. I went home to my mama. Man tell you about something, "I ain't going back, never get in trouble again. I don't like that woman. And I don't never want to see her again." And I never went back [laughs]. *[00:45:19][169.5]*

Kerry James Reed: *[00:45:24]* Did your parents ever talk to you about your family history while you were growing up? *[00:45:28][4.5]*

Harold Hughes: *[00:45:31]* Yes and no. *[00:45:33][1.5]*

Kerry James Reed: *[00:45:34]* Ok. *[00:45:34][0.0]*
Harold Hughes: *[00:45:36]* You know, there was no genealogy classes or anything like that. My mother was the oldest grandchild on my great grandmother's side, ok. And I know that I was asking the questions as I got older. Because, I can only go back - I've seen my grandmother, and I seen my great grandmother on both sides of the family, my father's side and my mother's side. And that's who she spoke about, you know. She knew her grandmother, but she didn't know who her great grandmama was, ok. So that her great grandmother would have been my great-great grandmother. And so basically, the family history stops at the grandparents, at her grandparents, which was my great grandmother. Her name was Bessie Webster. My mother passed at the age of 94. My father passed at 53. My grandmother died at 74. And my great grandmother was 98. So I see there's longevity on one side of the family, and shortness on the other side. So I had a problem reaching 50 because I thought 53 I was going to pass. I don't know what my thinking was when I was coming up because I got messed around with life, you know, as far as traversing from one age to another age, you know, if I should ever live to be as old as my mother, you know. My mother was born on April 4th and, passed on April 4th at the age of 94. So it is what it is. She had longevity on her side of the family. And, that's how I got introduced to the Douglass Cemetery, you know, through her. She was there, she was the family historian. *[00:48:15][159.8]*
Kerry James Reed: *[00:48:16]* Your mother was? *[00:48:17][0.4]*
Harold Hughes: *[00:48:17]* Yes. Yeah. She's the one that told us all about this side of the family. And, she had a brother, name was Harold Oliver. I think he was, she was the oldest daughter, but an oldest girl, her brother was older than her. And she was born in '30, and I believe what I read on his headstone, he'd he died in 1936, and was buried at Douglass Cemetery. That's how I got introduced to Douglass cemetery, because I used to go with my mother on Memorial Days and birthdays, when she would go out there and put flowers on the graves. Her father and her mother, and grandmother, and grandfather are buried in Coleman [Cemetery]. And then she would come down to Bethel [Cemetery] on the south side and across the street from Bethel...well Coleman was bad enough, because it stayed flooded. Then she would come to Bethel to place flowers there. Then she would go over to this lonely looking graveyard that was not being taken care of, and she would place a flower on his grave. I remember asking her about this particular cemetery. *[00:50:04][106.9]*
Kerry James Reed: *[00:50:05]* About Douglass? *[00:50:06][1.1]*
Harold Hughes: *[00:50:08]* About Douglass. And that's when she would tell me about segregation and integration that a lot of people were that were, buried here were Black people during segregation. That's where they buried them at, because it was against the law for the Blacks to be buried in a white cemetery or vice versa. So, she said that he died of diphtheria. And she said that my grandfather, to mark his grave, built a brick wall around it and encased it with cement. And that's how I remember where his grave was, ok. So, I would go down there. Now because, you know, when my mother passed or whatever, I used to when she got too old to do it, she would tell me to go out and do the flowers. So, right now I'm the flower bearer for all the family members throughout. Now I have to go to Coleman [Cemetery] to Bethel [Cemetery], to Douglass, [Cemetery], [and] Mount Pleasant Valley [Cemetery], you know, that's what I'll do now. And I remember a couple of years ago when I went out there to place flowers on Sonny's grave, it was flooded out there. And I remember taking pictures of it and posting them on Facebook. And that's when Michael Johnson saw it and he called me and we talked about it. And that's when I found out that he had people buried out there and I had people burned out there and that Alexandria was

being forced to do something about it, ok. It was being neglected. Then, you know, then we went on, we had these meetings with them and all that. That's how I remember Douglass Cemetery. Never seen anybody get buried out there, now; I'm 71 years old, I ain't never seen anybody get buried out there. But from what I remember, Douglass [Cemetery] was a bigger than that. It was bigger than that. Before they put them homes up there it was just a graveyard. This is what I remember, there were two graveyards. There was the white graveyard that had the black fence, that separated the Black graveyard. I'm just going to call it the way it is. And I remember that the people was on the other side. And I was wondering what that gate was, why it was separated. That's what my mother was telling me about the Black graveyard and the white graveyard, and they could not be buried together, anything like that. And Douglass [Cemetery] was from their driveway was the same width going across as that white graveyard. Now, today if you go out there to that same driveway which separated Douglass from Bethel, you can see where it goes across in their houses and stops at the graveyard. But you see where the white graveyard still protrudes beyond the housing. What I do remember, and I don't care what nobody say, was that my uncle was basically in the middle of the graveyard. But that tree is still there. The cement thing going around him is still there. But now he's almost on the end, you know? And then people gonna tell me that that graveyard has not been encroached on. But see, can't nobody tell me no different because I know what I know. Because I used to count the graves. And what I mean by that, Sunny as it was the fourth grade when there was not a driveway, but a path right there. And from there, where people used to park, get out your car and go to the graveyard, there were four rows before you got to him. So four rows back, and he was the 14th over. The 14th grave over. There was a big tree that sat right in there, it's still there, and he lays right beside that tree. But now there is only, what, maybe four more rows over before you went into the housing. And I know for a fact that is not correct, you know? *[00:55:24][316.1]*

Kerry James Reed: *[00:55:24]* So, if you had to put a percentage on it, how much of Douglass would you say those houses take up? If you had to estimate. *[00:55:31][7.0]*

Harold Hughes: *[00:55:38]* I would say 40%. Y'all telling me that, even the sign says there are thousands of people out there. I doubt if you can even count 500 tombstones out there you know? Because during the meetings you're talking about the City of Alexandria don't have rights out there. Well, somebody put a sewer pipe out there, so somebody had rights. And during the meetings that we have, you find out that they don't know who is supposed to take care of it, or who owns it. Stuff like that. So how did that manhole get out there? How did the housing get out there? I mean it floods worse now than it ever did. And I attribute that to the housing, you know. Now, I ain't never seen this big black well, as I'm going to call it, that sits right in the middle of the graveyard. And all the graves around it, the headstones have sunken or fallen in. Now who does that? You know, I'm pretty sure it wasn't there back then because it's cast iron and it's black. Back then, they wasn't using nothing like that. You know the difference between the old and the new. And you know, we're talking about people that have been buried out there in the 1800s, you know, so where does this come from? I mean, somebody did some encroaching on that graveyard. You know, and I contribute it, well, I can't even contribute that to segregation anymore because this was done doing integration. These houses are fairly new. They might be at the most, what, ten years old? Them houses out there. So this is brand new. Somebody knew what they was doing. Somebody sold some land that they weren't supposed to sell. But then again, there are only Black graves, so who really cares? Who really cares? They're not going to speak on it. They're not going to say nothing. And by

the time they find out that we did, it is too late, you know. I'm not going to take the blame for it. We'll let the city talk about this one. *[00:58:33][175.4]*

Kerry James Reed: *[00:58:36]* So, you mentioned that you would go with your mother on Memorial Day and put the flowers on the graves of your kin. Did your family have any other rites or funerary traditions that that they practiced, that you practiced? *[00:58:50][13.9]*

Harold Hughes: *[00:58:52]* What do you mean? *[00:58:52][0.1]*

Kerry James Reed: *[00:58:52]* So let me ask a different question first. Do you remember the first funeral that you experienced? *[00:58:59][6.1]*

Harold Hughes: *[00:59:01]* Yes. My grandmother's. *[00:59:01][0.5]*

Kerry James Reed: *[00:59:02]* Your grandmother's? Ok. *[00:59:03][1.2]*

Harold Hughes: *[00:59:03]* My grandmother's. Yeah. No, let me back that up. My great-grandmama. It was different. It was weird. I was, whoa, maybe ten. Back then they didn't have it at churches or funeral homes. They had it at her home, her house. That's where the casket was, at her house. And I didn't understand why was she there. My grandmother was at a church, my mother's was out of church, but my great-grandmother was at her house. So everybody came to her house to pay their respects, you know. And I remember we were sitting in a chair. I was sitting out there with all our cousins and things. Nobody knew what was going on. You know, we just babies. No bigger than ten years old. We had no understanding of death, you know, people crying. The only time I cry, because I see my mama cry. I ain't know what she was crying about, you know. But then again, you know, death at that time didn't have no meaning to me because like I said, people on TV would be back on TV the next day. And that's how I attributed it. So, that was my basic thing about funerals. I can differentiate my grandmother and my great grandma. It was a totally different event. *[01:01:09][125.5]*

