

Cecil Haynes

.... = Unintelligible

Italics = Sounds like

I: Interviewer
I2: Interviewer 2
C: Cecil Haynes
O: Outside person (Cecil's wife)
O2: Outside person 2

I: Good day, Mr. Cecil Haynes. We are absolutely thrilled to have the opportunity to have you share your tremendous life history with us as part of the Voices From Our America project. As I've said before, my name is Ifeoma Nwankwo, and I am "profesora catedrática" at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee, and we really appreciate your participation. You know that this project will surely benefit the community here in Panama and beyond, now and the future. The goal of the questionnaire, as you know, is to produce as detailed and coherent a narrative of your story as possible. So in light of that I encourage you to feel free to provide, not to worry about providing answers that are too long or too detailed. We want that. We want to get as much information as we possibly can. I know that you've already signed the form where you said what you want us to say or not, but if there's anything that you say during the course of the interview that you don't want us to use, just let me know and we can cut it.

C: Well, I'm extremely happy to know that your company or your, the company, yes, would be so considerate to recognize me and to appreciate the things that I have done in the past like the building, helping the building of the Panama Canal, which is a wonder of the world and of the benefit of use to the entire world. I'm extremely happy and proud to know that I was able to be able to accomplish that.

I: And so are we. So we start at the beginning. So tell me about your birthplace and what was going on there when and as you were growing up.

C: Well, would you like me to say, more or less, *from when* my parents got here? Well, my father came to work for the Panama Canal as one of the employees that they were hiring from the West Indies from the island of Barbados. And the reason why he came here, because at that time things were very difficult throughout, and in the West Indies it was really something that everybody knew and that they were all trying to find a means or a ways to improve the conditions at that time. And he took the opportunity of coming here, and at the end he was very proud and happy to know that he did come here. When they realized, not himself, but many of the others came and realized what they helped to accomplish, and they were proud of it. But to be honest, they were never redressed or given the consideration that they did truly deserve, because without them the Canal could never have been a reality. It required their labor and the ability of standing the conditions that was here, the work conditions and all, that many people

couldn't do, and as means of that, they really played an important part in the building of the Panama Canal.

I: What did your father do?

C: My father did, well, they're all laborers, came here as a laborer and worked his way through. Then he did waiting in a professional form or manner I think they got until, you know they work to the age of when they felt they had no more need for them, and they decided they would repatriate them back home to their countries. And some of them did and some remained here, and fortunately he was one that was able to stay here until he made a family. He was married in the West Indies, and he came here in the year 1904, and a year later, my mother came to join him because the laborers and so it was here; they wanted to be here, but they were unhappy, because the families were away and whatnot, and the government decided that they would bring the families here to join them. And this was done, and she came a year after the year that he was here. And they had a family, a family with six of us, quite big. And at that time, the living conditions weren't very easy and whatnot, and when I reached the age of fourteen, I decided I would try to see what I could do if possible to help my father – get a job. And I took on myself to go on out in the field, and went to an office, and when I went up to the office, the boss wanted to know, "What are you doing here? What you want?" I tell him, "I came to get a job. I'm looking for a job." He said, "We don't hire boys." I said, "But I can do something. I can probably *suit* the helper to help myself." Told me, "You sit over there for a while." I sat there for a little while, and then he called me, and he said, "We're going to put you to work. Here's what you're going to have to do." He said, "You see all those desks and people working here? They all working for me. And they work have to come to me, and I have to issue the work for them to go, and you going to be the one to take the work from us, from me to them, and when it's finished, you bring it back to me." At those times we used pencil, the ink that you dipped in pencils. And he said, "All those wells that hold ink, you have to keep them filled, and you have to change the nibs in those pens almost every other day so that they'll be able to write with. And all the pencils around, you're going to have to sharpen the pencils on the desks." Well, to me, that was absolutely nothing. And then he said, "Anything else that they probably might ask you to do, you have to do." Well, he hired me, and he started me with a salary of twenty-two dollars and fifty cents a month. But at that time they were paying the general labor in building the Canal was ten cents, ten cents for the general salary per hour. But those men were happy to get that because it was more than they were getting – there was nothing to get in West Indies, and even if there were there, this was still more than they would be making there. So they were happy to have it. And they worked at that and built the Canal, and the Canal was finished, and after the Canal was finished, they really were never satisfied, and to see what they did on the meager salary they got and things like that, that it came a point where some labor people from the United States were here at that time, and I think the man that really decided to organize them was a man by the name of Stout, and he decided that he would call a strike on the Canal. And that was something that was a no-no in those times because you couldn't strike against the government. However, he attempted it. And, it was a failure. And he had to get out of the country somehow

because you knew that he was going to go to jail for that. And then the United States realizing that the conditions, so they had to have changes. They got a new weight scale made, and then a weight scale was a lot better than it was at that time. But it actually begun from this strike that this man, Stout, that he called among the – there was a very intelligent gentleman from Jamaica, his name was Samuel Horatio White. You ever hear about him? Samuel Horatio White was intelligent enough to know that you couldn't strike against the government, and he told them not to do it. However, they could see nothing else but the gains they would get from this strike if it was successful. And, like I said, it wasn't successful, and, well, White told them, he said, "I told you all not to do it." So the United States, they discharge all, as many of the people that they could that called the strike and was part of the strike and who didn't remain on the job. Well, my father he would have been in the strike, too, but as God would have it, he was sick, and he was in the hospital, so he remained on his job. And that's how he was one of those who stood. But the people all had to leave the Canal Zone and go live in Panama because they, the, working for the Canal Zone, you had quarters, but when you, when you were not working with them, then you had to move to....and they moved into Panama and established themselves here in Panama. That was the one probably beginning. And I continued working, after I got this job, for seventy-one years, six months, and thirty days, believe it or not, in the same division....until from a boy until I was able to be an inventory management specialist. And, as a matter of fact. that's what I actually retired at now. I have the certificate there that tells you the number of years that I actually worked – you can see it. Now, there's anything else to that you would like to hear.

