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DeMaurice Moses

Rosie the Riveter

World War II American Home Front Oral History Project

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Interviews conducted by
Jess Rigelhaupt
in 2012

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DeMaurice Moses

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Interview #1 June 4, 2012

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01-00:00:06

Rigelhaupt: Okay, it is June 4, 2012. I'm in Washington, D.C., doing an oral history interview with Dr. DeMaurice Moses. The way I like to start is if you could say your full name and where and when you were born.

01-00:00:22

Moses: My name is DeMaurice Moses, Jr. That was my name given to me by my father. My nickname is Bucky. That was also given to me by my father. I was born in Washington, D.C. in 1933, on July 11. I spent my early years in Washington, D.C. while my mother taught school in Washington, D.C. at the Mott School. I stayed there only a short while before I moved to Harlem, where my father was located. That would be Harlem on Manhattan Island, a borough of New York City. From there, I spent about five or six years, and I recall that we moved to Jamaica, Long Island, which was in the borough of Queens. We were part of the group of migration of American blacks who moved out to the island as things became very dicey in Harlem at that time. As you remember, we had just started to recover from the Depression of 1929, which lasted all the way to 1940. You want me to keep going or—

01-00:02:02

Rigelhaupt: Actually, if we could just stay in your first years after you were born, in D.C. You said your mother was teaching at the Mott School.

01-00:02:10

Moses: At the Mott School.

01-00:02:11

Rigelhaupt: Could you talk more about what that was, her teaching position?

01-00:02:16

Moses: She was an elementary school teacher. She went to Howard University. She got her teaching degree at Miner's Teachers College, which was also located at Howard. During those years, an African American woman would best set her sights on becoming a teacher. Of course, everything was segregated during those years. My mother was well-educated. Before she began teaching, she actually had a master's degree, which was uncommon in those days, which she got from Columbia University, and she was actually taught in the progressive style of John Dewey. Eventually, I ended up back at the very school where she had gotten her master's, as part of an experimental program in progressive education. But that was years later.

But my mother really had to be with my father, who was an attorney, at the time. He was a lawyer, trained at Fordham and prepared at Columbia University. He graduated from Columbia in 1924. It's a funny way he was accepted. There appeared to be a place for a Negro student, since one had dropped out. In that class, there were two, and they liked to have two rather

than just one. My dad was working at the Faculty Club. He was born in 1900, so it would make him, when he entered, in 1922, he would have been twenty-two years old. He stayed there two years, and that prepped him for law. He was simply admitted because the director of admissions came to the Faculty Club where my dad was waiting tables and said, "Would you like to go to Columbia?" He had finished high school and had already done some early military service. So he said, "Yes, I'd like to go," and he just went the next day. That was how simple it was. So he was just in the right place at the right time.

My father eventually graduated from Fordham Law School. He then set up practice with a mentor, by the name Mr. Dingle, who was located in Harlem, where we had our apartment. Harlem was just finishing up the era of the Harlem Renaissance. It's interesting that three of my father's sisters were in the Cotton Club. Old movies will show my Aunt Ethel dancing with a feather boa, and who's looking on but Al Capone. There were no blacks allowed to watch the show, although all the entertainers were black. The favorite entertainer was not only Fats Waller, but there were several others, including Duke Ellington. My father's sisters also became the first black actresses. Ethel Moses was a very beautiful, brown-skinned woman who acted in the movies. Particular one I remember is one called *The Black and Tan*, and the producer and director was {Arthur Mashow?}. The other sister was Lucia, and Lucia acted in *The Scar of Shame*. Both of these movies, particularly *The Scar of Shame*, are shown from time to time, right in with other documentaries. The last time I saw *The Scar of Shame* was many, many, many years later, in Seattle. My father's dad was a minister. He was the secretary of the National Baptist Convention. As secretary, he was the communicating person with eight million other Negroes. He focused on the missions, and there were many missionaries that were sent through that fate to the African continent. So I was exposed to, eventually, as a young child, with a lot of American history. This was the setting before the war.

I don't remember much about growing up in Harlem until I was about six years old. But I remember that there was a school I was to go to called PS Ninety, and it was supposed to be the worst, most risky school to go to in the United States. It went up to the eighth grade. There were a lot of assaults and horrible things that went on. So my mom didn't want me to go there. My dad didn't either, so that's what projected the move to Jamaica, Long Island. Jamaica, at that time, was an all-white community. We didn't seem to have any trouble moving in. Wherever a black moved in, all the whites in the block moved out. So eventually, within about twenty years, Jamaica became an all-black city, on the outskirts of New York City, but within the borough of Queens. A hundred thousand people who were all black. It was absolutely fascinating to see that happen. The first school I went to was in 1940. I began school. I was the only black child in my class in the first grade. That was kind of interesting, because I was very precocious when I was younger, primarily because my dad was in the Army, on National Guard and eventually

federalized by 1940. So I knew what was going on in Europe. I knew about what we were up against, that there was going to be a war started. I was very interested in it. So I've talked a lot about it, and so I understood geography, which the other children didn't understand very well. That was an interesting time for me, because the principal recognized it and started skipping me. So instead of spending the year in second grade, I spent only a half a year and then moved to the third grade. Then when I got to the third grade and was to go to the fourth, they skipped me out of the last part of the third grade and put me in the fourth grade. I was ahead of myself for a while.

I had a long sojourn in Washington, D.C. I was, at this point, about nine years old. It was 1942. Having been born in 1933. I went to Washington, D.C. to live with my grandmother. That was on 1531 Tenth Street. Interestingly enough, at 1530, on Ninth Street, was the home of the greatest African American intellectual of that period of history, and that was Carter Woodson. I had no idea until these actually recent years when I visited the home and realized where he lived. I remember 1531 Tenth Street as a place where I could wake up in the morning and go on the deck outside, pick up my BB gun, and shoot rats, and right across the street was this incredible intellectual man. Upstairs lived Dorothy Height. She was barely thirty years old. She might have been twenty-nine at the time. I remember her well. She lived a long time, until she was virtually a hundred. Died recently. Dorothy Height lived upstairs in my grandmother's house. My grandmother had three floors and a basement, and she just took the middle floor and she rented out the other two. Dorothy Height I remember very well, because she took me to my first restaurant. I had never been in a restaurant before, which wouldn't be uncommon, because black people didn't have restaurants, and during those days, we couldn't go in a restaurant with white people either. It didn't matter whether you were in the South or New York City. You couldn't go in New York City. If you can segregate a nightclub, you can segregate a restaurant as well. I never had a chance until she brought me to where she was working. There was a very nice restaurant in the African American YWCA. I went there twice. I had this sea bass, which was cooked in cornmeal. It was absolutely delicious. I could think of nothing else better. I went back again, it was so good, and took my sister along with me.

Dorothy Height had an important mission at that time. I even knew that at that time, because my grandmother told me. One day, my grandmother, who was a light-skinned lady, probably about sixty years of age, she said that she had an important meeting that day. I said, "Where are you going, grandma?" I'm nine, she's sixty-something. She says, "I'm going to meet with Mrs. Roosevelt." I said, "Oh. That's the president's wife." She said, "Yes, that's the president's wife." So she went on to the meeting, and she came back and she said Dorothy Height and Mrs. Bethune were very close. Mrs. Bethune was active, tremendously active, on behalf of communicating African Americans actually to the White House. She was a friend of Mrs. Roosevelt, and so was Dorothy Height. What they had to do, since African Americans did not have a

communication with the executive office, the White House, they had to make one. So Mrs. Roosevelt and Mrs. Bethune and Dorothy Height were the ones that arranged it. There was one representative in the Congress, and his name was Oscar De Priest, but he was a single person. There was no other. There maybe were one or two African Americans who acted as White House staff, who were sent around the country, but to communicate with fourteen million people, at the time, Roosevelt didn't have anyone. So they decided to form a cabinet, and the cabinet was composed primarily of people who could represent the needs of African American people. The two places that the government considered African Americans to be important to the United States was in agriculture and labor. We have not gotten over the aspect that we were now removed from slavery and we could go on to do something else, but they still looked at us in terms of working in the fields or laboring in some way. That's the way he communicated. They set up meetings with specialists within the African American academic community that were experts in labor and agriculture. Agriculture particularly, because of William Carver, the scientist, and labor because Philip Randolph was very active in the labor movement.