Kerry James Reed: *[01:01:14]* So, you mentioned that you didn't really have a concept of death when you went to your great-grandmother's funeral. When did you develop that understanding then? *[01:01:24][9.3]*

Harold Hughes: *[01:01:25]* When my grandmother died. *[01:01:26][0.7]*

Kerry James Reed: *[01:01:26]* How much later was that? *[01:01:28][1.6]*

Harold Hughes: *[01:01:29]* Oh, I think I was at the start of my freshman year. Yeah, about my freshman year. No, no, no, I wasn't. I[t] was 1969, no, I was a sophomore in high school. Sophomore in high school. Of course then there was no rush of death. There was no friends passing on, or anything like that, or getting hit by cars, that just wasn't happening back then. Death back then, man, was a rarity. Today it's a normality. You know what I mean? It's just normal. People die any day. But back then they just didn't, for some reason. And if they did, I just didn't know about it. Nobody around me was dying, ok. So, the concept of death was nothing that you put your hand on. Of course, we knew people died, don't get me wrong, but it never hit me personally or internally, ok. Like I said, my first instance with death was my great grandmother, and that was in her house. That's where the casket was, that's where she laid in state at. And then some years later, my grandmother passed. And we went to the Catholic church for that, she had her funeral at the Catholic Church. And I understood then, you know, I was of age then when my grandmother died. So, I knew what death was. I just didn't have no concept when my great grandmother died, ok. I was just too young. And we deal with things differently then, you know. Some of us, we just don't even pay no attention, it's just like crossing the street, you know what I mean? You might run out there in front of a truck or whatever, not even with the concept that this man got to stop. Now, you

know, you're lucky if you stand on the corner and nobody run over you. But I learned to differentiate from childhood funerals versus now. And of course being in the military, you get a great difference of death. You know, like right now I've been through many a funeral. I've helped people organize funerals, talk to the undertaker, tell them about the graves and all, because you'd be surprised how many people today still don't know how to, or who to call when a loved one passes. Because they just haven't dealt with it, you know. Of course, you've seen the president die being on TV and all this. It is just like life today, to be simple what it is. You think everything is in a handbook, and when someone passes it's already there for you, and it's prepared. All you're supposed to do is just show up. You see because not knowing that your mother, your father has already done this for you and prepared it, you know what I mean? The food just don't show up on a table. Somebody's got to cook the food. All you used to was just showing up and the meal is prepared, you know. Or going to church and the mass is already done, and people know exactly what to say. People don't understand that somebody's got to get up before all this is done and get it ready. We're just used to showing up and everything is done for us. Death doesn't care whether you're prepared or not. It's going to happen. And if you're not prepared, you got a problem in front of you. You got a problem. And we all mourn differently. You know, like, when I was in Okinawa [Japan] when my father passed. And I was kind of mad because my father had been dead, what, four days before I was notified through the Red Cross. And when I got home, I asked my mother, "So what took y'all so long to notify me that my father had passed?" And the answer she gave me was hard for me to swallow. "We didn't tell you because we thought you couldn't handle it." You know. And I don't know where she got that opinion from or where any of them got that opinion from that I was that weak, that I couldn't handle death. I'm in the military, death is part of my job, do you understand what I'm saying? And it was kind of strange that she gave me that answer, and it affected me some kind of way. So after his funeral, I went back to Okinawa. But 60 days later, my brother was killed. So I had to turn around and come right back. So my father died in April, and my brother died in June. Basically 60 days apart. Unbelievable. They're buried side by side at Pleasant Valley out there off of Duke St. But the notification from my brother was totally different from the notification from my father. And I guess what I had told her and my brothers about my feeling about being notified last and late for that particular reason that they thought I was too weak to be notified about that for my father, I didn't appreciate it, you know. But then again, I did the same thing, mind you, because my daughter was one of his favorite grandkids. He had two grandkids. He had two of them that was his favorite: my oldest brother's daughter, Francine, and my daughter, Jada. I told her she was too young. When I went to Okinawa with my family was in Cherry Point, North Carolina, because the Marines sent me there. But they didn't move the family because I was only going to be there for a year. So when I got back, I went there, I went to see them, and I told them about their grandfather. And I decided not to take her because I wanted her to remember him the way she saw him. So today she always remind me, that she forgive me, but at that time she didn't. She held that against me, that I didn't bring her home to see her grandfather, you know. So, I guess what they did to me, I did to her. So, you know, it all becomes the learning lesson man. Let everybody know what's going on, and whatever happens, happens. Everybody going to learn how to deal with grief a different way. It's just that simple. *[01:10:18][529.0]*

Kerry James Reed: *[01:10:20]* Were your father and brother laid out in church as well? *[01:10:25][5.5]*

Harold Hughes: *[01:10:27]* My father was Baptist. And the rest of the family is Catholic. My brother was laid out in Saint Joseph [Catholic Church, Alexandria, VA], and then we carried him down. My father, on the other hand, now, mind you, we're talking 60 days difference. My brother was laid out, it was sunshine. In 1983 when my father died, it was a blizzard. And he always said he didn't want these phony people at his funeral, with all these fake alligator tears. When I got home, I had my wool Marine Corps uniform on. It was so cold that the bottom part of my pants froze. A lot of people never made it to the funeral. When we left the church, it was right up here on Washington St on the south side. *[01:11:51][84.4]*

Kerry James Reed: *[01:11:52]* Which church? *[01:11:53][0.3]*

Harold Hughes: *[01:11:54]* Roberts Memorial [United Methodist Church]. The guy who owned the funeral home was my father's best friend, Mr. Bell. So, he worked at Lewis Funeral Home. He drove the family car. He made a left hand turn and went down the hill towards, what's that last street down there, Union St. And why he want to do that? That car could not make it back up the hill. So we pushed that car from Union St all the way back up the hill, right in front of City Hall. That's where we left it. Remind you this is the car that we are paying for that we are supposed to be riding in, not pushing, ok. And I remember that my mother and them had left with the other family car, and the repass was supposed to be at the lodge on Henry St, and she never knew why we never made it that day. So when she came home, we was already home. We never made it to the repass. Because I was frozen, man, it was too cold. And you know, I'm in the Marine Corps uniform and I got shoes on my feet, not boots. And my pants legs are frozen. I got a nephew in a car who was about eight years old, he has a broken ankle with a cast on, and everybody pushing, you know, it made no sense. So, that's how my father's funeral was. Hey, his wish came true, you know. He died during the blizzard, you know. Then we carried my dad to Pleasant Valley [Cemetery] and they couldn't bury him then because the ground was frozen. So they put him in a mausoleum for about a week, until the snow had melted away and the ground got soft. Now, mind you [chuckles], now the ground is soft, right, so now you're walking in mud [chuckles] and it was just, like I said, it was just a mess out there for him. It was a mess. He really got his wish, you know. And a lot of people laugh about that day. 'That Francis, boy, he said he didn't want nobody at his funeral, and he got his wish.' So, you know, be careful what you ask for. [Laughs] *[01:14:44][170.1]*

Kerry James Reed: *[01:14:48]* Yeah, absolutely. So then you went to Saint Joseph's growing up then? *[01:14:50][2.7]*

Harold Hughes: *[01:14:51]* Yes. *[01:14:51][0.0]*

Kerry James Reed: *[01:14:52]* Because your mother was Catholic? *[01:14:53][1.0]*

Harold Hughes: *[01:14:53]* Yes. My mother was Catholic. Her mother was Catholic. Her grandmother was Catholic, you know. Yes. So, that whole side of my mother's family is Catholic. My father's side is Baptist, you know. So, of course, as I said, my mother's family out rule my father's side of the family. Because as I was saying, when I was growing up, all the family lived within walking distance, ok. My mother's people are from Alexandria. My father's people are from Leesburg [Virginia]. So, my grandmother and my great aunt married two brothers, John and Robert. Now John and Robert are from Leesburg and Rebecca and Marian are from Leesburg also, but they somehow came up here, you know. That's where my mother met my father. So of course all the, my mother's name being Williams, all the Williams were right here in Alexandria. So when the Hughes got up here, it was just a few of them. So when my mother and father got married, and then his older brother married his wife, they were all in the projects, ok. All in Samuel Madden Homes. My

grandmother and great aunt lived next door to each other in another set of projects, which was, just as I was saying, the 800 block of Alfred and Columbus, which is right across the street. And, my mother's sisters was living in the 1000 block of Montgomery St and Columbus St. So you're talking about a two block radius. On one corner you've got two aunts, on the other one you got a grandmother and a great aunt. Coming across the street you got an uncle with five girls and one boy. You come around to our side, you got my father with five boys and one girl, and then you come on the other end, you got cousins. So, we've got all the corners as family. *[01:17:58][184.5]*