I:?

C: In many of the interviews that I've been having, people would ask me of this discrimination that existed on the Canal at the time. Well, it is something very ugly – was something very ugly – and I have decided of myself it serves no purpose or any point for me to mention of the hardships that we went through – and a terrible discrimination it was – to mention it in these interviews. But I would admit, it really existed, and it wasn't pleasant. We had this discrimination of gold and silver. All the whites and the Americans were on this gold that gave them wonderful salaries and all the privileges anybody could ask for, because it was known or said that they came from the United States where they were living comfortable, and it was a sacrifice, which true, to be out here in the jungles with the mosquito-infested area and whatnot, and realizing the sacrifices they made, they were recompensed for it, when they didn't realize that we came to for the same thing, and it meant nothing to them where we were concerned. So, we had to live the way it was and accept the conditions at that time. But it really was really not something really pleasant for, wasn't pleasant at all. And those who really could have afforded it, after they stood a little of it, they left and went back to their countries. But this gold role and silver role really existed – it was a reality.

I: Do you think that that gold role-silver role discrimination has continued in various ways into the society today or do you think it just ended in that moment?

C: I'm going to be honest and frank: it continued until the wartime. And some of the Americans that came down here and saw the conditions, they realized it was unjust. And they felt that they should do something about it, and they belonged to labor unions in the United States, so they took on themselves to contact there the main office, and told them of this condition and that they would like to organize the people here so that they could be treated a lot different and treated like working for the United States government, because we weren't as treated though we were working the government. And so, it so happened that they did that. And over the years....at that time, it really wasn't very easily accepted by the Americans that was here because they felt that we weren't entitled to it because we are not Americans, but they were Americans, it was theirs, and whatnot. It really was true. It was their engineering and their money that actually did it, but it would not have been a reality if it didn't have this labor to do it. The money and the engineering and whatnot, it was just there, but you actually had to dig that ditch. Think the measure was eighty fathoms down, and, while digging that ditch and whatnot, the terrible accidents that occurred where thousands of men were covered alive, buried alive. I don't know if you – and that's a reality. Well, after the union, these people decided that they would form this union here, the first union was – maybe now if I could think of it, recommend a gentleman to you who had a lot to do with it, that's Mr. Sinclair. You heard of him? But you never met him? Possibly you could. And he would give – Sinclair, he was the labor leader here for us at the time – and he helped to fight that issue, to make the conditions what it was at the time. Oh, I forget his first name – you'll get to that. He could give you the complete history of what I'm telling you about, and that what made, the Americans were forced to accept the conditions because we became affiliated with the unions in the United States then, and they were forced to accept us as U.S. citizens, as U.S. federal workers, and we were able to get better salaries and vacations and everything that we're having today, or had at that time until the Canal was turned over to Panama.

I: You said that you weren't considered Americans?

C: No, we weren't Americans, we were aliens; really came from West Indian island and whatnot. And not only that, but I was born here in Panama, but I was working for the United States government, and born under the United States flag, says you wasn't a citizen, because this was not their, this is Panama, which is a fact. And it was not territory of the United States, though they managed it and ruled it and everything as territory of the United States, but still it was, it served....for dual purpose, for their benefit.

I: So they considered you not American....?

C: No, we're all Panamanians. We're called Panamanians, or what you term aliens, be you Barbadian or Jamaican or whatnot, and we were Panamanians, we were aliens.

O:But don't they refer, supposed to refer their own employees still?

C: Yeah, but they're all federal employees. We work for your federal government.

I: So you were non-American, U.S. federal employees?

C: That's exactly it.

I: But you were born in the Canal Zone, so therefore you were not Panamanian either?

C: Born in the Canal Zone in....

O: Gatún.

C: In Gatún, Canal Zone, flying the United States flag there, but there no claim you can make on that legitimately because really and truly the territory was that of being of Panama. And we were not Americans citizens, so we were born here.

I: Were you recognized by Panamanian government as being Panamanian?

C: Yeah, we were recognized. At one time we weren't, because when the north areas was in power, and the American government had a struggle, because when the Americans went, felt that the Canal was built, and they didn't want their people here any more and they were repatriating them, the....wanted to know, "Well, what are you going to do with this generation of people?" He said they belong to, they are, they're American citizens, they didn't belong to us. And the British government said, "They don't belong to us either." So we were there, and enough was said, we would be considered Panamanians when we reached the age of maturity and –

O: *Leadership.*

C: – can declare ourselves as citizens of the country. We had to do that. And I, my mother did that for my brother and I. Had our papers made up by a lawyer, his name was *Tinka*. The lawyer's name was – probably you can get his initials – and that man Tinka made up the papers and declared me, we were declared at that time, as a recognized citizen, Panamanian citizens, that's how we became. But....though we were born in and grew up in Panama....said, well, I knew nothing about these people that weren't registered or anything else. You brought them and then they're here and now you're just going to drop 'em. Yeah, well, that's one of the true stories of us being in here. Now is there anything else like?