There were probably about a dozen and a half members of this cabinet, of which several came to my grandmother's house to lodge or to eat. Because there just simply wasn't any way for a black person who came to the White House to go anywhere to eat or to lodge. There were no hotels open and no restaurants. They had to come to my grandmother's house. At least several of them did. They came from time to time, maybe once or two or three times a year, throughout the war years. I remember helping my grandmother prepare their meals. My grandmother would cook the meal from scratch. She didn't have a car. Of course, very few people did. She'd go to the O Street Market, which was no more than a couple of blocks from my house. It was on Seventh and O Street. We would go there and she would tell me we were going to cook a chicken that day. She would pick the chicken out. In those days, you picked out a live chicken. They cut off its head and bled it and de-feathered it over a drum. Then my job was to carry it home, along with the vegetables and potatoes, and to continue the de-feathering, because some of the feathers were still there. I would de-feather it, and then my grandmother would cook this delicious meal for the two or three members of the cabinet, and then they would stay overnight for a few days.

I remember a chicken meal and a rabbit meal. We did the same thing with the rabbit. The rabbits were in a cage. You pick out the rabbit you want. These were huge, big, white rabbits, raised for slaughter. My job then was to make sure that all fur was removed. It was gutted and cut up. Also, I had to help my grandmother cut it up, because we brought the carcass back. Then the other meal was a carp. She didn't go to the fish market. We took the streetcar to the lagoon, which was right adjacent to the Potomac River. We go there, and she'd approach one of the black men there, who'd be laying down. He had a stake in the ground, a metal stake, and a line that went out maybe fifty to a

hundred feet. A bell would be on the stake. She'd ask him to catch her a couple of fish. He'd just bait his hook with some dough and cotton and toss it out by hand. Within five minutes, he'd have a fish. The bell would ring, and that would wake him up, because he'd lay down and go to sleep. He would partially clean it, and then my job was to complete the cleaning. Then she'd fix a lovely baked fish. It was a two-way street. My grandmother treated them very well. I had to give up my bed. We had something called hot beds. They would take my bed, and then I would go to the living room, and I'd sleep on the couch, but I only got part of the couch. Another member of the cabinet would sleep on the other part that I didn't use. We got along okay. They liked me, and they'd give me presents. They'd give me BB guns, knives, fishing reels, and that sort of thing. One day, one of the men went fishing and he brought me and my grandmother a huge rockfish. Probably looked like it was about two feet long. We had that for dinner. I understood later what this cabinet meant, realizing that it was the first time that African Americans were actually looked upon as worth anything. But during the war years, African American people—if it wasn't for Howard University, we would have been without healthcare, because that's where we went if we had a problem. If you needed an operation, there was probably one of three chief residents who would do the operation. We all went to what they called Freedman's Hospital, which was an open ward with curtains separating the patients. I had my tonsils out there. So did my sister. My brother was too young.

The thing I remember most about Washington, D.C. at that time was the numbers of black people that lived in Washington. It seemed like I never saw anybody who was white. My grandmother would take me places around the federal buildings, and I'd go in there, and sometimes she'd take me to Glen Echo, because in Glen Echo, I could actually take part in all the rides and the food that they served, simply because I was lighter-skinned and they never challenged me. But my grandmother said, "Look, if you're challenged," because I was pretty sunburned, "you just say, yes, you are Negro, and that's my grandmother over there, and we will leave." She says, "Don't get into any scraps over that." My father, who was overseas at the time, he always would tell me never to contest any type of attempt to enforce the segregation laws. When he came home, he told me the same thing. I just generally accepted what was in place at the time.

The experience of my mother—I actually have a write-up that she gave to a book about what it was like to be an Army wife of a black commanding officer. My dad, of course, started in the military service in the Expeditionary Army to Europe, but he didn't have to go, because the war stopped. They had the armistice on the day or so that he was to leave to go over to Europe to join the 369th Infantry, which is all-black unit. He was trained as a radio man. It was interesting that it was hard to get black radio men, because it was somewhat complex to operate the radio and we didn't have the education, so they trained college students to do this. He was a radio man, and that's what he would have done if the war hadn't stopped. It was 1918. He was eighteen

years old. The war was over. He joined the 369th when it came back to Harlem, and he stayed in the National Guard and he rose from private all the way to major in the National Guard. There's an interesting time in 1934 before World War Two started. At that time, he was one of four trained infantry officers in the United States Army. That was from history. One of four. He was, at that point, had risen to be a captain in charge of a howitzer, which would be an artillery company, now called a battery, in the 369th Infantry. He went to Fort Benning. I'm going to disclose something which would be actually unheard of to history. This was 1934. A black person would be lynched in a minute in Georgia in 1934. It was bad enough in the North. When my father went down there, of course him being black, and obviously black, he had no place to eat and no place to stay. But the Army assigned him to go to advanced infantry officer's training there. What were they to do? They went to a black preacher in the town of Benning and they asked him to take care of my father, and the preacher refused. He said no. I don't think he gave much of a reason for it. He said, "No, it isn't right. He's in the Army. You take care of him." They decided to separate my father from the rest of the officers. Then an interesting thing happened. The New York National Guard contingency, who were mostly white, surrounded him and contested the decision to segregate my father. The general in charge agreed that this was federal property and he would not separate him, so he was integrated. Of course, my father was very exceptional in his ability to handle those situations. I'm sure he'd get mad, but he was able to handle it. So he went through the camp very, very well, without any problems, and let them know how satisfied he was. But this was the first integration of the United States Army, and this was 1934. This had never been done before. Of course, it was all lost sight of once the war started. But my father was part of an integrated classroom.

After the war was about to start, he had—I think maybe it was just about ready to start. My father was trained not just in infantry and artillery, but my father was also trained in anti-aircraft artillery. This required a knowledge, at that time, of pre-calculus or calculus. Virtually no officers in the U.S. Army even understood how to shoot a plane down, but my father did, because he was trained to do so. They sent him to Fort Monroe to teach white officers. This one Negro officer was sent there to teach white officers how to shoot down planes. He got there, the same thing happened. They were going to segregate him. Then the commanding general of Fort Monroe, which is located on the tip of the Charles Peninsula, they decided it didn't make any sense. Again, they instituted the idea, this was federal property, this wasn't Southern—just like Fort Sumner was federal property. They could do this anywhere. So on the federal property, he was not segregated. Again, this was 1940. When it suited them and they needed to do it, they could do away with the segregation. Not only did they do away with the segregation of him, but they allowed me and my mother to visit and to even use the commissary. That's when we found out that black soldiers' families, even though they were in the service, were not allowed to use the commissary until much later in the

war. The reason was that it would offend, particularly offend, Southerners, and would also maybe offend some Northerners. They absolutely tried to separate the people from each other.

Then he was sent overseas to Hawaii. By 1942, I was sent to D.C. to live with my grandmother. I wanted to remember some things that happened in 1943. This was another factor that's not generally known to the public. My family and I have not spoken publicly about this, although there is a book out now called *Divided Arsenal*, which does speak about what happened. There were, of course, numerous mutinies and riots, killings and injuries, bad feelings. Some terrible things went on. Many black soldiers were virtually neurotic, and some of them psychotic, over the aspects of segregation. In Camp Stewart, Georgia, my father came back from Hawaii and took over the command of a battalion. He was now a lieutenant colonel. This was what they called an anti-aircraft automatic weapons battalion. Again, to train to shoot down planes. This whole base was composed of anti-aircraft training units. Some were white and some were black. Most of them battalion size. They integrated these units into divisions and into the corps. Some went to Europe, some went to the Far East.