Kerry James Reed: *[01:17:59]* Sounds like the entire neighborhood was just your family. *[01:18:00][1.0]*

Harold Hughes: *[01:18:01]* Exactly. Next door was the Thompsons who worked with my father at the Wellington House. Two doors down was the Lloyd-Diggs, who worked at the Wellington House with my father, ok. So, you know, if you got in trouble, believe me, they knew it before you knew you was in trouble. So, yeah. That's how life was coming up. Back then, people cared. Like I said, these days if you say something to somebody's kids these days, man, you got to fight the kids, you got to fight the parents. And the difference that I find out today is this, as I was saying, family history: when I was, let's just say when I was ten, my mother was born in '30, she'd have been 32. My grandmother would have been something like 62, which would have put my great grandmother in her 80s. And I'm saying this to say this, now I have a lineage. Somebody can give me some type of history about what happened, you know. My mother was born in '3, my grandmother was born in 1918. So that would have put my great grandmother 18-something. She might have been in slavery, you know, I don't know when Jim Crow stopped. I do know it lasted a long time in the city of Alexandria, ok. So I had somebody to give me some lessons in life. Today, the mother might be 15. That puts the grandmother early 20s, great grandmama early 40s, great-great grandmamma could be in her 50s. Ain't nobody's seen life. These people haven't even seen integration, and segregation. How much history can they tell you? And all this is the result of integration, and interference from big government. You know like I was saying, the man of the household was with his whole thing was, "I'm the breadwinner." You know, "Look what I brought home." You know, "I'm feeding this family, I'm the man of the house. This is my castle, and I am the king." When big government came in, separation in families. What I mean now, your family starting to break up. Now they're going down to the court systems, getting restraining orders, getting divorces. Now you have to pay alimony and all this. Now you got single family homes. Now here comes big government one more time, and the young girls finding out that having a baby has become a payday. So if I'm getting an X amount of dollars for one child, I can get more each time I have more kids. Now mind you, in order to get this money the fathers who are not paying child support are going to jail. So now you've got young girls who's is getting pregnant and not even knowing who the fathers are. Now the young girls are just running, they're just running wild. And, of course, these young boys, it's an introduction to manhood. They don't know what they're doing. And now here they are 15, forced into fatherhood. At 15, still in school, you know, it's crazy. It become crazy, but that's a direct result of one family homes. I understand that, and I know that a woman can raise young men, or young boys. At a certain age, he needs a man figure around him. A mother can only teach a young boy so much. Just like a father can only teach his daughter so much. I mean, don't get me wrong, I can do the best I can with my daughter, but there are just some things I just don't know about. And I don't care to know about, you know. What can I tell her when she gets of age and she start having these women things happening to her? You know what happens as they get older without me going into all that, I

ain't the one to be talking to them about that. Now, I'm going to tell you, "Call your mama, or see your grandmama. I can't tell you nothing about that. I'll go to the store and buy them for you," you know? *[01:24:59][417.3]*
Kerry James Reed: *[01:25:02]* When did you have your first child? *[01:25:03][1.1]*
Harold Hughes: *[01:25:04]* Oh, I was 20. I was in the Marine Corps, or getting ready to go into Marine Corps. I had my first child as I was out of school, I was in the Marine Corps. I would say '75. *[01:25:27][23.0]*
Kerry James Reed: *[01:25:28]* You'd finished boot camp by that time, right? *[01:25:32][3.9]*
Harold Hughes: *[01:25:32]* Yes. *[01:25:32][0.0]*
Kerry James Reed: *[01:25:33]* What was your MOS [Military Occupational Specialty] coming out to boot? *[01:25:34][1.4]*
Harold Hughes: *[01:25:34]* Communication 2512. *[01:25:35][0.1]*
Kerry James Reed: *[01:25:36]* 2512. When did you go to Okinawa? When were you stationed there? *[01:25:40][4.7]*
Harold Hughes: *[01:25:42]* I went to Okinawa in 1983. *[01:25:43][1.0]*
Kerry James Reed: *[01:25:44]* Ok. *[01:25:44][0.0]*
Harold Hughes: *[01:25:52]* Yeah, when I went in the Marine Corps, Vietnam was winding down. And they had just finished, well, I guess the Tet Offensive had just finished, or what they called it. Anyway, that's what started it, but it was winding down. They was removing the last troops out of Vietnam, ok. And let's put like this, the last combat troops were coming out, And I was in boot camp at Parris Island. And so they gave us what is called the Firewatch Ribbon [National Defense Service Medal]. Because it was during that era that the end of the war was still going on, so they gave us Firewatch Ribbons. Most of them got PCS [Permanent Change of Station] out to different States. Not me, I got stationed on Parris Island. So they gave me a check for $1. True story, they gave me a check for $1 to go across what they called the parade, there. Now I'm personnel rather than a troop. I didn't like that. I didn't like being on Pariss Island, even though I loved the troops. When I walked past the troops, they used to salute us. I loved that part, but I wanted to get off Pariss Island. It was the worst duty station I ever been on. And [unintelligible] of course. Then they sent me down to North Carolina, and I got PCS to Cherry Point [Air Station] to the air wing rather than to Camp Lejeune to be a Grunt. So, you know, "Swinging with the wing." Ok, so, I spent ten years there. After the first five years, I got order to Okinawa. Well the story of Okinawa was it was real hot like New Bern [City, North Carolina] or Cherry Point, however you want to call it. And we got on a Flying Tiger [helicopter]. We was flying to Camp Hansen in Okinawa. We had to refuel in in Anchorage, Alaska, mid-winter. And mind you, when we lived in Cherry Point, you know we got our summer gear on. So we're talking short shorts, short sleeved shirts. And when the refiller hit the fuselage on a plane, so then the whole plane had to be checked. So we had to debark from the plane, and if you ever been on the military base, you know I ain't nothing there but the the terminal. And I'm not talking about nothing like Dulles [Airport] or nothing like that. And like I said, ain't much out there but separate runway and a terminal. If you've ever been in the military, you know, everything is called a, "hurry, hurry, wait, wait." And usually you were waiting on that flight line, with your packs on and everything else waiting to see if you're going to move or not. 9 out of 10 times you're going back to your barracks. But, of course, there's no barracks for us because we're not stationed there. So they put us in the, in a terminal and like I said, mid winter and we got shorts on and a bunch of Marines, about 120 Marines just sitting around doing nothing. It's actually like a

devil's playground. [Laughs]. So, somebody had this bright idea. I guess one of the guys in the terminal told us that there was a liquor store about five miles down the road. And it was crazy to be in Anchorage, Alaska, seeing a bunch of Marines walking down there with shorts on, headed to the liquor store. And, well, we did and we got back and we weren't cold no more. So next day, we flew into Hansen, which is the air force base in Korea. Six months later, here we come with some more orders. We have been transported to Korea, cold weather training for six months. So we floated, I was aboard the USS Dayton, Ohio, flat bottom LPD: land platform deck. I had been on a USS George Washington on the Potomac River going to Marshall Hall. Which is the name of the park, Marshall Hall. So, I'm ready now, you know what I mean? I've been up and down Potomac River plenty of time, you know, I ain't gonna get seasick. Well, believe me, in the middle of the ocean on a flat bottom, it's a whole lot different then going up to an amusement park on a dinner boat. It was fun taking the jeep, running through the water and going up on that ramp and going down to the bottom of that LPD. When that LPD, nice and smooth when I left port, when they got to the middle of the ocean, and that wind got to blowing, and the seas start to swelling, when you at the bottom of the boat, you really don't feel it that bad, but you can feel it. Because it feels like its going north and south. But when you get up on the deck and you really see it and you don't see no land, you don't see no lights, you don't see nothing but rain and water, you understand what they're talking about now, you know what I mean? I don't care. The first thing I thought about was that the ship was going down. That's when I realized that the safest man aboard a ship is a man who can't swim. Because first thing he's going to do is he going to drown. He ain't going to suffer. But if you out there and you think you can swim or you know you can swim, you going to fight it. You're going to hold on for dear life. But where are you going to swim to? I mean, you're going to go down sooner or later. And that's a realization that I realized. I mean, what's the point of learning how to swim or being able to swim? Ain't nothing to swim to, you know. Hard pill to swallow. But then again, so we got on to Korea and we went to Busan, to Osan, to Suwon to Seoul. And to make a story short, we got there, we were outside in the snow, right outside an Air Force NCO[non-commissioned officer] club, and mind you I'm a sergeant. But I can't go in to the NCO club, because Marines are not allowed to go in indoors with camouflage on. They got this strict code, UCMJ [Uniform Code of Military Justice] has a strict code that you can't even do this in cammies [camouflage] and stuff like that. So we're outside for six months in the snow. I was so glad to leave that place I didn't know what to do. So that was my life in the Marine Corps. So, we've been to childhood, who had been to school, been to college, been to the Marine Corps. Now back home - *[01:35:04][552.9]*