I: So where exactly were you born?

C: I was born in Gatún, on the Canal Zone, or in the Canal Zone. But I had to declare, like I said, when I reached the age of maturity, as a Panamanian.

I: What year were you born?

C: 1913.

I: So what was your childhood like? What are your fondest memories?

C: Where I work?

I: Your childhood?

C: Oh, my childhood. Well, my childhood was like any other child. On the Isthmus while you were here, and I would like to go down to the beachside to see the boats and men going out to fish and whatnot. And they would come back in with fish, and they would sell the fish down there, and I would be able to buy fish for my mother, and these fishes would be bunched in different bunches and I could get a bunch for about fifteen cents or twenty cents at that time, take that home, and that helped to make dinner for us and whatnot. And I don't of anything else that I could say about my childhood that was so, as a matter of fact I began working as a child, so it was, my mind and everything else was more intent in doing something to help myself and help my father to raise us. And it wasn't a bad idea because going out to work at an early age was like an institution for me – I learned. They, both black and white, they realize I was young, inexperienced, and whatnot, and they all helped me. And I was willing to accept the kindness that they did to me. And many of it, I remain today. As a matter of fact, I'm living with today some of the things that I was taught by them and whatnot. I'm very grateful for that. And it probably seemed to make me the individual I am. Of course I had a mother that, she was a very ambitious lady, if I have to say it myself. Very strict. And there was also, the schools were, there weren't schools at that time, but she was a schoolteacher. And school teachers from the West Indies there, and that's the way it was with me whatnot. And, sometimes I would think, "She's a little too hard and forceful on me." But, after I reached to an age to realize why she did it, I'm happy and proud to know she did that to me at that time, because whoever I am and whatever I've done, whatnot, I credit her for all of it. You got a great deal of love and respect for her for those things, because I feel myself very well of having myself in the life to my satisfaction and the satisfaction of many other people, and it's all through her.

I: My grandmother was also a school teacher, a Jamaican school teacher –

C: She was?

I: – so I know exactly what you're talking about.

Tell me, do you remember any particular anecdote about your mother? Any particular thing that she used to do that you remember, or any particular instance where you remember?

C: Sure, I remember things about it where....

O: Begin from the....

C: Yes, from what was little boys, as little children. She, particularly on Monday morning, when she's going to begin the week, we had to begin it with prayer. And we had to kneel down at the bed where she, and we, and I'd be kneeling there for an hour or so while she's saying these prayers and whatnot, but my knees hurt me. And I'd be sitting through, listening to the prayers, but that's one of the....that I've had, and that helped to teach me to be religious. And she's always insisted that she wanted me to be a gentleman, and I would do things that gentlemen do, and because she grew in that, and she knew it and whatnot, and she taught the best for us. And she did it. And I'm going to be frank to you: a lot of people kind of didn't like the way, "What do you think of himself? Who do he think he is?" But that was something that was in me. I was trained that way, so I. And then she had the old English customs in her. She dressed well, and particularly when she's going to church with her prayer books and whatnot and her hat and so, hey, she was very, and her gloves, very, very stately. That even in her coffin when she died, it portrayed, you could see it, that's a fact.

O: *Nobody cried....*

C: You could see her in her coffin, a dignified lady. I'm not boasting about anything, quite to the contrary. It is that you asked me some realities, and I'm telling you about her because you wanted to know of what I thought about her, so I'm just giving you a little idea.

I: Very excellent. Very excellent. Thank you very much for that. What do you, you said that your mother remembered, made you say prayers – do you remember any of those prayers, and you want to share one with us?

C: "Our Father" is number one, and then many other prayers, because she would pray, and while praying she'd be crying and praying. I can't remember prayers. As a matter of fact, I was just there, but to say remember the prayers, I can, I know some of the prayers she was saying today because I go to the same church, use the same prayer books and so on, and those were kind of the prayers that were said and whatnot, but to tell you, I, as a matter of fact, I could care less that.

I: What kind of church did you grow up in?

C: In the Episcopalian church. It was St. Peter's Church in La Boca. And I remember when she held my hand and took me there for the first time to the church. And then, my brother and I, we grew like twins. And everything she did, she did for both of us. And she had that style of dress where these young English boys used to, how they used to dress with the knickerbockers and the long stockings and the Eton collars. And she used to dress us up like this. Well, all the other little boys, they weren't like that, and they weren't going to, and when we're going to Sunday School dressed like that, they were there and they'd cheer us and tease us. Well, we felt bad about it, and we said "We don't want to be dressed like that!" She said, "You put on what I give you. You walk down that street, and I'm going to stay here and watch you!" And she used to

do it, but we were really, really dressed. I don't know if you know what the Eton collars are like? You do know?...A broad collar, and, more or less, it bothered my brother so much, that while he was giving....you have to give a....study and give....While he was giving it, one of the boys behind him decided they write on it, on the collar....and went, while he was writing on the collar, he put his finger in the prayer book in front of the *deal* and hit the guy, pow, and created a – but as a matter of fact, I mean, he did not, it tempted the boy to write on the collar, and he was writing on the collar, and he resented it, and he fight in church. I don't know if I can remember maybe a lot of other things, but at the moment now to come out with it.

O2: Perfect.

O: The collar was stiff.