The place was full of rumors. One rumor was that a black sergeant's wife had been shot and killed near an Army camp by a white military policeman. It was not true, but it was a rumor. That provoked a riot—more than a riot, a mutiny—by black soldiers in one of the units that was commanded by all-white officers. This unit was not commanded by my father. My father was in a different unit. But somehow, my father intervened. It was a good thing he did, because if he didn't, there would have been a massacre. There was another white unit with fifty-caliber machineguns on half tracks. They were to stop the insurgency by shooting the black soldiers. Imagine fifty-caliber machineguns mounted in quads, aimed at a couple of companies of mutinous black soldiers. Eventually, several military policemen were shot, and one was mortally wounded. Somehow, my father stopped the gunfire, went out, picked up the mortally wounded white MP, put him on his back, and brought him to the base hospital. That stopped the riot. It also stopped the massacre that was going to happen. The Army did not prosecute anybody. It went all the way to General Marshall, the chief of staff of the U.S. Army, and he ordered all black units in the South to be immediately sent overseas. He didn't care whether they were ready to go or what. Just get them out of the United States. And he did that. That riot is the one that caused the soldiers to be just shipped overseas. But the stopping of that massacre would allow, eventually, the integration to take place, which it took place as late as 1948, with Truman's order. My father played a part in history. Of course, I knew all of that had went on. I think that may have had something to do with how I turned out.

Near the end of the war, I had some wonderful experiences. One experience I remember quite well was watching the fleet, which would be the Atlantic Fleet, come to Annapolis to bring back, at the end of the summer, the sailors.

The Annapolis upperclassmen, who had been assigned to the fleet that summer, beginning of the summer. But instead of bringing them back just a little bit, they had a big parade, a parade of ships. Aircraft carriers, battleships, cruisers. You could not count them. They were all in front of our summer home. We had a summer place on a place called Highland Beach. The house was located maybe a furlong away from Chesapeake Bay. I remember going down one morning to go swimming, and there was the fleet laid out before me. It was twenty miles long and five miles wide. There was hardly a place for the water. Just ships. They stayed there three days. I nearly burst inside with pride, and never forgot it. It had enormous impact on me. I could tolerate anything that the country wanted to do, but I was very proud of it, because the war was over, it was won. Look what we did it with. There were the best of the Navy warplanes. The Corsairs and Hellcats. They would fly fifty feet over the water and aim their plane at a place we call the pavilion. It was like a place where we would have dances and meetings. It's a very small black township. We had a bay and we were the center of the bay. All white America came to this one place. It was absolutely incredible. It was even better than watching the parade of the Eighty-Second Airborne when they came back and marched up Fifth Avenue at the end of the war, and I watched that, too. The whole parade, from start to finish. I had quite an experience in watching the country get through the war years.

I had another incident, which made me very proud. I was going to Grimke School. I think I was in the fifth grade. The day was called Pan American Day. It was at that point that I realized the United States was part of two continents, and there were three areas. There was Canada, there was the United States, and there was Mexico. Then there was another continent below that, South America, and all the countries, and the Caribbean countries. I realized I was part of a bigger world. The principal gave me a flag, and I was to participate in the ceremonies at school. I was about ten years old. A little, tiny flag, and I'd march around. It was the flag of Panama. I had raised enough money by selling to the junk dealer tin cans and newspapers. Old newspapers and tin cans that we used. I took that money and I bought a war bond with it. I saved it up and bought a war bond. It cost eighteen dollars and seventy-five cents. It was the cheapest war bond. Since I had achieved, as a student, buying a war bond, I was given a reward. Three infantry men, dressed in their combat gear and their Tommy guns, came to the school and rode up into the hallway, up the steps, in a jeep. They put me in the jeep. I rode back down, in the jeep, and around the block. That was a big moment for me, because it meant I belonged. Even though, obviously, we were segregated, I still belonged. The soldiers were white. I think it was like that throughout black America. They seem to just put up with what happened and didn't complain. That's why the integration actually happened, because it needed to stop, the separation needed to stop, and the best place to do it was the military. When I got educated and went to prep school, then to Yale, and then to training, become a pediatrician, I went into the Army and served in Europe. Okay, you have questions for me?

01-00:48:15

Rigelhaupt:

Yeah. Let's stay with where you just ended, in terms of talking about the importance of integration and the importance of the military as an institution in that. I think it's important that it was a federal institution. If you could go back and talk a little bit more about if you remember any conversations between your grandmother and Dorothy Height and other members of the black cabinet, in terms of what they were trying to achieve and what they were trying to talk about with the Roosevelt administration. Even though, as you described, it was indirect.

01-00:49:01

Moses:

Yeah, indirect. What I knew was that what they were doing was extremely important. I was only nine to eleven years old, and yet I could understand there was serious segregation, that we had no representation, and that these men were part of the communication. And that Dorothy Height was the person who had the linkages to make this happen. Actually, there are pictures of the black cabinet. Members of the family have a picture. I know where it is. The conversations they had, I don't actually remember. The main thing was simply getting something to eat and have a place to stay. This was a serious problem. Also, I had an experience where, after the war—this would be 1948—where I went over to Ralph Bunche's house. Ralph Bunche was the United Nations emissary to Palestine when the war between Israel and the Arabs took place. Count Bernadotte from Sweden was his superior, and Count Bernadotte was assassinated by a Jewish militant member of the Stern Gang. Ralph Bunche took over the negotiations and was able to achieve a peace agreement between the Arabs and the Jews, and set the initial boundaries for Israel. They didn't fight another war until fifty-six, and then, of course, they had even two more. But his ability to personally settle it was astounding. I had a chance to actually talk to him in forty-eight, because Truman wanted him to be the under secretary of state and to concentrate on the Middle East. He wouldn't do it. I was at his house when he said to me, when I asked him, "Why won't you do it?" and he said, "I'm not going to subject my wife and my children to that kind of Washington, D.C. segregation." Actually, Ralph Bunche was a Californian. He had not experienced the stuff that was going on in Washington, D.C. Except he taught there, so he knew what it was like. He couldn't wait to get away from it.

What I would take away, any black person who was accomplished was deeply, deeply offended by the simple act of segregation. If you go so far as to prevent a person from eating and sleeping, you have insulted their very being. It's a wonder that they don't end up hating you and rebelling. That helped form my own feelings about segregation. I hated it. I grew up hating it and didn't want my life controlled by it. So that's why I didn't stay in the Eastern United States, I went West, because I would see it off and on all through the Northeast, and even in medical school, which was in Ohio, where I went, at Case Western Reserve. I couldn't wait to leave. One thing that I would like America to understand is that it's very difficult to undo what went on, for as

long as it did, and then expect that it's going to just go away and the feelings will disappear. That's not going to happen. It's going to take a long time. Although it may look, at times, very, very like a lot of progress has been made. Indeed, a great deal of progress has been made, but the feelings will stay there for probably another couple of generations before it finally is over with. Which is what they're probably dealing with now.

01-00:55:14

Rigelhaupt: This is a good place to pause. I need to change tapes.

Begin Audio File 2 moses_demaurence_03_06-04-12_stereo.mp3

02-00:00:06

Rigelhaupt: Okay, so it's still June 4, and this is tape number two with Dr. Moses. You said as I was changing tapes you wanted to begin after the pause by talking about your father's family.