Kerry James Reed: *[01:35:06]* Really quick, how long were you in the Marines? *[01:35:08][1.6]*

Harold Hughes: *[01:35:08]* 15 years. *[01:35:08][0.4]*

Kerry James Reed: *[01:35:09]* 15 years. Ok. *[01:35:09][0.1]*

Harold Hughes: *[01:35:09]* So now I'm back home in Alexandria, and I'm realizing that Alexandria has changed. And what I mean by change is that, when I left here, I knew about this vicious circle, about the white people coming from the suburbs into the inner city. And then the Blacks moving from the inner city to the suburbs, which was a vicious circle. But what I didn't realize was that when the Blacks were moving out, going to the suburbs, they were selling their parents' homes that the parents had purchased and were supposed to be kept in the family. But the siblings were squabbling and fighting over the mom's home on the dad's home, and, 'I want my money and I want it now,' and all this is going on. So we selling these $35,000 homes that our parents bought,

and now these $35,000 homes that were affordable are now being turned into $100,000 homes. And now you cannot afford to move back to the inner city, you know. Now those $100,000 homes are being turned, sold, and they come back to million dollar homes. So now we are really outsourced. So, what I'm saying is, remember that I was talking about my childhood the projects? They are gone. We played over at the school. It's gone. We went to the recreation centers, Pendleton St and Charles Houston, they're gone. We went to see movies at the theater for a quarter, with the Charms suckers and all that, and the Sugar Daddies and the Sugar Babies and all that. They're gone. Bowling alley, skating rink that was down the Berg. They are gone. What I'm telling you is, that everything from my childhood or my life in the city of Alexandria is gone. No longer exists. The only three things that I hear, Saint Joseph Church still remains, the high school that I graduated from is now a middle school, and the Lodge, we're talking about Alexandra Lodge, which was the spot to be during segregation. That's it. So, Alexandria isn't Alexandria per se. My whole childhood has been erased. You know, so that's what that was about. And now that I mentioned the Lodge I'm going to cut it short. Give you a little history on the Lodge. The Lodge was built December 3rd, 1903. Now the historical part about the Lodge was that, remember that we talked about segregated Alexandria, now we're talking about the military was also segregated, ok. Now you had, and I go back and use the terminology that was used back then, was that the colored troops were stationed at Fort Belvoir. Now remember, Mount Vernon and everything around Mount Vernon is pure, it's lily white. So the colored troops are not welcome. So the only thing the colored troops could do was get on the AB&W, which was called at that time Alexandria, Barcroft and Washington [Transit Company], come down Washington Street, get off and come to Alexandria Lodge. Now there was a need for what is called the United Service Organizations. So the Alexandria Lodge renamed the dance hall to USO [United Service Organizations], and that's where the color troops used to come to, which is history. It's in the books that Alexandria Lodge number 48 was the first USO that was solely for the colored troops on the East coast. When that happened, what the brothers did was that they went on Friday nights, when the troops came they would stop the husbands from coming into the lodge, but they will allow the wives to come in. So they didn't want, you know, because if you're a soldier you here and you lonely by yourself. And you going to come over here and ask my wife to dance? Me and you got problems. So, what they did if there was single women or something, they let them come in and mingle with the troops. That's how they got through that situation. And when the lodge got too small for all that. And so now when you go back, you tell the other colored troops about this place that we're going and having fun. When that got too small day they built a lodge on Pendleton St. They built a building that was solely USO. It's not a fraternal organization that has only one room dedicated. This building here, which was Pendleton St, was solely designated and built to be a USO, to service the troops. And when the troops stopped coming, they just turned it into a recreation center. So that's how that happened. That's history. That's how that happened. So, now we are up to today. *[01:41:43][393.7]*

Kerry James Reed: *[01:41:44]* Really quick, I want to get into the Elks Lodge, but you said something really fascinating earlier when you talked about coming back to Alexandria after being in the Marine Corps. You mentioned that you no longer recognize the city of your youth, essentially. So coming back, seeing that the city had changed so much, how did that how did that make you feel, knowing that the city was not as you remembered it? *[01:42:07][23.0]*

Harold Hughes: *[01:42:08]* I tell you, this is how I remember what happened. I came back from California and I call myself, "Let's take a trip to the city for nostalgic reasons." And I remember

coming down Patrick St, and I looked and I said, "Where's the projects at?" They are gone. And so I rode even farther down. And then I got this sickness thing I'm feeling in my stomach, you know. And I realized, this is not the Alexandria that I know. This Alexandria here is void of everything I've ever done. I don't belong to this Alexandria. I have no part in this Alexandria. It has effectively erased my whole childhood, teenage years. And there's nothing here that brings me back to Alexandria, you know. I had to learn it all over again, you know, as an adult, and it's just not the same, you know. *[01:43:37][88.6]*

Kerry James Reed: *[01:43:41]* There's almost a really tragic irony to that, I think. Because you mentioned earlier that, you know, you were not taught Black history growing up. And then when you came back to Alexandria, the Black history that you had experience was erased. *[01:43:56][15.0]*

Harold Hughes: *[01:43:57]* Correct. It's [sighs] I don't know. I mean, genocide is what it felt like, you know, and I know, you know, with time, everything changes, but not that drastic, you know. We weren't, as a child, we weren't allowed to see but so much of oppression during segregation, you stayed within your own territory. So, a lot of Alexandria you weren't allowed to venture to, you know. Now, mind you, besides the projects uptown, there was the projects in the Berg. Kind of crazy, because, you know, the projects in the Berg is where the police department was. The police department was effectively sitting in the middle of the projects. You know, the jail house and everything else was it was still there. Even with that old jailhouse, if you go down there you can still see on that wall that the jail had, you know. It's part of history that they cannot erase. But yet, everything else with time, success, improvement, however you want to say it, it just erases everything. Nothing left. You know the statue that used to be down here? That Appomattox statue is gone. The, black and white water fountains gone. So, I'm describing what is effectively known as Old Alexandria versus modern day Alexandria, you know. Like I said, I witnessed the turn of the century with Patrick St and Henry St as a dirt road become Patrick St and Henry St North and South, to Patrick St, and now Henry St, you know. Man, it's a drastic change in the city of Alexandria. It's a drastic change. And that effectively separated segregation from integration. During segregation, that pocket of people that I'm talking about and the city that I knew would have been in place. Now because of integration came the separation of family, separation of values, to the improvement to the city, to the erasement of memories of childhood, teenage or whatever. They call it improvements, but at what cost? I mean, my childhood memories or whoever's childhood memories are just those. It's just like me, I could pack up and move to Birmingham, Alabama, and don't know nobody and never been there. Would have been just like coming back to Alexandria. I don't know the place. I really don't know anybody in the place. You know, everybody who I knew is in the suburbs, or in Woodbridge or in Dumfries or in Fredericksburg. They're somewhere else. When I come to Alexandria and when I speak, or I go to the schools, I don't know nobody, you know. The families that I know, like Richard Williams, who you'll be speaking to later on, his family I knew very well. I know his wife, his sons. Matter of fact, you know, I knew his family. They are gone, you know, they moved out to DC. Ricky, his son, played for, well, should have been on the team from Remember The Titans [T.C. Williams High School football team], along with my brother that year, along with Petey. All of us played together at GW before the K6221 [Plan to integrate Alexandria Public Schools, you know. So that plan came along as a direct result of the strikes that we did because we were in school, you know, back in those day we striked about anything. So we had plates and things, and they decided they were going to put it in a compactor. And they were going to change from plates, to paper plates. Which now you are dealing with portions instead of

meals. The meals changed, the meat loaf and all this to, a little of this, to this processed food, you know, French fries and a hamburger, or a hot dog. You know what I mean? Versus what we was getting chicken and meatloaf and stuff like that, fish. That's what we was getting on the regular plates. But then they went a la carte, and that caused a whole strife within a whole system. And then during that time, they was allowing us to go off campus to Burger King to buy what you wanted. Then they had Al Steak House down the street, they had the greatest steaks this side of the Mississippi for as I was concerned. And when we went on strike, they actually, shut the campus down. *[01:51:18][441.2]*