C: The collar, it was a stiff collar. It fits all around your neck. It was broad here, and it'd come down here, narrow off like this, and it had a, I don't think it was a button, you had to use one of those, it was a little stud that you used to keep it together. But I don't know if, the collar came off, just came right off like this, and it was stiffer and elegant looking, and then we wore stockings up to here, and what they call knickerbockers, it was....like that. We used to look sharp at that time, but the others weren't doing it, so why we should be doing it? You probably seen them, the collars that the little boys use in the States there, some of them, the exact type of collars....

....Whatnot, but I don't know, I wanted somebody that, I don't know that I'd be able to get....and honestly, this a true, true story: I prays and ask God to send me somebody that I would want and would like, and so happened she came along, and she's in that place. That's true. And that's for how many years? Sixty years, she said, something like that.

O: Sixty-two.

C: I don't remember figures.

O: Sixty-two years.

I: But what we'll do, we'll have a section where we'll put you....we'll talk –

C: Definitely.

I: – more about that.

O2:

I: So you mentioned that you went and got the fish. What do you remember your mother cooking with that fish?

C: Well she cooked her style of cooking, and it'd usually be very tasty at the time. I don't know that she knew anything about it, but she would make this thing with cornmeal they called coo-coo that they used to make in Barbados when she was there. She used to make that with a big gravy to it, and then the fish was boiled into it. But the fish was tender and it's well seasoned and it was enjoyable at the time. Now that's what she did with the fish that I bought. Sometimes she fry it, but, you know.

I: Who were your best friends when you were a child? If you had time to do all of that?

C: I had a lot of good friends. As a child, everybody was my best friend as a child. There's was none that I felt would be like a brother or something like that, no, we were all there, we played together, when you leave, that's it. But to confide in them and things like that, no I didn't have that.

I: *Did you have an opportunity to go to school?*

C: Oh yes, I told you we went to school until we got the Canal Zone, first until eighth grade, and then after I left and went to get this job, and after I got the job, I felt that, well, not only that, but my mother kept putting me in my near....the responsibility of being a fairly good education, and I decided we'll go to private schools that gave me high school training. And, also, I felt then since you're doing it, you reach this far, they have a thing like college. The Canal Zone had a junior college. And I went to the junior college for two years. But I couldn't tell you that I graduated from college. But I had the ambition, but my ambition and then to work and of marriage and things like that, two years, I said I call it enough.

I: Who were your teachers and how were they, whether in primary school or elementary school?

C: I had a lot of teachers, S.K. Walters, what's the name, Reed, McCarthy, they're a bunch of the names that I had. Plenty, plenty, plenty, and they were all highly educated men from the West Indies, highly educated. And a lot of them, they knew, at least the curriculum that they had here was so limited, they knew that if there was an opportunity, form these schools that advanced us a whole lot. One of the things, too, that I felt, too, that my mother was forcing me to do is, at that time shorthand was a requisite, and people were learning shorthand. But, I went because I was sent to do it, and this professor was a neighbor to us and he saw to it that we got it. But to me, it interfered my regular studies and so, because the characters and whatnot, it robbed me of it. And I found that I was really getting backwards in the classes, and I told my mother about it, that I just couldn't go, and it's a good thing I did that because it served no purpose. It did me more harm than it did me any good. But those were one of the things that people aspired to do because men at those times were high class clerks and had to take stenography or whatnot....the women worked, girls worked, and girls were doing afterwards, so it would be a waste of time, a waste of money.

I: What did you want to learn?

C: Who me?

I: Yes.

C: I learned a little of anything that I felt that I could get and that would be of benefit of interest to me, and a little of anything....At least I wanted to know that I was able to do things that would give me as much money I could get in a decent wage and things like that.

I: So you talked a little bit about how you started work, essentially as a messenger. Can you tell me more about your growth as a worker at the Panama Canal Commission? What kinds of jobs did you do over time?

C: Well, like I said, I begun as a boy. And I don't know if my way or whatnot, but I gained a lot of sympathy, I would say, from the different people, and I sort of showed a little, I don't know if you want to call ambition or whatnot, and for that reason, I remembered at one time when I became a messenger from a boy, became a messenger from \$22.50 to \$37.50 on a different....or grade, you know, called this job, until I became a clerk, and I worked in there as a clerk and I go on and then I aspire to keep working the same office, the same division and thing, until I became an inventory manager specialist. And one of the best there was. I have a letter here that commends me highly for the manner in how I was able to keep the floor work going by, what you say, able to order parts and keep, have the parts go smooth flow, that when they have a breakdown or something like that. One of the terminologists said that they didn't know how I was able to do it. How I was able to. I don't know if I could find that. You'd like to see it? Oh. Two years. It became knowledgeable of how long I worked and all, and everybody began to become aware of it and recognize it. And I was considered the employee that had worked the very longest for the U.S. federal government on the Isthmus here, possibly through the United States, I don't know. And I've been very highly well recognized and respected for that. And the administrator, he himself personally thinks very much of me. I think very much of him, too. And I have several photographs or so of different officials that I had worked with and made good marks with.

....

C: Let me show you the letter. You may want to take a copy of it. History of this....done by the printer....

I: Oh, okay.

C: No, you all can take a copy of the letter, and I could tell you, here's a copy of the letter that I was telling you about that was given to me by one of the divisions that

considered my work to be outstanding in keeping the Panama Canal supplied with parts for the motor vehicles.

I2: Can you speak a little bit about the picture? You just said about the prime minister.

C: Well, this prime minister, he came here when Panama had the “centenario”, and they told him about me, and he made a point to meet me because, he told me, he said, that my father was a Barbadian, and if my father Barbadian, I am a Barbadian, and I felt proud about that....