02-00:00:20

Moses: Okay. My dad's family was from Cumberland, Virginia. That's central Virginia. Appomattox would be located—which was the courthouse where the surrender of the Confederacy took place—that would be about thirty or forty miles to the west. That gives you an idea where they came from. He had a very unique family. It was a completely interracial family. The founding father was a man called Alexander Trent, who was an Englishman and was given, by King George, 16,000 acres of an oak forest in central Virginia. What they were to use these forest trees for, obviously, was to make British ships in the eighteenth century. I've visited there, and they still have some of the old oak trees. There were, of course, many millions of them in the past that were cut down. There was a river that ran through the property, called the Willis, and you could put the logs on a flatboat and you could drift or pull your way down to the James River, load them up on a bigger boat, and back out to the entrance of the James River to the Chesapeake Bay, and then out to England. There was also a brick factory there. Alexander Trent had a large number of slaves. Eventually, through some generations, there were relationships between the white family and the slaves. One of the slaves was named Julia. Julia married the great-grandson of Alexander Trent. The slaves were, of course, passed down from one generation to the other. His name was Peter Trent, and Peter Trent was a soldier in the Confederate Army. The Confederate Army that he was part of was the Seventy-Six Confederate Volunteers. It was an infantry regiment. When the surrender took place at Appomattox, as the family law states it, he separated from the Army and met up with his black half-Cherokee wife and went back to the plantation and raised a family of thirteen children, who were part Indian, part black, and part white. There was a lot of children from these thirteen. Not all of them lived. Some of Peter's brothers were killed in the war. You can see that he was part of the war, and you can also see the connection with Thomas Jefferson. Some of the members of the family were related to the Hemings, of which Thomas Jefferson had a relationship with. That was Sally. Some of them were related

to Thomas Jefferson's cousins, and they were all in the same unit together. Alexander Trent was a colleague of Thomas Jefferson in the House of Burgesses, and also of Patrick Henry. So he was a member of the aristocracy.

After the Civil War, the plantation system fell on very difficult times. In some respects, the last time I was down there, it appeared that they had not recovered yet. It still looked, in many respects, like the old plantation, only the people there were quite different. They were all mixed up. You couldn't tell whether they were black or white. Many of them were said to be white, but actually were black, and many of the blacks could have been white. It was hard to tell the people apart. But I had a nice visit. That was maybe about five years ago that I visited. One of those thirteen children was my grandmother, and she looked just like an American Indian. It was hard to tell if she even had African American blood. But her children did, because she married a black man, who became a minister. It's interesting how they educated themselves in those days. She was very literary and could write extremely well, but her sister was almost like a muse. She was brilliant. She could write sermons. Some of the sermons eventually were passed down to Martin Luther King. They were changed a bit from one paragraph to the other, but basically they say the same thing. As far as I could tell, they never went to grade school. Where did they learn to speak and to write as well as they did? It's a mystery to me. But eventually they did go to a seminary school, and both she, my grandmother, and her husband, became literary and accomplished people. He became, eventually, the secretary of the National Baptist Convention by about 1926.

02-00:08:41

Rigelhaupt:

Your great-aunt, who you said wrote sermons that eventually ended up with Dr. King, for the record, what was her name?

02-00:08:51

Moses:

Her name was Lena. Her name was Lena Trent.

02-00:08:58

Rigelhaupt:

Were there ever any discussions in your family as far as hearing King or sermons that people identified as your great-aunt's?

02-00:09:10

Moses:

Reverend Vernon Johns—a number of documentaries were written about him—he was the former minister of the Dexter Avenue Church in Montgomery. Dr. King took over the church from him. Reverend Johns was from Danville, Virginia. Reverend Johns, who was the mentor to Dr. King, Reverend Johns married my mother and father. That's where we knew about these sermons. Because Lena Trent and my grandmother were writers, and Lena wrote most of the things, but Lena would also help my grandfather write, who was married to my grandmother. I read a few excerpts of her writing, and to me, she could have gone to the best colleges in the United States. She was brilliant. Not much is known about her, except in that context.

We knew about the sermons. The sermons are actually held tightly by Robert Moses. You know of him as the icon of Mississippi Burning. He's my first cousin. He owns those sermons, and he's not releasing them, because Dr. King has been accused of plagiarism, but it wasn't really plagiarism. These ministers simply passed their information on from one to another, and they used each other's statements commonly. It would bother Dr. King's name and heritage to be bringing up this sort of thing, so Bobby has held tightly to this information. He has it, but he won't release it. He'd have to die before he'd release it.

02-00:11:54

Rigelhaupt: Lena, your great-aunt, is—

02-00:11:58

Moses: She wrote the stuff. She wrote it. Johns has it. Reverend Johns has it. He passed it on to Dr. King. That's how it went.

02-00:12:16

Rigelhaupt: Is that Bob Moses's grandmother or mother?

02-00:12:21

Moses: No, that would be Bob Moses's great-aunt. Bob Moses's father and my father were brothers. His father was also involved in a singular event that happened in 1939, which was just before the war. It just gives you another illustration of what was done to African Americans. He was the architect that designed the Virginia building to the World's Fair. When they found out he was black, when he came to present himself to get the prize money, they wouldn't give him the prize money and disallowed his drawing. They gave it to somebody else.

02-00:13:46

Rigelhaupt: This is the 1939, 1940 New York City—

02-00:13:49

Moses: The New York City World's Fair. It was in Astoria. Not Astoria, Flushing.

02-00:13:59

Rigelhaupt: Right near where the—

02-00:14:01

Moses: La Guardia Airport. That's where that was. He was involved in that. Eventually, he became the head of architecture at Hampton Institute.

02-00:14:13

Rigelhaupt: Will you say his name?

02-00:14:14

Moses: That was William Moses. We called him Bill. My father spent some years after the war at Hampton Institute as professor of military science and tactics. My father probably trained as many as a fourth of all the officers, black

officers, in the U.S. Army at Hampton. There were hundreds and hundreds of them. It was a very popular program because they could get a job when they graduated. That was in the late forties and early 1950s. My dad had another couple of other important jobs. One was extremely important because it gives us some better insight into what happens to soldiers, American soldiers in particular, during the war. This had nothing to do with race. My father was working as a lieutenant colonel on the clemency board at the Pentagon from 1947 to forty-eight. During that time, he and two other lieutenant colonels would review capital murder cases of American soldiers who committed atrocities in World War Two and were subject to capital punishment or life imprisonment. They reviewed their cases to see whether their sentences could possibly be commuted. Most of their sentences were commuted, changed. They were set free or they were on a path to freedom, even though they had committed some awful atrocities to civilians in Europe, civilians in the United States, and to their own fellow soldiers. That has some meaning for today and how the United States Army handles those kinds of things. The clemency board prepares the cases for the military court of appeals, which then makes a decision on what happens to the soldier after his case is reviewed. My dad told me about a lot of the cases. They weren't a whole lot different from the Bales case that occurred in Afghanistan.

He did that for a while, and then he was sent to Europe—not Europe, to Japan, in the early 1950s. I think fifty-three to fifty-four. He had a very important job. He was a colonel by then, and he was to review the contracts made by the United States Army and Navy, contracts made with the Japanese—I think there was something like several billion dollars of contract—to see whether they were carried out effectively and whether we were, in effect, cheated. Well, we were cheated, by lots of money. He could do things like that, at that level, but he could not get a job even as an entry-level lawyer. He wasn't fifty years old in 1948. He was forty-eight years old. In fifty-three, he was fifty-three years old, and he couldn't get a job in a law firm, a white law firm, with that kind of experience. Not partner, just work for them. Couldn't do that, because they couldn't have a person who was black to be in the presence of a person who was white. We've come a long way. It was like that when my father was alive. He was discharged from the service in fifty-six. He was too sick to continue. He died about ten years later.

02-00:19:53

Rigelhaupt:

I was going to ask earlier, when you said your father, he started law school in 1922?

02-00:20:01

Moses:

No, he started law school in twenty-four. He had finished pre-law at Columbia University, and then he went to Fordham.