Kerry James Reed: *[01:51:20]* When was the strike? *[01:51:21][0.7]*

Harold Hughes: *[01:51:21]* This was 1971. I was a senior. I'm the last class, ok. So this would've been '70-'71, because 'Remember the Titans' would have been September of '71. Yeah. And they would have graduated in '72. So that was a strike. And, it effectively shut the school system, shut the campus down, and you were forced to buy from the cafeteria. So what we did, we went back to what we always known. We started brown bagging it again, you know, because, like I said, well, maybe I didn't say it, cause the first, second, and third grade at Charles Houston they had no...well...I never knew what a cafeteria was in the school system until about the fourth grade. Because my first, second and third grade, no school I went to had a cafeteria. We effectively went to school, you sat in a chair, a desk, and you stayed in that one particular desk all day. Unlike today where the kids change classes, when I was coming up the teachers rotated, not us, the teachers. So now you're sitting that this desk and, you got your lunch under - no, in your desk because we had them tables that you lift up on your desk and you put in books and all that and your lunch in there being that there were no cafeteria. And when I went, something had happened, they was starting to build onto Charles Houston to make a cafeteria. So we got bused to Lyles-Crouch [Elementary School], ok. I'm not talking about the brick building, Lyles-Crouch. Lyles-Crouch had a green wooden structure that sat at the other end, and that's where we went. And during lunchtime there was, at the time we called them teacher's pets, there was a student that was picked that would effectively go around, collect all the milk money or ice cream money and go across the street to the Chamber of Commerce, buy the milk and ice cream, come back and hand it off. And you ate at your desk. So, that was life back then, you know. So all we had was those brown bags. That's why they called them the Greasy Brown bags. Because you brought what you had from dinner that night, or you either had peanut butter and jelly, or spam, or baloney with no cheese. If you were lucky, you had cheese with no baloney. And those who had it, had baloney and cheese. [Chuckles]. *[01:54:56][215.0]*

Kerry James Reed: *[01:54:59]* So going back to the Elks Lodge, you mentioned the history of it. What prompted you to become involved in the Elks Lodge when you came back? *[01:55:08][8.9]*

Harold Hughes: *[01:55:10]* I joined the Elks Lodge in 1990. *[01:55:11][1.3]*

Kerry James Reed: *[01:55:12]* Ok. *[01:55:12][0.0]*

Harold Hughes: *[01:55:14]* That's as an adult. But before that I was in a juvenile. Now what I mean by that, the juvenile ran from ages 6 to 17. So my parents were members in the Elks. So we are talking about me being in the Elks as maybe an 8 year old until about as long as I was in a Boy Scouts. So we're talking about that until maybe a sophomore in high school. And remember then when I got out of high school, I went to college. So then Elks wasn't part of my life then. And then when I went to the Marine Corps, Elks wasn't part of my life. When I came back, I got back into it, ok. So I got back into the Elk then. So my great grandmother was an Elk. My grandmothers were

Elks. My great aunts were Elks. My father was an Elk. His brother was an Elk. It was a family thing. All my mother's sisters were Elks. My mother was an Elk. My mother's one of the few Elks in the city of Alexandria that transitioned. And what I mean by that was that she was a juvenile. When she got of age most of them went about their own business. But my mother went over and became a daughter. So there was no gap between juvenile and being a daughter. She was one of the few ones that did that. I came back and I progressed from a member all the way up. For the last five years I've been the Exalted Ruler. Which I gave up this year and now I've been an officer in the state for five years, and now I'm getting ready to run for the higher position as president of the Past Grand Exalted Rulers Council, yeah. So, if you had asked me years ago would I ever be the Exalted Ruler, that means the number one man in charge of the lodge over here, I would have told you, "no," you know. But, I am now. And some say I might be the face of it because I am a historian over there, ok. I'm one of the longest active members. There is a guy that we have who's 90 years old that I pick up every meet night and take him. So he is the most active, oldest, active member that we have. And then I believe I'm next, to be truthful with you. You know, I've been there for 37 years, you know. So. *[01:58:48][213.3]*

Kerry James Reed: *[01:58:51]* How did you come to be the historian for The Elks? That was something that happened before you were Exalted Ruler, correct? *[01:58:56][5.3]*

Harold Hughes: *[01:58:57]* Yes. Sitting around with history books, going through the files, listening to the older brothers talk. They died off. No one else cared enough, or wasn't taking interest in learning the history of the Lodge. I wrote a compacted history where I went all the way back, where I read how they first formed and where. And I found out who was the first Exalted Rulers and who was the first administration because they started back in 1903, over here on what is now Fayette and Cameron St at Odd Fellows Hall. The building that you see now at 227 North Henry St was actually two separate farmhouses. They bought them. They were two shacks and they combined them. They were facing North-South. Now it faces East-West. They're kind of strange because, here we go again, they turned the building. And what was crazy about it, it had, what would I call that? It had a, not a basement as we know today, I don't know what they was calling him back then. Well, I guess you call it a sub basement. Well, I don't know what they call them back then, but when you go on the ground and there is this, I guess it might have been a shelter or whatever, you know. And so they turned their building from North-South to East-West, but it sits on the same platform, you know. And as they out grew the structure they added on to it. And as I said, they kept on adding and then from 1904 when they moved over here. And they added, in 1935, an addition. And then in 1942, because of the war and the need for a place for the colored troops to go, they added on another addition. And that's the way you see it today. It was, like I said, it was the only place that people of color could go. *[02:02:28][210.6]*

Kerry James Reed: *[02:02:28]* Yeah. *[02:02:28][0.0]*

Harold Hughes: *[02:02:29]* So when the marches on Washington took place. And, of course, the caravan and everything came down Washington St to go over to hear Dr. Martin Luther King speak. A lot of them broke down on Washington St, and the brothers would come down here and take money out of their own pockets and help people with flat tires, gas or whatever. If they couldn't help them that night, they will bring them back to the lodge to house them. And then the next day they would send them on their way or they would drive them over. So that's what was happening back there. Now at that time mind you, there was 300 brothers and 300 daughters. That place was 600 members strong. Today in that same building, I think we have 70 members strong. Because, like

any other fraternal organization or any organization, young people don't care anymore about joining things like that with any structure. So we have a tendency to be higher up in age. Dying off. And so now you are down to this cluster of brothers that came in when I came in. And that's where it stops there, because if you, lets just say we go to a convention right now, this will be [unintelligible], you go to a convention and you ask everybody 20 or under to stand up, nobody's going to stand up. Then you go to 30, maybe you get 1, then you say 40, you might get 10, then you get 50, you might get 20, then you say 60 you might get 40 people standing up. Now, when you hit 70, that's where a whole heap of them going to be standing. And then when you hit 80, you'll see it starting to reverse again. Going back down to the, maybe 100 and then you get 90, if they can stand up, you might get 50. So what I'm saying is that the age bracket that members are these days are going to be between 60 and 70, you know. And that comes with the linage dying off, direct effect of nobody passing on oral history, direct result because most members came out of families, you know, mothers and fathers and their sisters and their brothers, and then their kids came. I had a daughter that was an Elk but she stopped. So mines stopped with me. There's nobody behind me that is an Elk in my family. So that's how that went. It was a family thing, word of mouth. It was an honor to be one. But, you know, by people moving on, moving out of Alexandria, moving to the outskirts they effectively kill the membership in Alexandria. *[02:06:35][245.8]*

Kerry James Reed: *[02:06:38]* You mentioned to me previously that you were able to get the Elks Lodge registered on the National Historic Register. *[02:06:45][6.5]*

Harold Hughes: *[02:06:45]* Yes. *[02:06:45][0.0]*

Kerry James Reed: *[02:06:46]* Yeah. So, why did you do that? Why was that important to you? *[02:06:51][5.3]*

Harold Hughes: *[02:06:54]* Well, it became important because I actually saw what was happening. I saw these million dollar homes being built all the way around it. Then the city came there one day, we had a meeting with the city, and they told me if we would allow them to tear the building down and keep the facade, which is the front, they would remodel the building from the ground up. They would put some housing on top of the building. They would pay us for doing that, and they would give us the building back and the mortgage free of charge. Well, that didn't seem reasonable to me at all. Because anything that sounds that good, gotta be something wrong. So we turned it down. Then the guys next door from Paisanos [Pizza Restaurant] sent a lawyer over there, and offered us $1 million for the building. And just the building itself is worth 2.7 million. Not even talking about the land that it sits on. Like I said, the building is 120 years old. So now I'm saying to myself, pretty soon code enforcement is going to start coming over here because I know the infrastructure needs work. Anything that's 100 and something years old going to need work. So, they're going to start coming in here finding nicks and things and try to effectively shut the building down. So, me and Brother Miller decided, 'lets do something about it. Let's go down to City Hall and see if we can get some help.' I actually didn't even know anything about Historic Preservation for buildings. We thought we was going to go down here and get one of these black plaques from Alexandria. And when we got down there, we had to go to the Office of Lands and Deeds. So we went there and we wanted to see the plaque for 227 N Henry St. Well, there is none. Not only is there's no plaque for 227 N Henry St, 227 N Henry St is not even in the Office of Lands and Deeds. So we spoke to this lady over here at the Christ Church named Melanie. Mr. Miller works over there with with her. So we sat there and we talked to her and she advised us to call Richmond [Virignia]. So called Richmond, and Richmond told us, "Mr. Hughes, we are aware that there's a 227 N Henry St in