I2: Say that again to the camera.

C: No, you're always, no, no, no. You want me to say that to them?

I2: No, just describe the license. What is it?

C: Oh yeah. This is a drivers license – a Canal Zone drivers license that I had to drive, because you had to have drivers license from the Panama Canal to drive, as well as Panama used to have their own drivers license, but the Canal Zone, you had to have a drivers license. This is the drivers license for the Canal Zone. And like I said, this was when I was young and beautiful, that photograph.

O: *(someone is speaking Spanish)*

C: This is a christening of the tugboat when she broke the bottle of champagne on the tugboat, raising the tugboat there.

O: *(speaking Spanish)*

C: Operating my tugboat. This is the King of Spain giving me his personal medal.

O: *(speaking Spanish)*

C: And this is....

O: Mr. Storehouse.

C: They took this, this is an evidence of me working at the....I managed this part of the storehouse.

I: Used to?

C: Yeah.

I: Yeah.

C: Okay. Now.

I: Now show us the Mr. Clinton things.

C: President Clinton?

I: Sí.

C: Oh, if you want those, sure you can see, you can take copies of those. There's several letters there that he.

I: No, so you can tell us about, just choose one, please.

C: The one where he invited me to the, this was the one where I was invited. This is the most important one.

I: Okay.

C: Cause with all the several one, this is the one that has some significance.

O: En natural (*speaking Spanish*)

I:

O: (*speaking Spanish*)

I:

O: (*speaking Spanish*)

C: These can stay here. Okay.

I hope I'm not getting myself in trouble.

I: No. Your wife....so she'll keep you out of trouble.

C: Oh yeah, there she is, yeah. Now, so much for that.

I: So, Mr. Haynes, what kind of music did you grow up hearing? What were your favorite songs?

C: Well, I'm going to tell you, music in general, I like. It doesn't care in what language or what kind, but I enjoy music, period.

I: What were your favorite songs?

C: My favorite, no, I didn't have no special favorite song, but the special music that I like was fox trots, English music.

I: How did you come to like that?

C: Well, I grew in the environment where you heard these things from childhood. That's a kind of a music we heard and whatnot, and that's what I danced particularly and whatnot.

I: How did you learn to dance foxtrot?

C: I don't – God must have taught me, but I just said just hear the music and see people move, I move, too, in my way. Followed people, cause I'm not telling you that I was no pro in dancing, but I enjoyed it, what I did.

I: Do you remember who were your favorite musicians?

C: My favorite musicians – they had many. There's a man in the early days, his name was Wood, Joe Wood, I think they called him. But he was the first man that brought actors and dance music here from the – he was a West Indian, too, Barbadian. Played English music.

I: So he played classical or fox trot music?

C: He would play anything. But when they go out for an evening entertainment, it was just fox trots they would play, and they would play dance songs, Spanish music, for dancing in other words, dancing.

I: Describe for me an evening out.

C: An evening out? You mean to going out to for a dinner or something like that?

I: Like dancing. Who would be there? So how would people dress? Who would?

C: Well, I've been to many things. I've been to a dinner dance where I was able to dress formal. We both go, and we dress formal. But my later days, my dancing was really formal, more or less. But in the early days, when I was full of everything, you name it, and I'll dance it.

I: Did you dance to American music as well?

C: Yes, that's American music I'm talking about.

O: Nat King Cole.

C: American music, Spanish music, a little of everything.

I: Was the music that you were able to have access to the same in the Canal Zone as in the rest of Panama, so that everybody else in Panama also liked all those music?

C: Yes, that's right. The same type of music in Panama and the Canal Zone because the Panamanians enjoyed what they called music of the

O: *Was*.

C: Not only *was*. They knew all music. And then, for what they call *dansongs* and sing what's in Spanish, and then they'll be an assortment of music, particularly that fellow Wood that I told you about, Joe Wood. That Joe Wood has made many pleasant evenings for the younger people here in the early days. Very good. And then there's another man, but he played with Joe Wood, too, fellow named *Ramdean*. He played with Joe Wood. Then we had another orchestra here that was very good orchestra, too. I'm talking on this side, because on the other side, they had lot of good orchestras over there, too. A fellow by the name of Paine, Paine Syncope, something like that, but Paine was....They would know his initials or his first name, people, if you ask. Very good music they played. He was one of the top.

I: Wow. So it was mostly what you would call big band music?

C: Yeah, big band music, yes.

I: Do you remember any Caribbean music at that time, Calypso, early Calypso, or anything?

C: Well, I'm going to be honest with you. I never favored it. Never favored to listen. I hear them or whatnot, but I never listen to it.

O: You like *Westermans* or what? George Westerman had that one....

C: No, no, no, no, no. There was one that came out something like I said back to back, belly to belly, I don't give a damn and done that already.

O: And that's one....

C: That's one of, that's what you're talking about.

O: Yeah.

C: You know nothing about that.

I: I do, my grandfather, of course.

C: Oh, your father, yeah.

I: Of course.

C: Yeah, that's right.

I: He was born as almost the same year as you. He was born in 1912, and he worked on the railroad, railway, in Jamaica, so all of this, everything

C: Oh, yeah.

I: So you didn't favor it? Tell me why.

C: Well, I don't know. Look, to me it was not....

O: Tell the truth....

C: It wasn't what – it was ordinary. It was ordinary music.

I: Not religious?

O: Huh?