02-00:20:13

Rigelhaupt:

Then he worked as an attorney for a few years before—you said he went back into the service in 1934?

02-00:20:22

Moses:

He was an attorney from when he graduated from law school, somewhere around twenty-seven or twenty-eight. He graduated from law school, and he was an attorney until he went into federal service in 1940. All that time, was in the National Guard. These men in the National Guard, they were true soldiers. They stayed up with Army training for all those years in the 1930s. That's the reason we actually were able to put an Army in the field, because we had huge National Guard Army. The main thing was that we fortunately didn't make a mistake by committing them before we had even a bigger army. We had plenty of soldiers. It was Roosevelt who made the decision of Germany first, and he didn't commit our troops or our material to the Pacific War until later.

02-00:21:46

Rigelhaupt:

Did your father talk about any important experiences he had being a veteran of World War One?

02-00:21:55

Moses:

No, because he wasn't overseas. My father was never committed to combat. The war ended just as he was about to be. The war ended, World War One, just before he joined the unit. The time the bomb was dropped, he didn't have to land on the beaches of Japan, which they were training for.

02-00:22:28

Rigelhaupt:

But he had served in World War One as well?

02-00:22:31

Moses:

Yes. His initial training as a soldier was in 1918.

02-00:22:39

Rigelhaupt:

Did he talk at all about some of the racial violence that plagued the country in 1919 in Chicago? Well, in 1917, in East St. Louis, and then I think 1921 was in Tulsa.

02-00:22:55

Moses:

No, I didn't personally find out about those things until later in life, when I read about them. The only personal experience that I had, personal knowledge, was when I was ten years old and the events took place at Fort Stewart, Georgia. I knew about that a month after it happened.

02-00:23:26

Rigelhaupt:

How did you learn about what happened in Fort Stewart, Georgia?

02-00:23:30

Moses:

He wrote me. He wrote me and he wrote my mom. He wrote me personally and told me, and said I wasn't to mention it to anybody.

02-00:23:40

Rigelhaupt:

It hadn't been picked up by any—

02-00:23:41

Moses:

No, it was never in the papers. Nobody knew about this except, our family, until *Divided Arsenal* came out. We would not discuss it in any public manner.

02-00:23:59

Rigelhaupt:

How did the author of *Divided Arsenal*—did he find you? Did he find your family? Or contact you?

02-00:24:08

Moses:

He wrote a book about African American military policy in World War Two, and then he happened to—the Freedom of Information Act was up, so he could get that information. It was totally blocked. Nobody knew about it.

02-00:24:35

Rigelhaupt:

But also in 1943, there's incidents in Detroit in—

02-00:24:41

Moses:

Yes. But I had no personal experience with any of those things.

02-00:24:49

Rigelhaupt:

But did you hear about it in Detroit? I think the Zoot Suit Riots in Los Angeles were also in 1943.

02-00:24:55

Moses:

Yeah, I remember the Zoot Suit Riots. I've seen pictures of it. But it didn't become part of my consciousness. I wasn't born during the Harlem Riots of 1919. I wasn't born then. In the North, we were kept rather isolated of a lot of the incidents that occurred. There wasn't as much national news and commentary as you might think there would be, like there is now. It was a different time.

02-00:25:54

Rigelhaupt:

Do you remember any members of the black cabinet who stayed with your family and you talking about any of these things or bringing black newspapers or other press that might have covered it?

02-00:26:13

Moses:

There was very little covered, as I recall. I remember only two names: Mr. Giles and Mr. Robinson. One was labor. I think that was Mr. Robinson. Then Mr. Giles was agriculture. That's why I knew there were these two things. Then I also knew of a man—later on, I knew him, and I knew his two daughters. He actually became the secretary of the Human Rights Commission of the United Nations. He was the secretary for the cabinet. He was a very young man, very brilliant. Brilliant man. He was alive up until ten years ago. His wife and my former wife, the one who died—I was married to Grace Nash—her name was Grace Nash Moses. I was married to her for fifty years. Her mother and the wife of the secretary of Human Rights, they were close friends. I remember how she was treated when she went to Brown University. She didn't want my wife, Grace, to have gone to Brown

University, because when she went there, they put a wooden fence around her in her classroom when she went to class. This was in the 1920s. This is Brown University. It was strange, because at the same time, they had one of the greatest football players in the country, was Fritz Pollard, and he was black. He's bringing all this glory to Brown, and then they're putting this poor other student, putting her behind a wooden fence in a classroom. That kind of stuff doesn't make any sense. They did terrible things.

02-00:28:57

Rigelhaupt:

In terms of talking about your father going to college, and your mother as well, it sounds pretty clear that there were a very limited number of spaces open to African Americans.

02-00:29:08

Moses:

Oh, yeah. Things were based on the whim of a particular administrator. To a certain extent, that was going on even when I applied to medical school. I got to medical school, I think, because I fit some sort of profile. They were worried about how I would fit in. When they saw me, then they immediately want me because I fit in. It wouldn't ruffle any feathers. But then when it came time to go to training, the internship, there was one hospital that I was advised not to apply to. Not because I couldn't get in or be accepted, but because there might be an embarrassing situation for me. That was the hospital for the medical school I was in. This was 1959. By sixty-one, I had been training at another hospital in Cleveland. My first child was born. This was 1961. I brought my wife, Gracie, to the hospital to deliver the baby. I entered the hospital. I was a resident there. Matter of fact, I worked there. I was a resident. When I brought her, the first thing they wanted to know was, "What race are you, Dr. Moses?" I said, "I'm black." They said, "You'll have to be put in a separate part of the hospital. She will have to be put in a separate part of the hospital." So I said, "Then change it to I refuse to state what race I am. She'll have to go where you put her. You can decide where to put her, but I'm not going to decide that she'll be segregated." They said, "You have to answer the question. You have to write it down or check it off." I said, "I refuse to check it off." So they told me to go sit down and wait until I made up my mind. I said, "She's going to deliver a baby any time soon." They said, "You have to answer the question whether she's black or not." From then on, I decided to answer all questions of that sort as black. I said I wasn't going to go through that again. Their normal hospital room was about, at that time, was about a third of the size of this room. They put her in a room this big, with four empty beds in it. Took all the other beds out. She had a wonderful room, but absolutely segregated. But they didn't segregate the baby. The baby was all right. That could be in the same room with the other white babies, or whatever babies they had in there, but she could not be attended by anybody except a black nurse. And I worked there. I'd go in the nursery and examine babies. This is how ridiculous this was.

02-00:33:04

Rigelhaupt:

This is Cleveland, 1961?

02-00:33:06

Moses: Nineteen sixty-one, that's right.

02-00:33:10

Rigelhaupt: Part of what I wanted to ask you about, which is what you're hinting at, is in terms of the way segregation and racism worked in the United States. It was not a Southern phenomenon.

02-00:33:21

Moses: No, no.

02-00:33:22

Rigelhaupt: It was a national issue.

02-00:33:23

Moses: It was a national issue, yeah.

02-00:33:25

Rigelhaupt: I was curious about your initial experiences coming to D.C. when you were nine, knowing historically and having read that D.C. was a very segregated city at that point, and if that was different than New York.

02-00:33:44

Moses: Oh, yes. That was different.

02-00:33:46

Rigelhaupt: How would you describe what you first—

02-00:33:47

Moses: The main difference was that, when I went to school as an elementary school student in Washington, D.C., it was absolutely segregated. There was nobody in my classroom, or in my school, that was anything other than black. When I went to, eventually, Jamaica, Long Island and went to school, there was nobody else black but me. I was constantly sort of pulled from one to the other, and I had to adjust. My family helped me adjust. Actually, I was treated well by both races. You'd receive comments here and there. Black children would call me "yellow boy" and the white children would kind of laugh at the fact that I said I was black. But nobody mistreated me.