Alexandria. We're very aware of that, but we can't tell you what's in it." I said, "Ain't none of this making no sense." So I contribute the lack of paperwork, and the city being because of segregation. And Richmond don't know because Alexanderia never reported to them. And, of course, they were segregated also. They just didn't care, about any Black establishments or anything else, because if you don't see them, you ain't got to help them. So that means the city ain't got to spend the money on them, ok. So now we decided when we found out that the [unintelligble], Code Enforcement did come because when people start moving around, moving in to their houses around the lodge, of course, for the last, hundred years, we always rented the building out on weekends, Friday nights and Saturday nights. That's how you make your money to keep the building going, for dances and playing music and stuff. Now here come the complaints from the city. And so we, like I told them, 'when y'all moved here, this building was here. You had to know what was in this building. And now, because you bought this home here, you don't want to hear the noise. Or you don't want us there,' ok. So now the building is in trouble of either being taken or being taken by right of way or right domain or whatever. So I got in contact with the Preservation Society because a building this old has got to be something, and it's the last venue of colored Alexandria. And they agreed. *[02:12:59][365.0]*

Kerry James Reed: *[02:13:01]* So how do you think that the Elks Lodge reflects Black history in Alexandria? *[02:13:08][6.9]*

Harold Hughes: *[02:13:13]* Being that basically it's the only venue that's left in Alexandria, except of course the Black library resource thing that we have down there, the library that we went to when we was in school. [Robert Robertson Library, now the Black History Museum] Because we couldn't go to another library because of segregation. The hub colored Alexandria was in inside the Elks, with people like James Brown and Ray Charles, basically part of the Chitlin circuit was right there. We still have pictures, and we still have the fliers and bands that were posted around Alexandria when Ray and them came. We have pictures of the soldiers dancing in the lodge and things like that. So, it is actually the historical hub of Alexandria, you know. Actually, there's nowhere else you can go that's going to depict the lifestyle of colored Alexandria except there, you know. It's basically the same way that it was, it looks the same way that it did in the '40s to be truthful with you. That's why I was so important to get it on the Virginia Historic Preservation Society for endangered buildings. So now, no matter what happens, I kind of secured the building. One thing, I must say that they kept, when I was coming, in Elkdom they kept hollering about grandfather clause. Come to find out when I did a little more research. They actually didn't understand what the grandfather clause was. Like these windows in this particular building right here: if one of these windows break you have to go downtown and get permission to replace them with that. But you have to replace them with the same type of glass that that is. Well, that's what they thought over there in Alexandria Lodge, but that's not a true statement. There was no code for that particular building because that building did not exist as far as Alexandria was concerned. They thought that the grandfather clause also allowed them to stay open until 1:00 at night, that's also not a true statement. That grandfather clause was something that somebody just thought of and threw out there, and has no preference to the City of Alexandria at all. I looked that up, because last year they were talking about code violations for noise on the weekends. But that was just a disgruntled neighbor complaining, because code enforcement came down there one night and he sat outside in his vehicle with his meter running to see what the decimals were that was coming outside the building. And what he established was that there is no way it possible that the complaining neighbor who was on Henry St, effectively in front of the

building, and the auditorium is almost on Patrick St. So that what was going on and so now we try to be good neighbors, and we kind of have to sort of turn that down and cut the hours of when we know the public got kids so we don't do Sundays and stuff like that anymore. So that's what's going on. Because they want the building, they want us gone. And it's just that simple. That building is worth more torn down than it is standing. And being that it is on the Preservation for Endangered Buildings makes it a little harder for somebody to take it. *[02:18:10][297.2]*

Kerry James Reed: *[02:18:11]* Yeah. Ok Mr. Hughes, we've been talking for a little over two hours now. [Harold laughs]This has been an absolute pleasure hearing you talk, but I would like to move on to a little bit about Douglass, if that's all right? *[02:18:28][17.2]*

Harold Hughes: *[02:18:29]* Ok. *[02:18:29][0.0]*

Kerry James Reed: *[02:18:29]* So you mentioned to me, it's very early on in our conversation this morning about how you when you first saw Douglass it was flooded, and you took pictures. *[02:18:40][10.3]*

Harold Hughes: *[02:18:40]* Yes. *[02:18:40][0.0]*

Kerry James Reed: *[02:18:40]* And you put them online. Can you can you describe what it was like going to Douglass and seeing it flooded? *[02:18:48][7.2]*

Harold Hughes: *[02:18:50]* Well, when I went down there, and this was about five years ago, five years ago I believe it was. And I saw it and I looked and I just couldn't believe what I was seeing. Because it was a drastic difference from what I had seen from childhood coming up and knowing that the improvements in Alexandria that had taken place and why this particular graveyard was basically abandoned, ok. Now mind you, Coleman is another Black cemetery, but it's slanted, it's on a hill, and I know that the bottom of the hill floods, has always flooded. But this particular one [Douglass] is basically flat or was flat all the way across. And it just looked like nobody cared. And when I talk about flooding, I'm talking about flooding. I'm to my waist deep in water, sitting in the middle of the graveyard, the cemetery. It basically had, ok, if we are talking football fields, we are talking about the 50 [yard line] to 40 [yard line] is on both sides and then 30 [yard line] is on both sides, down to the 20 [yard line] on both sides covered in water. And I'm talking about water that you ain't gonna walk in. I mean, you know, and it's just there and you see that it's, I tell you what, it's higher than the graves. The headstones are underwater, you know, that's how deep it is underwater. And, you know, people are hesitant to walk in cemeteries anyway. And you sure ain't going to walk in one that's flooded that deep. Because first thing you're going to think it might give way. And the headstones are down. And nobody cares. That was my first impression. That's why I took the picture. And that's why I posted it, because I found it disgraceful. *[02:21:23][153.4]*

Kerry James Reed: *[02:21:24]* Yeah. So then when Mr. Mike Johnson then contacted you about the Douglass initiative and you found out that somebody, it might not have been the City at that time, but somebody did care and somebody was aware, how did that make you feel? *[02:21:38][14.1]*

Harold Hughes: *[02:21:41]* It made me aware that my thinking was off, ok. That there that was a process that had begun and I just happened upon it. And I guess by me posting it on Facebook gave it more awareness to a lot more people. Because right after that Mike contacted me, there were in the process, of holding a rally at the grave site, at the cemetery, excuse me. And I tell you, at that time I didn't even know it was called Douglass, to be a truthful with you. I thought it was part of Bethel. And so when he told me that, of course I had told everybody in the Elks that we were going to go over there and we were going to participate in this rally or we're going to do something about this cemetery on the south side. But most people thought I was talking about Bethel because they

were not aware of Douglass. But they had that terrible rain that day and I didn't make it. But Mike and them made it, and they stood out there and the rally wasn't what it was supposed to have been. And then the next time they had something happened we came and we participated. Then I got engaged with the, what was it, the church. Yeah, with the minister down there. Then they had what they would call, there was a shareholders or whatever that means, somebody has a stakeholders meeting. It means that you have somebody, part of your family is buried there, and you care something about that, about Douglass. And that's when I learned that: who was buried there, how long they been burned there, and how many people were supposedly have been burned there. And that's when I realized that what I had seen as a youth coming on up until I seen these homes there, I believe I'm right, you know. I believe I'm right because, as I said, because my vivid memory of the south side was that the railroad, the trains were parked there, the coal trains were parked there. There was a lumberyard there which caught fire and burned down. And that portion of land led to the graveyard, ok. And what I was so enthused about the graveyard was that as a youth, I used to walk down to that brick wall which was the military graveyard down there and I never ventured in, you know. With segregation again, you know what I mean? You learn the do's and don'ts about that. But never seen a whole bunch of people down there at Douglass, laying flowers or anything else. So, when I became of age and my mother could no longer make it that's when I started, like I said, I started doing the flowers. That's how I knew that, something was going on down there, and it wasn't right. But of course, you don't know who to talk to because nobody's taken ownership of it, and it had been going on for years. So, you know, it's just like everything else, you see and you don't see, you know. I ain't got nothing to do with it, ain't my business, you know. Now, of course, you wish you had said something a long time ago. And I guess that me being there, at the right time and taking the picture and posting it on the social media got me more involved in it and here we are today. *[02:26:34][293.0]*