I: It wasn't religious?

C: No, it wasn't religious.

O: No, not for that, just the words and....you know....

C: We had to dance it though when they played it.

I: Wonderful.

C: That I grew up with culture from the West Indies, and not only that, but that culture was culture that I believe that the very Panamanians have adopted, because it was really something that was dignified and things that aspiring. When the West Indians came here, one of the things that the men, that struck them most, was that the Panamanian men didn't know how to dress, because your shirts should be in your pants, and they had their shirts outside of the pants. But that's the style, that's their way of dressing. And that was one of the things, too, that they felt that they taught the Panamanians to dress well. It could be true, too, that might have been, I don't know. But it might be a little embarrassing to mention that.

I: What other impact do you think, what other aspects of what's thought of as Panamanian culture do you think came from West Indian culture?

C: Well, I....

O: When they go to church on Sundays. The little children used to be dressed with their little hats and bonnets.

C: No, but that was what you call

O: Same thing....

C: It's universal. That was universal.

AUDIO ENDS HERE (59:25)

But uh I don't know they, they, they, they, they, the way, you take for instance one of the things that, that, that, that they learned from the West Indians is souse. They *(laughs)* and they *(sounds like tape cuts off abruptly)*

I: So what other, what aspects do you think of Panamanian culture or their genesis to West Indian culture?

C: Well I, I really wouldn't like to, to um they have culture. With their culture and what they feel the top and the best but it could be improved.

I: You were talking before about food and other things. So the West Indian influence is in Panamanian culture? Tell me more about that.

C: Where foods are concerned?

I: Any, anything, food yes.

C: Well they, they enjoy Panamanian food and everything

O: *(speaking under him – can't understand her)*

C: that Panamanians, but that American, West Indians or so children are what's...prepare before they even taste it, it's delicious. *(laughs)*

O: That's souse, that's souse.

C: Before they even taste it. *(laughs)* So you can tell that

O: I know they like it.

C: that, that influence or the impression it have on them, the food style of cooking. They, they, they, they enjoy it. They enjoy it.

I: So you say address, cooking, what else, any other?

C: Yeah they, they have, they, we have ...we help them along those lines. I don't, I don't, I don't want to degrade people, might have done more but we've helped them along the way. Whether they admit it or not.

I: So what, how would you classify yourself in terms of identity? In terms of racial or cultural identity?

C: Oh I would classify myself, well I think it'd be more prudent for people to classify me. That's the way I feel about it. But I because I'm going to be honest with you, I highly recognize throughout Panama and throughout possibly the world, I'm world-wide known. People have come from all parts of the world to interview me when the Canal's turned over to Panama and uh like I say they have their, they have their, their, their impression and so both be, there was one writer I think from Colombia, he gave me a glowing write-up when...as a matter of fact and I, and I, I that's what I told you a while ago, sometimes I wonder if I, if they're speaking of the right person.

I: I mean how did, how would you classify yourself in terms of race or in terms of culture? Are you with Panamanian or you West Indian or you black or you not black? How would you define yourself in, in, in terms of race and in terms of culture?

C: I define myself as an individual. That's how I define myself. And an individual that's, that, that's I don't want, I don't want to (*laughs*), I'm an individual. And it's for you now to classify me as a type of, and I feel I get what I portray more or less what I would like to have. And people have respected me along that line.

I: Hmm hmm. Hmm hmm. So tell me uh about your view of your West Indian ancestry? How do you, how do you perceive it?

C: I, I, I, I feel very highly on a view like when I went to Barbados, I was looking for people that's not as advanced as those in the United States and whatnot. And I was highly struck for the dignity and the ambition and the culture that Barbados uh, uh display and, and, and that the reason and the reality very dignified little country. Have you been there? (*laughs*) That when I was asked who my parents were and I told them my father Barbadian, you're a Barbadian, your father a Barbadian, then you are Barbadian. And I tell 'em, if I'm a Barbadian, I'm happy and proud to know about it because they are outstanding people. And I'm not fooling you, I'm not, one, one of the things that impressed me that they claimed there were 98% literate. 98%. Could that, could it be that high? (*laughs*) And if I'm a Barbadian well I'm up there. (*laughs*)

I: So how do you think others in Panama, see, see people of West Indian descent?

C: I'm going to tell you really and truly. Some of them, some of the Panamanians feel that people of West Indian descent is not equal to them. Not some of them, a lot of them when you are, when, when none of us are as equal or are to be way ahead.

But some of the real intelligent ones that has been out and come back, you get the and I can personally I can't complain about my treatment. My treatment is highly, as mu-, the, the, the people want to meet me, Panamanians are wanting to meet me. I had a, I guess today I had to go to the, the, the municipal judge or something like that here.

O: ...later.

C: And the minute I went there and they're all impressed with me and things like that. Why? For my accomplishment. And I'm known or considered *a longer than Canal* that's how I termed.

I: Hmm hmm. Hmm hmm.

C: *A longer than Canal*. And I, I feel happy and proud for that because you know what it is to be so closely associated to wonder of the world, the most wonder, most modern world that's serving the entire universe and I'm part of it and still alive, that's a great honor. I mean I'm saying it no's but it's the truth and that's what it is. And I have to mention it.

I: How do you think others in Panama view or treat blacks who speak English?

C: Blacks that speak English?

I: Hmm hmm.