02-00:34:52

Rigelhaupt: But other than your direct experiences in school, did you see any clear lines of segregation in D.C. that were different than New York?

02-00:35:04

Moses: Well, yes. Eventually in New York, by about 1947 or so, you could eat in a restaurant in New York. In the early forties, you couldn't eat in a restaurant in New York. I think the first restaurant to open up was a place called Horn and Hardart. It was a place where you put a nickel in and you got a pie out. You could go in there. They would say, "Oh, Horn and Hardart is integrated. We can go there and get food." It was hilarious, the point at which they would go. D.C. was absolutely segregated. Although, in D.C.—now that was different.

In D.C., you didn't have to sit in the back of a streetcar, because it was the district and it was federal property. I think the ability to bring the two races together in the same place was actually accomplished by the legal issue of interstate commerce. See, because the railroad was integrated first, because it was crossing from one place to another. It was interstate commerce, and you couldn't segregate in interstate commerce. So they finally got that worked out. There were a lot of legal remedies that they had to go through. It was interesting how that took place. But what I learned to do was not to contest or worry about something that you couldn't do anything about. But if you could do something about it, then you did.

That brings me to what happened when I left the Northeast and went to Puyallup, Washington State to practice medicine. That was quite a change. Washington State was a very unique area of the country. The major founder of Washington State was black. I went to the town to practice, to begin my practice. Actually, it was probably the first association between a white American doctor and a black American doctor. His name was Paul Gerstmann, and he had trained at Northwestern. He was born and raised in the town of Puyallup. The town of Puyallup was founded by a man named Ezra Meeker. Ezra Meeker was a tiny, white-haired gentleman, only about five feet tall, and had white hair and he lived until he was well above ninety. When he was ninety, he actually took two oxen and a cart, and he drove them from Puyallup, Washington to the White House and back, to emphasize that this was a place to come and settle. That's what he did. He drove all the way there and all the way back. He was a unique man. He came to Washington as a bedraggled settler, alone, split away from the wagon train, and he found another trail called the Natchez Trail that cut through the northern Rocky Mountains, which are really called the Cascades. He went through there and he ended up in the southwestern part of Washington. He came to a place, and he was starving. It was a place that was the home of a black farmer, and his name was William Bush. There were two brothers. One was William. I forget the other one's name. They started out in St. Louis in the 1850s. He was a hunter and a wagon train master. He came there and he directed the wagon train up the Oregon Trail to the Willamette Valley. Oregon territory was—they had rules against African Americans settling there. They had beautiful farmland in the Willamette Valley. So he had to move. To move, all he had to do was go across the Columbia River. He went across the Columbia River and he settled in southwest Washington, and that's where he had his farm. He became a founder of the state of Washington. The head of the delegation for the 1903 St. Louis exposition was his son. He was the one that brought in this Ezra Meeker, who his life he saved, and then he told Ezra to go north to a place called Puyallup, where the Indians were friendly. He thought he could get start with a farm there. He became a millionaire by the growing of hops. The Indians were his labor. Then lots of people moved to that area and to Tacoma. That's how Washington got started.

02-00:42:26

Rigelhaupt: Did you know the Cayton family at all?

02-00:42:32

Moses: I didn't know the family. He was a newspaper man.

02-00:42:37

Rigelhaupt: In Seattle.

02-00:42:37

Moses: In Seattle.

02-00:42:38

Rigelhaupt: So not too far away.

02-00:42:39

Moses: Yeah. Tacoma is just thirty miles from Seattle. They still talk about him. But that was unusual. Cayton was a very unusual man. At one point, it was somewhere between the eighties and the nineties, there were six African American mayors of all the major cities in Washington State. It was very, very unique. I went there because I knew something about the history. When I went to the town, when I went to practice, I was not able to get any place to practice in New Jersey. I couldn't rent a building. The only practice I could have was a practice in a black neighborhood. I didn't want to do that. I didn't want any segregation at all. I didn't want to be separated on a hospital staff or anything. So I go to this one town, and all I do is open my briefcase and hand them my curriculum vitae, my resume and what I've done, and I go to the bank. That's what you do, you go to the bank. The banker asked me, "How much money do you need?" and I told him how much I needed, and he said, "I'll double it," and shook hands, and I started practice. That's how simple it was. The people, at first they came around because they wanted to see the Negro. Then after they saw me, they said, "Yeah, he's okay," and that was it.

02-00:44:36

Rigelhaupt: What year did you start your practice in Puyallup?

02-00:44:38

Moses: Sixty-five. I got a lot of awards and stuff that happened over the years. It was a wonderful experience, totally unlike what would have happened to me if I stayed here. The only thing that was not so good was my wife, after fifty years, she died. Eight months after she died, I met Charlene again. I had known Charlene when I was a young man. I think I was about twenty. We've been together the last four years.

02-00:45:37

Rigelhaupt: If we could jump backward again to World War Two, when you were living with your grandmother. One of the other things that had a big impact in terms of the country and in terms of questions about race and segregation was A. Philip Randolph's March on Washington Movement.

02-00:46:01

Moses: Yeah, there was that issue.

02-00:46:03

Rigelhaupt: Do you remember what you heard about it?

02-00:46:05

Moses: Yeah. All during my life, I had understood that there were two people that were extremely important to the ability of black people to get employment in the war industry. One was Philip Randolph, and the other was John Sengstacke. John Sengstacke was the editor of the *Pittsburgh Courier*. He challenged Roosevelt that he would go to a concentration camp if Roosevelt didn't follow Randolph's idea that the defense industry was to employ blacks, just like it employed whites. Roosevelt was really struck by it and really believed, yes, he would go to prison. That wouldn't have been so good to put a newspaper editor in prison. So he finally agreed to Randolph that he would open up the defense industry to African Americans. I since remember, now, reading, in particularly Leon Litwack's book, about it's been in a storm so long that the South was very threatened by that, because it meant that black labor would leave the farm and go north. There wouldn't be anybody left to run the farm, because the Negroes would leave. Maybe that's what was in Roosevelt's mind. He was listening to the South. But then he had a conundrum. They were leaving anyway, those that could, so if they were going to leave anyway, he might as well have them work in defense industry, because they were needed there. It worked out. The migration had already started in the thirties, up from the Mississippi Valley to Chicago. That had been going on ten years at least. Then there was another migration in the war years from Louisiana and Arkansas and Texas to the West. The earlier migration had taken place from the Southern states, like North Carolina and South Carolina and Virginia, up north to the Northeast cities. That was taking place in the twenties, or even before. Something was going on anyway, so he gave in. I think that the cabinet played a role in helping black labor stay in the South. Something changed, because the South did retain a certain amount of black labor. They could actually work the farms. Then the black colleges in the South often had an agricultural education, so they had people coming out who knew about farming. That's all changed now. They're now corporate farms. Black people don't go into that anymore. Around the time of that cabinet, they did.

02-00:50:57

Rigelhaupt: Part of what had to happen after Roosevelt issues Executive Order 8802 and the defense industries were supposedly desegregated or—

02-00:51:11

Moses: They got the worst jobs, but nevertheless they were put to work.

02-00:51:16

Rigelhaupt:

Did the black cabinet play a role in your memory, or did you hear conversations about how that executive order would be implemented and how it would actually go into practice, more than just being an order that—

02-00:51:37

Moses:

I can't say that I had direct experience with that. All I know was that there was a cabinet and that's what their mission was. Their mission really was to take care of things on the home front. The time I spent as a young man when I was going to prep school and I was going to Yale, when my father was at Hampton Institute, there was a huge agricultural center there. A massive farm. Almost every black college had a huge farm with education of people who were doing that. I think some of those black cabinet members, they came from those faculties.