Kerry James Reed: *[02:26:36]* So, you mentioned that when you took it back to the Elks Lodge, they all thought you were referring to referring to Bethel. When you describe the Douglass initiative to people who aren't involved now, how do you describe it? What do you say is going on with it? *[02:26:53][16.4]*

Harold Hughes: *[02:26:53]* Well, I give it to them raw. I tell them that we are talking about maybe one of the oldest graveyards in the City of Alexandria for people of color. Most people think you're talking about Coleman, which is down there behind Mount Vernon Hospital, ok. I say, "no. I'm talking about the graveyard that's out there by Bethel." Because a lot of people don't even know about Bethel, you know. It's just a patch of land there with headstones on it, that's what people say. Like I say, I'm 71 years old and I've never seen anyone buried there. So it's not that it's, unlike Bethel where you see people being buried there all the time. So, to most people it's just a cemetery out there that nothing happens, no one's being buried there. You rarely ever see anybody out there. And if you do, they're walking their dog or they are coming from somewhere else you know. Or they might be coming from the, like I said, the white graveyard that is fenced off from this portion. But there's rarely ever, until recently because of their initiative, you see anybody out there. And so I guess that plays a part into the condition, the encroachment, and everything that's, or lack of caring that has happened out there, you know. I mean, the overgrowth, the flooding, the headstones falling down, and then you're talking about, the trees where the giant size branches done fell off, you know what I mean? Knocking over the headstones and stuff like that, you know. It's just a lack of caring, I can say, because if nobody owns it, nobody's going to spend the money taking care of it, and

nobody really cares. That has a direct effect on the Black community. Something that we should have been doing and caring about years ago. Make sure that it's up to code. Make sure that somebody is cutting the grass. Making sure that when these old headstones of fall over, all the flooding take place, somebody should be out there, draining the thing or whatever. So, that's what I'm talking about. You got all these cemeteries: you got that military gravesite out there, you got the white graveyard out there, you got Bethel across the street. Everybody's is being manicured there and taken care of, and then you've got the most historic gravesite out there, nobody even knows exists. I mean, because if you, right now, if you walk down the street and ask somebody, "where is Douglas Cemetery?" Anybody going to tell you? You ask them, "where is Bethel?" They can tell you right off hand. I tell you, you can walk in the Black neighborhood and ask them where is Bethel. Where is darkness, they don't know. *[02:30:57][244.5]*

Kerry James Reed: *[02:30:59]* What do you think that or how do you think that forgetting about the cemetery, what effect has that had on the Black community in Alexandria to forget about Douglass? *[02:31:12][12.1]*

Harold Hughes: *[02:31:13]* Well, let's just put it like this: it is not the fact that they forgot, they just don't know. And as I say, the people who did know died off. And with your grandparents and people who are old are dying off went a whole lot of the history. And if you ain't got nobody that you know was burned out there, why would you even go out there? It ain't like we, like I said, it ain't like we forgot, we just don't know. And it's a shame that we don't know that. And as I've said, it ain't a part of Black history, you know. I'd bet you that if you ask these days, they don't know who Frederick Douglass is. That's just the world today, you know. You got this grave out here named after him and it's, 'who is Frederick Douglass? I mean, some people can't tell you who John Fitzgerald Kennedy is or Martin Luther King. They can't tell you, you know. Hey, it is what it is, you know. Look, 'I live on Patrick St. I can't tell you what happened on Henry St.' And that's how the day is, you know. And just like me, like I say, this particular grave is on the south side. When I was younger we didn't venture down there. So, the only reason why I knew about it, and like I said, I didn't know what it was called, was because my mother's brother is buried there. And she went to place flowers on it, and of course she never called it by name, as I can remember. She said, "I'm going to Sonny's gravesite." That's what's her brother's name, Sonny, you know. And I know about Coleman because her mother was buried out there, and everybody know where Coleman is because it's still an active cemetery. And so is Bethel. But like I said, nobody's being buried at Douglass. And so therefore, nobody even knows where it's at. *[02:33:52][158.8]*

Kerry James Reed: *[02:33:55]* Have you seen the archeologists doing work at Douglas? *[02:33:58][3.3]*

Harold Hughes: *[02:33:59]* No. *[02:33:59][0.0]*

Kerry James Reed: *[02:34:00]* Oh, you haven't observed any of that? *[02:34:00][0.9]*

Harold Hughes: *[02:34:01]* No. I've heard a lot of talk. *[02:34:04][2.6]*

Kerry James Reed: *[02:34:04]* Ok. *[02:34:04][0.0]*

Harold Hughes: *[02:34:06]* No. Matter of fact, I go down there frequently because my mother's buried at Bethel, so, I do go down there quite often. And I haven't seen anything. I've seen, last time I went down there, there was a sign down there speaking to the initiative. Right there where the sign about Douglass Cemetery is that had a lot of signs at the bottom of it. You wouldn't really notice it it if you're not looking, you know. I haven't really, you know, I never paid any attention to the sign itself where it says Douglas, you know. So, that's our fault. And I just think of it like that, that's our

fault. And that's what it is, that's just our fault. And, you know, if you don't know, you don't know. It's a shame that we don't know. *[02:35:22][75.2]*
Kerry James Reed: *[02:35:25]* So, the only family member that you're aware of that's buried at Douglass is your mother's brother, Sonny, correct? *[02:35:32][6.5]*
Harold Hughes: *[02:35:33]* My mother brother and a cousin. *[02:35:35][2.2]*
Kerry James Reed: *[02:35:35]* And a cousin. *[02:35:36][0.2]*
Harold Hughes: *[02:35:36]* Name is Dixon. Matter of fact, Sonny is in the, well, he used to be in the middle. See? Here we go again. *[02:35:44][8.3]*
Kerry James Reed: *[02:35:45]* Yeah, yeah. *[02:35:45][0.3]*
[02:35:46] He's by the tree, and Candice Dixon is on the side by the road. They're in the same row, ok. But she's actually near the road or the driveway. So I've got two people out there that I know of. That's all I know of. *[02:36:12][25.8]*
Kerry James Reed: *[02:36:13]* Did you know of your cousin when you were a child as well? *[02:36:16][3.2]*
Harold Hughes: *[02:36:17]* No. *[02:36:17][0.0]*
Kerry James Reed: *[02:36:18]* When did you learn about your cousin? *[02:36:19][0.8]*
Harold Hughes: *[02:36:21]* Right before my mother passed. *[02:36:21][0.7]*
Kerry James Reed: *[02:36:22]* Ok. *[02:36:22][0.0]*
Kerry James Reed: *[02:36:23]* Right before my mother passed. I saw it and I said, "Is that? Candy's grave." And she told me, "No, that's Candy's older sister who passed during birth." So she was buried there you know. All I knew was about my uncle being buried there. And then, you know, the only reason when I go out there today, because of the difference and the size of it [Sonny's grave], I'll just go to the tree and look for the brick wall. *[02:37:06][43.4]*
Kerry James Reed: *[02:37:07]* Yeah. *[02:37:07][0.0]*
Harold Hughes: *[02:37:08]* That's how I find it. *[02:37:09][0.8]*
Kerry James Reed: *[02:37:11]* So, you mentioned that you're, I think it was grandfather, built that concrete wall around your uncle's grave. So clearly your grandfather paid a great deal of attention to his son's gravesite to take care of it the way he did. What does it mean to you that, you know, there is renewed attention to Douglas, then? That people are starting to, at least, try to take care of these gravesites now, even if they haven't done so in the past? *[02:37:43][32.4]*
Harold Hughes: *[02:37:44]* I think it's a wonderful thing myself, you know. Like I say, I see that my grandfather's era, they paid attention to it, you know. And sometimes I wonder why he built that cement wall around it. I don't know if it's because of the water or because of the conditions or because he wanted, that's how he could find it. That's how my mother always described it to me. "And when you go to Sonny's grave you'll look for the cement wall that daddy built around it," you know. And that's how I found it, you know. Harold Oliver Williams [Sonny], 1936. So, yeah. I mean, I don't know: was it to keep people out, keep people in, I'm not sure, you know. Or was that a distinct marker to find it. And, you know, and I believe that was the it was the distinct market to find it, yeah. And now my other theory was that during that time he might have lined his grave with cement, you know. I thought about that too, you know, rather than just put the, I don't know, in 1931 with the wooden caskets I would imagine, just sitting in grave with there, I don't know. But it I'm pretty sure that it goes deeper than just the top perimeter. I think that may have been an encasement for the whole grave. I'm not sure, you know. I ain't digging it up to find out that either.