C: At one time, we had a man black like you are, his name was *Materna Vasmus*, Panamanian and *Materna Vasmus* outlawed English to be spoken in Panama, black man (*laughs*). He outlawed English to be spoken and today I here in the television, anything, that they're forcing the citizens to learn English, forcing them to learn and, and that, that they have teachers that, that, that's vouching to teaching English within days. Yet still he what you call de-appreciated us, a black man. He was a black Spaniard but he was a highly intelligent man, he was in law, highly intelligent and it's surprising to me that he would think in terms like that.

O: He was a minister.

C: He was minister of *Ghoman* justice.

I: Okay. Okay. So how long have you been married?

C: You have to answer that question.

O: Thirty-six years.

C: How much?

O: Thirty-six years.

C: Thirty-six. I thought you said more than that.

O: No sixty-three.

C: *(laughs)*

O: Sixty-three years.

C: I would like it if it were thirty-six. *(laughs)*

I: How did you meet?

O: When I was visiting a school name and he was going from work.

C: No, no, no.

O: *Carmen Wesley.*

C: I was, I was coming from playing tennis and while I, and the building I lived on, she was visiting a schoolmate of hers in, in that building. And for some reason while I went up the stairway you know she was there talking just a, and right away I told this because I, this was my neighbor, why don't you introduce me to your friend. And she introduced me to her friend and that friend last until today.

I: What was your first impression of him?

O: Well he was young and he had a nice personality. I liked the tone of his voice and his smile. I was introduced and I went home to my mother and told her that I met a young man but I didn't say anything because I only introduced and then from there was...start. Then when he really was serious about me, I would say he took his mother to my mother and they became a little friendly and I got a chance that I could go out when he explained tennis or he would like to carry me to the clubhouse to see a show or something like that. Or he would invite me on a Sunday evening to ice cream, that's where we went on for a little while until we decide, until he decided that it was time now we would get married.

C: And she liked to dance too. She and I just invited to go to dance and I didn't know whether she knew to dance but she kicked her feet up like *(laughs)*.

I: How long was all that, that courting?

O: Oh for about four or five years.

C: Or maybe more. I don't know but I don't remember dates you know so and she gets mad about that when I don't remember dates and I have to look 'em up when

O: Yes it's my wedding anniversary, very faithful and very dutiful, must remember the wedding anniversary. Had a birthday too. Plus a nice little daughter, a nice friend, a nice scholar to the nuns. I expected what I work for. I want to think I deserve *where* he had been always faithful to all *partitions*.

I: So what is the secret?

O: Pardon?

I: What is the secret to being married, being able to be married for sixty-three years?

O: Hmm a lot of patience, a lot of respect for each others, you got pre-plan to be good so and be careful with your friends too. You can know everybody and not everybody comes to your house.

I: Mr. Haynes what would you say is the secret?

C: Well I would say the secret was I would say the secret is, is, is normal and natural and it's a natural instinct that you admire someone. You like them. It develop into love. And good understanding and of the result you feel you want to be together forever. And it so resulted, happened here. Well I don't know how much ever it going's to last but (*laughs*) so far it has for she said sixty-three years.

I: What would your message to the young people be? What would you message to the young, to the people, the younger people, the younger gener-

C: If I have to give it to them, you know where, where, where um they, they could be married until the end? My message to the young people is that they have to be person of themselves and they have to be uh willing to pattern other people, use other people for an example, and would like to live the life that's older people than them has lived. And um be respectful at all times. Be dignified. Be ambitious and take as much studies as you can because today if you not capable of taking care of yourself, you can't get a job. And that's the only thing that's going to help anyone today and I notice that the youths they're putting a lot of time into studies because they know what they are going to face or what's up against them so they're taking a lot of time out to be abreast of that situation...so I recommend that they any, any, any youths if they want to get ahead in life is to be abreast of with the times we have today.

I: Senior? What would your message to the youth be?

C: For her, with her?

O: The same thing.

C: She said the same thing, that's right you got to be (*laughs*).

I: No you tell me.

O: I agree.

I: Hmm?

O: I agree to what he said.

O2: Cut...

C: St. Peter would open the doors...

I: Hmm hmm.

C: And he kept, he kept quiet. But he's very religious and he said the nuns and the priests and things like that everybody got to be like that.

I: *That's true.* Okay. Yeah. Okay. All right so tell me about your why he was doing all the work on the Canal, what were you doing?

O: Story is long.

C: She was keeping house. She was doing of as a matter of fact, making sure that house is kept clean, making sure that my supper's cooked and that it something that I would enjoy. And that when I got, have the supper she serve it to me and I didn't say anything, did you enjoy your supper, you didn't say anything whether you like it or not, and things like that. Look forward to some compliments but I, I don't want to spoil it so I oh yes (*laughs*)

O: That the...I used to go and pay the bills, go to the bank. We used to been there, *best* business.

C: Oh yeah we've, we've been a...

O: I used to accept the money.

C: Where a little transportation. We attempted um, um, um well housing, what, we attempt uh, uh there's a term for it you know. And uh we, we, we attempted a little of everything. I invest a little money in stocks and things like that. And uh we've tried all our lives tried. Housing is what I really wanted to do, *I mean* for a little housing, transportation.

O: I used to go and visit the sick.

C: And then yeah we kill a lot of time in um, a lot of time in helping, a lot of time in helping others and at a, at a college level helping others at a college level.

I: Tell me more about what you, what you did with helping?

C: Anything that I, I, I have to speak for anything that (*laughs*)

I: Yeah.