02-00:52:45

Rigelhaupt:

Another thing about A. Philip Randolph was that he was a Socialist and had been a member of the National Negro Congress, for a short period, in thirty-six to thirty-nine. Do you remember any sense that his politics were too far left or more controversial than—

02-00:53:08

Moses:

I know something about that. Not specifically about him, but I knew about my mother. My mother was active with Communists in the thirties. She worked for the Works Progress Administration as a social worker. She had a master's degree. She helped to implement money going to people who were destitute. As part of that work, she was exposed to people in New York City who were Communists. She said she stopped going to the meetings when Stalin and Hitler came to an agreement. Then she quit. I think she would have quit anyway because of the circumstances of my dad being in a commanding position. But she writes about whether she was going to be spied on and all that sort of thing, and I think that was in the back of her mind. She was never labeled as a Communist by anybody. She certainly was a Socialist. She couldn't help but be, with all the poor people.

Now, her family was also interesting. It was a combination family deriving from European settlers who were colonists. The one I can remember the best was a slave, and goes back to 1758. No, 1759. She was a slave. She worked in that tavern on Cornhill Street. She married an indentured servant. He got through his indenture, seven years, and he was from County Cork, Ireland. Then they had a family. All those children were slaves, because she was still a slave. She was never manumitted. There's a plaque in the harbor of Annapolis, and it gives the name of John Ridout. John Ridout was the broker for the ship that brought a large number of slaves into Annapolis. One of my grandmothers was the nurse slave to John Ridout. They had a child, either from John Ridout or his son. That was my grandmother. Then she was manumitted. Then, eventually, a doctor occurred in one of the subsequent

generations, and then he was the doctor who owned the land that the initial hospital in Annapolis was where it was built.

02-00:57:45

Rigelhaupt: I'm going to pause right there just to change tapes.

Begin Audio File 3 moses_demaurence_03_06-04-12_stereo.mp3

03-00:00:06

Rigelhaupt: Okay, so this is tape number three with Dr. Moses. Just before I paused, you were talking about your family history on your mother's side.

03-00:00:17

Moses: My mom's side.

03-00:00:18

Rigelhaupt: In Annapolis, who had owned the land where a hospital had just been built.

03-00:00:22

Moses: Yeah. That hospital was built in—

03-00:00:31

Rigelhaupt: The hospital.

03-00:00:34

Moses: The hospital, it's now called Anne Arundel County Hospital. It's a large hospital, several hundred beds now. It was called an emergency hospital in 1904. The naval academy was being expanded after the Spanish-American War. My great-grandfather—that's who he would be—his name was William Bishop. He was a general practitioner, as most doctors were then, and he had a very successful practice. He was a mulatto, meaning he had black, or African American, ancestry, and white ancestry, just about equal. He had graduated from Howard University School of Medicine in the very first class. He was a very good doctor and very successful. He had both black and white patients, and he practiced right on the main street in Annapolis, in a building which eventually became the Annapolis Bank and Trust. He owned, through his grandmother, much of the second circle of buildings in Annapolis, and the land. Eventually, the courthouse was part of his land that he sold to Annapolis. The emergency hospital, he provided that land. He provided the land for the bank. Then eventually he had his home on Cornhill Street, which was the site of his distant grandfather, who had a livery stable there. As I said, he was very, very, very accomplished. He was a member of the church. All his relatives were buried in the church cemetery. He was known to be African American, but participated in the city, not in a segregated manner. He was a free man. He had another relative who turned out to be the mess steward for the captain of the *U.S. Constitution*, who eventually became Admiral Dewey, the hero of the Battle of Manila Bay. The story goes that when his relative, Moses Lake Bishop, became sick and was on his death bed, he was taken care of by Captain Dewey, who eventually became Admiral Dewey, by his wife.

That's been in the family law for many, many years. Just about every meal that Captain Dewey ate was fixed by his mess steward. It's a pretty important person in your life. If they didn't do their jobs properly, you may not survive in those days. Anyway, he was very well accepted by the Annapolians. The history I already alluded to about John Ridout being actually a probable integral part of the family or one of John Ridout's relatives. There's a story that one of the distant progeny of John Ridout spoke to my brother in the movie. He was sitting right behind him and he said to him, tapped him on the shoulder and he said, "We used to own you." Then they met for the first time and had a glorious conversation. This happened very recent times. All is well that ends well.

03-00:05:41

Rigelhaupt:

You said this happened at a movie?

03-00:05:42

Moses:

Yeah, in Annapolis. His name was Ridout also. He was a distant descendent, and he was sitting behind my brother. My brother's name is John Moses. They were in there together. My brother has lived his whole life in Annapolis. He's been on the bank board. He has a home right on the Chesapeake Bay. That's where I spend a lot of time now. The importance of all this, having heritage in both races, and both races where there's significant contact with whites and blacks together, and now my family is considerably integrated. I have Jewish grandchildren. I have other grandchildren that are African American, but of such hue that you would not know they were actually African American, but they are. One of them, at the age of twenty-three, his name is Isaac {Castima?}, he has a Finnish last name because his father had a lot of heritage from Finland, so he has a Finnish name. His father married my daughter in Puyallup, Washington State. This young man, at the age of twenty-three, became a strategic consultant for all the major corporations in the state of Washington. He's very, very brilliant and exceptional in his political and intellectual skills. He was educated at Pomona. His sister, what became the youngest member of the Washington State School Board in Olympia. She was barely seventeen years old when she was appointed by the governor. That's a competitive appointment. There are 160-some high schools, and eventually they find one person to represent them. She was the one chosen. The children benefit from the experience of their ancestors. They probably are part of what we would now call post-racial United States. Very few people have gone through what our family has gone through, so I suppose more people have to go through that before we truly have an extensive post-racial United States.

03-00:09:50

Rigelhaupt:

Going back to this moment of what the historians have to come to see as a moment of transition, during World War Two—and I'd asked about the March on Washington Movement, and you had mentioned the *Pittsburgh Courier*, which, if I'm recalling correctly, was a newspaper very active in promoting what was called a Double V campaign.

03-00:10:14

Moses: Yes.

03-00:10:15

Rigelhaupt: What do you remember about the Double V campaign?

03-00:10:17

Moses: Double V campaign has to do with victory over the Axis powers, Japan and Germany. Overcoming them, and at the same time, overcoming segregation in the United States. The two were thought to be together. We were really misled by that slogan, because when the soldiers came back, they came back to a country that was just as segregated then as it was before. They were denied the same privileges that white Americans had. It delayed the expansion of the Civil Rights Movement. Not only did it delay it, but it greatly affected it. Probably didn't become as advanced in the integration as we should have, because the South continued to resist, even though the North began to improve. In effect, we're still following a so-called Southern strategy, which perpetuates the Civil War and the reconstruction aftermath. We're still going through that today. There's some likelihood that, particularly if Romney becomes president, unless he literally acts like Lyndon Johnson, the racial polarization will continue, and maybe even get worse. He has an enormous responsibility, if he were elected, that he is not ready or appears to be the kind of person to handle it. Then we didn't think that President Johnson could do that, either, but he did.

03-00:12:48

Rigelhaupt: In a broad way, what do you remember about World War Two affecting your living conditions with your grandmother in the sense of things like rationing? Did those have an effect on your daily life?

03-00:13:08

Moses: I don't think that rationing had that much overbearing effect on my life. It was interesting that my father, and some of the other officers in the 369th Infantry, had a contact with a man from the age of criminality in the 1930s. His name was Bud Hewlett, and he was a member of a syndicate of numbers bankers who were involved in racketeering. He was very friendly with my father and other members of the 369th. He had a way of obtaining things that were rationed, just like other criminals did. Sometimes we would get things that other people couldn't get. He had a very successful family that was not involved in any criminal activity later on, and he got out of the crime and survived, whereas all the rest of them were killed off. We can't say anything but good about him, because he took care of us during the war. My grandmother, she was older. We went everywhere on the streetcar. My mother had a car. We seemed to have enough gasoline to get from one place to the other, and we drove at speeds of thirty-five miles an hour, which didn't use gas up very much. I don't think that the rationing was a big issue.