so, you know. But he had his reasons like, you know. And I'm pretty sure that is either was an aisle marker or that whole grave itself is cement. *[02:40:09][145.4]*
Kerry James Reed: *[02:40:12]* When was your most recent visit to Douglas? *[02:40:14][2.0]*
Harold Hughes: *[02:40:14]* Last week. *[02:40:15][0.3]*
Kerry James Reed: *[02:40:15]* Last week? *[02:40:16][0.3]*
Harold Hughes: *[02:40:16]* Yeah. *[02:40:16][0.0]*
Kerry James Reed: *[02:40:17]* Going to see your cousin and your uncle? *[02:40:17][0.0]*
Harold Hughes: *[02:40:19]* No, I went, I was going to see my mother. My mother is buried back at Bethel. And whenever I go see her, I always look over and say, "hey, Sonny," you know. *[02:40:30][11.2]*
Kerry James Reed: *[02:40:33]* So, you went there last week. If it's possible, could you, you know, paint for us exactly what you saw when you when you visited last week? Like what did grass look like, you know, the gravestones, etc. *[02:40:47][14.2]*
Harold Hughes: *[02:40:49]* The first thing I look for was in the middle of it to see if there's any water out there. I didn't see any. That's when I noticed right there where the Douglass sign is that underneath the sign itself are two notices about the restoration or whatever, about what the City is doing out there, okay. Then there was some balloons because I remember that the last time we was out there, when they was talking about it and the large turn out and Michael and them the people from the churches were there, it was about a couple of months ago, and we were taking pictures and things. There were no signs at the bottom of the sign that speaks to Douglass then. So the day when I rode past there, there's two signs that they're talking about the restoration of the, whatever they doing out there. And the grass was cut. It was a bright, sunny day. Just the whole picture just seemed different, you know. But I did look over there, and it was still short and [coughs] I'm talking too much. Yeah. It looked different, like somebody cared. Yeah. Hope we keep it up and not fall off. *[02:42:39][110.6]*
Kerry James Reed: *[02:42:40]* Yeah, absolutely. That was going to be my next question actually. So, you know, there's still a lot of work to do in Douglass. *[02:42:48][7.7]*
Harold Hughes: *[02:42:48]* Oh, yeah. It's just the beginning. I mean, my thing is, how many graves have we lost, you know. And I was saying to myself, they talking about thousands of graves out there. I'm just visualizing it; I see less than 500 headstones. If you get 500. And I looked over here where those homes are, ain't nobody going to tell me no different. I mean, they are on that grave site. I mean the cemetery. Oh, yeah. Make no sense. *[02:43:37][48.5]*
Kerry James Reed: *[02:43:42]* So, what are some hopes, then, that you have for the future of Douglass, both the initiative and the cemetery itself? *[02:43:52][9.6]*
Harold Hughes: *[02:43:54]* I hope it gets the recognition that it deserves. Being that its's that old, it would have to be one of the oldest cemeteries in Alexandria. We talking about strictly Black, or colored. And maybe fence it off, drain it, stop the water from flooding it, level it off. Well, we know they ain't to be resetting no headstones and stuff like that, that damage is done and it's going to stay done. Like most things, like I said, like they do out there in the battlefields. I mean the battlefields, the war parks and stuff like that. Put something out there that talks to the cemetery itself. Rather than just that old signage that they have that they dedicated to, people of color, Frederick Douglass, or slaves or whatever. Because, I mean, some of them had to be slaves, ain't no doubt in my mind that slaves are buried out there. And there are a lot of people that buried out there, maybe on top of each other or who did not even get headstones. I mean, because lets just look at it: headstone cost

money, a lot of people didn't have money. And you're talking people from, I mean, I don't know I wasn't back there. But from what I know, but what I'm thinking they, a Pauper's grave [Penny Hill Cemetery] is up the street even further, which is unmarked. People didn't care about people of color dying off then and there, so you had to place them somewhere. So I'm pretty sure that there are a lot of unmarked graves there. Or maybe a couple of mass graves. I'm just thinking right about now, we're talking slavery. This was a slave depot, you know what I mean? You had this slave pen up there off of Duke St. So, I'm pretty sure there is more out there than what, if they even say, that it is. I don't think nobody even knows. *[02:46:37][163.0]*

Kerry James Reed: *[02:46:38]* Yeah. *[02:46:38][0.0]*

Harold Hughes: *[02:46:40]* But my hope is that it gets a recognition that it rightly deserves. And that the city do the right thing by it. That's what I think. Somebody encroached on it, and that's, at this point, there's nothing you can do about it, ok. That's just there. But make sure that that doesn't happen again. And let's get this thing, survey, and whatever's left of it, make sure that it stays there. And make sure that the graves are properly cared for. Yeah, that's my hope. Is that somebody pay attention to it. Yeah. *[02:47:39][59.4]*

Kerry James Reed: *[02:47:42]* And then moving forward, how would you like to see the city treat Black history? *[02:47:47][5.4]*

Harold Hughes: *[02:47:50]* Well, and that's a good question. Instead of treating it like it doesn't exist, let's recognize what people of color have done for this particular city, ok. Now you know what's happening down there in Florida, basically erasing people from the books or races from the book, or getting rid of the book like it never happened, you know. DeSantis is something else. Let's not do that. It's already a fact because I'm a living proof that it, when I was coming up there was no Black history. And you know, that's kind of funny. Because as far as I can remember, Black history, at one time, it was a week, you know. And then a month. Now, now, if I'm not mistaken, I'm 71 years old, and I think their recognition of Black history, period, might be 90. So, that's not too long ago. That's not too long ago that there was no Black history anything. And not just Black history, let's just have history and recognize the contribution of all races to the making of America, and especially the City of Alexandria, you know. It's a lot of history in the City of Alexandria, a lot of things goes unnoticed and unrecognized, you know. One biggest thing that's right here in the city right now of historic importance is Earl Lloyd. He came out the Berg, first Black player in the NBA, first Black bench coach in the NBA, first Black head coach in the NBA. He has a statue, right here in Charles Houston [Rec Center]. Nobody knows about it, you know. That statue, when it sat in the closet for almost six months before it came out. And how I know about that is because his niece is my fiancé, and Mrs. Charlita Lloyd, donated that statue to the City of Alexandria. And when they was to first place that statue, they wanted to place it in the back of Charles Houston. Now, of course, you know, these days being in the back of anything has connotations back to segregation, ok. And I know that kids do not know who Earl Lloyd is. And seeing that statue in the back of the building versus in front of the building where it belongs, it will never get the recognition that it deserved. It should have been placed somewhere outside the building, you know. I mean, it should have some type of thing for visitors to come to the City of Alexandria to see, you know, that statue itself. Being you are the first of anything should have been something that should have been highly spoken on, or there should be some signage outside speaking to, 'here is the statue of Earl Lloyd. The first Negro player in the NBA.' Something like that, rather than just keeping everything quiet. If you run upon it, you run upon it. And if you don't, you don't, you know. So, but that's the history of

Alexandria, you know, everything is quietly tucked away. And if you ain't one of the mainstays, you will never know about it. And I guess that's the history of Douglass, I just summed it up, yeah. If you ain't one who knows about it, then you'll never know about it. So now, if you don't know about it, there ain't nothing I gotta do about it, you understand what I'm saying? The City ain't got to spend the money on it, ain't nobody complaining about it, nobody knows its there. So, 'let's just leave it like that as long as possible. If they don't care, we don't care. And that we don't hear that means don't nobody care.' But now that it's out in the forefront and people are paying attention to it, now if you don't do something about it it's going to become even a bigger issue. So 'why not just nip it in the bud, where it doesn't cost us a fortune, and we just, hey, thatta boy, we give him a little here, that will satisfy him, and maybe they go away.' That's how I see it. *[02:54:05][375.3]*

Kerry James Reed: *[02:54:10]* And then finally, Mr. Hughes, if you could hold onto one memory forever, what would it be? *[02:54:15][4.4]*

Harold Hughes: *[02:54:20]* Charles Houston. Playing football. *[02:54:22][1.8]*

Kerry James Reed: *[02:54:23]* Playing football at Charles Houston? *[02:54:24][0.9]*

Harold Hughes: *[02:54:25]* [laughs]Yeah. Yes, yeah, that's my fondest memory, is that. Other than that is playing for George Washington High School and beating T.C. Williams. [laughs] Yes. *[02:54:40][15.6]*

Kerry James Reed: *[02:54:41]* That's terrific. Well, thank you so much Mr. Hughes. It's been an absolute pleasure speaking with you today. *[02:54:48][6.5]*

Harold Hughes: *[02:54:48]* Oh, the pleasure been all mine, believe me. You know I can talk all day long. *[02:54:53][4.5]*

Kerry James Reed: *[02:54:55]* I greatly appreciate it. Thank you so much. *[02:54:56][1.4]*

Harold Hughes: *[02:54:57]* Not a problem, sir. *[02:54:57][0.0]*

[10259.7]