C: Anything that I, that I have an idea of and I bring it and approach it to her, really and truly I use it, I leave it to her to accomplish and she goes through with it. She was a great help where that's concerned. Great, great help. But I got the ideas and then after *getting together* we even went in for a little um, um grocery business here. We, we attempted a lot of little things too. Help us on today and whatnot.

O: I worked for my church too.

C: Yes well

O: I used to be the treasurer of the church. And um I was representative of the boss of the ladies on the *gotolocum* and I used to perform or help them in the processions. And we're in a lot of things.

C: Until today she still in this uh did you know they have groups of ladies go around in different areas and discuss the Bible and so and there's a lady right across here, she's a doctor and she have a group that goes there as a, they didn't go this week but every week they're either Thursday or, or, or Tuesdays and that's a lot of her time is being spent over there and whatnot.

O: But I enjoy it. Enjoy it very much. And they enjoy me too because you know the catalyst...study the Bible so much that's how we're studying it now. And we have a lot of changes. I enjoying going over there because uh we exchange our thoughts.

C: ...

I: Hmm hmm. An actual conversation about, about the Bible as opposed to just reciting

C: Yeah.

I: reciting things. Is there um let's see, would you mind telling me your birth, your Mrs. Haynes.

O: Yes January 20th, 1913.

I: And your birthday Mr. Haynes.

C: My birthday is August 7th, and I was born 1913.

I: Okay. Is there any other information that you would like to share with us that we should include that we haven't yet touched on in our conversation today?

C: Well I, what, what I would really like to share with you is that my whole content and feelings that I don't think the black people were treated well enough or satisfactory for the accomplishment that they made here. They made that Canal and that uh the Americans knew it but they refused to acknowledge or recognize it until the last minute here they're, they're realizing that, that they didn't build it alone by themselves. They were given the Congressional Medal of, of, of, of something of Congress or whatnot. We were given nothing, absolutely nothing and, and, and we were entitled to a lot. And it came to a point now that Parliament that they were forced to turn the Canal over to Panama and now they've turned it over to Panama. It's Panama's. But Panama really doesn't know all of who has done and when they done it and how it was done. And they can care less or forget it because it doesn't mean nothing to them. They have the Canal and it's our Canal and all that sees the Canal and we improving the Canal and that's it today. But it's really not so and I, I hope that the time will come that they, that the Panamanians themselves realize or recognize us and do something for it. When I say to do something, I mean your purple monument or you put up something, nothing like that has ever been done, you know that one of the world you see it out there, it's, it's no little foolishness. It's something to, that you, you'll be proud of that's the reason, that's the reason why in my humble way and to myself with God, I'm satisfied to know that I've been recognized in the way I have been for it. But it should be not only for me but here is a model built like they were put up a roof (*tape has crackle*), a wall or something like that because of what was done. But you know the Canal was built and you see, I see in, in the mornings when they're putting all the um, when, when Panama is opening up the different stations, they show you the construction of the Canal and the black people and whatnot and that's all. No there should be a monument (*tape is having problem, inaudible*) and I don't want to *come out in favor* because they will tell me but don't we do it for you? Well it's not me really. It's those who have done it and, and, and should be recognized, somebody should recognize 'em. I don't know if you agree with me but

O: On the, a lot of West Indian people that the children have an English name, they're colored but they go to school and they learn that their native language because you were born here and when you talk to them, they will not tell you in English and you'll say what is your name, Marguerita Brown or Marguerita *Wesley*, Marguerita something is where you get the Brown and the *Wesley* from? You must have get from some West Indian.

C: Well they have that, they have you know, I they got that thing of *Materna Vasquez* where if you didn't speak Spanish, you were not a citizen of a country. (*laughs*)

Well I wouldn't be telling, I'm going to be honest and tell you the truth and I tell everybody that. I do speak a little Spanish. I don't speak it like you but I'm more Panamanian than you. I was born here 1913 when

O:

C: ...no place.

O: (*speaking a few words of Spanish*)

C: And that's the truth and the fact. And the reason why I was more exposed to the Americans all my life and I adopt their customs and habits and I become sort of Americanized.

I: So because you're Americanized, you're not seen as Panamanian?

C: But I'm Panamanian. I am Panamanian. And I tell 'em, I 100% more than you because I born when Panama just getting her independence more or less.

O: Oh well. Oh well. Oh well.

I: You were going to say something else? No.

O: I just said that we're before on the when we started to register children you know, ...Haynes here.

I: Hmm hmm.

C: Oh. Yeah we, we, it's

O: We were born after the *levy incidence*.

C: Yeah that's how they yeah how they have it. So then how you not going to get Panamanian yet. They asked me you know they asked me. (*laughs*) But they're Panamanian. (*laughs*) Panamanian. I'm more Panamanian than you are.

I: Well thank you both very much for sharing and yes it will be very important. We will use it and there's a conference going to May 26th and 27th about the West Indian influence in Panama.

C: And I am, I am, I am very truly satisfy and happy to know that we could offer our humble opinion of this major project you're going in for there and that uh those people who would be listening or hearing would feel that we were worth something, that's what I would like to know.

I2: Okay. Perfect.

I: Definitely.

(sounds like interview ends but still a little talking continues)

C: '98, '99 of the 2000, I came out earlier.

I: Hmm hmm. Hmm hmm.

C: And now very well, very and they come in Spanish and in English

I: Okay.

C: They come...the Canal.

I: Hmm hmm. Hmm hmm.

C: And it was something that they asked

I: At the hotel so yeah.

(audio ends at 1:29:12)