03-00:15:50

Rigelhaupt: You described buying a war bond as a student, which—

03-00:15:54

Moses:

Yes. The family bought other war bonds. I think that helped put me through college. There was property—that's the other thing. If an African American family had some property they could inherit, and they could rent the property, it provided an income. It didn't cost much to go to college when I went to college. A semester would cost you \$800 a year, like at Yale University. You could make, in a summer, at least a semester's worth of income. It was a big help. If you had a little bit of property, you could eventually come up with tuition to go to school. Some families, of course, didn't, and they had to rely on scholarships or work their way through school, which many did.

03-00:16:59

Rigelhaupt:

One of the major events in the country's history during World War Two was the internment of Japanese Americans on the West Coast. Did that make much news? Do you remember hearing about that in Washington as you were—

03-00:17:16

Moses:

Not in the East. Of course, I knew all about it eventually when I went to Washington State, because the major internment camp in Washington State was only several blocks away from my office. It was the Washington State Fair Grounds, is where the Japanese Americans were incarcerated before they were spread out to the other Western states. They were brought there, and they spent the time there until the other camps were built. I was very familiar with that. That was, of course, one of the reasons I felt that the townspeople were so generous in their attitude towards me, is that they had come to grips with what had happened during the war. I think they wanted to be looked upon as gentle and caring people. When I arrived, being the first African American in that town—and actually, I wasn't the very first one. The very first one was a very prominent figure in the war. He was an African American who was brought up in China by missionaries. Nobody knew about him until fifty years later, after the war. He was brought up by missionary parents who were African American, in China. The family was dislocated by the Chinese-Japanese war of 1937. At the age of fifteen, he joined the Chinese army and he became a lieutenant. He fought for a number of years with the Chinese army, and then when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, he traveled across Siberia, and eventually made his way to the West Coast of the United States. He joined the U.S. Army and he was an expert with a machinegun, so they made him a machinegun instructor at Fort Lewis, Washington, and he trained the soldiers. Here again, an African American. If they want to use him, they'll use him for their own benefit, but won't let anybody else know about it. Eventually, he demanded to go to a combat unit again. They gave him his choice and he went to Europe. He won the Distinguished Service Cross, and then years later, his actions were of such nature that they gave him the Congressional Medal of Honor. It was posthumous. He died shortly before his family received the medal.

03-00:21:01

Rigelhaupt:

What was his name?

03-00:21:02

Moses:

His name was Rivers. He fought in Europe, for Patton's army. Actually, he eventually lived in Puyallup, Washington, or near there. Another town over called Orting. He lived there in—started in 1958. He died sometime after that. So I wasn't the first black person. He was. It was interesting, because that area, called the Puyallup Valley, it's a valley that leads by way of a river to a glacial river, which leads to Mount Rainier. That area of the country, during the late nineties all the way up into the early 1920s, was a hotbed of the Ku Klux Klan. At the height of it, there were 1,200 members of the Ku Klux Klan in that area. I didn't know that until well after I had been in practice.

03-00:22:28

Rigelhaupt:

Yet another indicator, though, that the issues were never only Southern.

03-00:22:32

Moses:

Yeah, they were never actually settled. There was a final ending to attitudes of racism in Puyallup, Washington, which actually occurred after the turn into the twenty-first century, when the Puyallup school district was sued by black parents for discrimination. It never went to court. There was a settlement, and the settlement was \$7 million. That means that there is a court record of a decision whereby a school district cannot allow discrimination to take place within its boundaries. That school district is subject to legal action if that happens.

03-00:23:54

Rigelhaupt:

So part of the way you learned about what was going on in World War Two was through your father's letters.

03-00:23:59

Moses:

Through my father's letters, yeah.

03-00:24:02

Rigelhaupt:

How else do you remember learning about the war?

03-00:24:05

Moses:

He was able to come home on two occasions, once in 1942, and again in 1943. Then I didn't see him again for a couple years. But he was home for maybe a week. That was customary for commanding officers to leave the combat zone and actually come back to the United States for one reason or another.

03-00:24:41

Rigelhaupt:

Do you remember reading newspapers or seeing newsreels before film, before movies, that gave you—

03-00:24:47

Moses:

Oh, I loved the war movies. But my father always counseled me, if I ever went into the service, I was to always be an officer, never to be an enlisted man. Of course, enlisted men often tell their sons, never be an officer, be an enlisted man. I received a lot of input from my father on how to behave in the

army. I had an advantage when I went in as a medical officer. I knew the ropes, so to speak.

03-00:25:25

Rigelhaupt:

Another major event that happened around World War Two was the Holocaust. Not so much that I'm asking any question about the Holocaust, but if you have memories about how you first learned about it. Trying to understand what it would be like to learn about something like that as it was almost happening.

03-00:25:53

Moses:

The first we knew about it was after the war was over, and the concentration camps were discovered and Eisenhower visited. During that time, the newsreels actually came out and showed us the particulars of what had happened in Europe. Of course, we knew about the savagery carried out by the Japanese to American prisoners of war throughout the Pacific campaign, but particularly the Bataan Death March. By forty-four, when we invaded the Philippines, we learned all the particulars of that situation. I think we were well-informed about what can happen in a war. I don't think any of us are so fearful and upset—I don't think any of my friends or anyone that I ever knew protested in the Vietnam War. We didn't react to that. Because, as young people, we'd already been through a war. That's just what war is. We accepted our participation.

03-00:27:37

Rigelhaupt:

Do you remember having any conversations with your parents or your grandmother as the news footage first came in from the Holocaust? Part of my asking is—and it's obviously a very difficult question—you were probably eleven or twelve at the time that this really—how do you make sense of something like that at eleven or twelve?

03-00:28:11

Moses:

I think we were almost inured to savagery by that time. I don't think it surprised us that the Germans or Japanese did that. We were conditioned, of course, to believe they were capable of it. So the fact that it happened didn't surprise us at all. One has to remember that there were 400,000 American soldiers and sailors and airmen who were killed in World War Two. Four hundred thousand. We didn't really learn about the Holocaust until the war was over. I think that the victory in the war may have desensitized us against what had happened. It didn't unnerve us at all. We knew it was horrible, and we don't want that ever to happen again, but I don't sense an overwhelming, sickening revulsion. I think it was our own losses of our own soldiers, combined with that victory in 1945. Of course, nobody that I ever had any contact with would ever think that that didn't happen. It did. Obviously, it happened. We remember the newsreels.

03-00:30:34

Rigelhaupt:

How do you remember learning about the use of atomic weapons in Hiroshima and Nagasaki?

03-00:30:40

Moses:

We were absolutely out of our minds with joy, because it meant that our fathers were going to—we're going to see our fathers again. Look how many Japanese died in that. Perfectly innocent people. Here again, we weren't glad the Japanese died. It's important to know how people felt. I remember hearing about it. I was on the Chesapeake Bay at a beach when I heard about it. But my first thoughts were, my father is coming home. I'm going to be able to see my father. Because the thought you always had was your father was going to be killed. You would never see him again. Everybody whose father was involved, that's what they thought. So then when the bomb was dropped, and then surely the war was over, that's what we thought about. I don't think we gave much thought about the fact that 200,000 Japanese were killed. Maybe we should have, but we didn't have that feeling. But it wasn't hatred towards the Japanese as people. We didn't have that at that time.

03-00:32:24

Rigelhaupt:

Was there something about the use of atomic weapons that was noteworthy? I ask in the sense that we know that nuclear weapons became of major importance in world events and world relations.

03-00:32:47

Moses:

Oh, yeah. I understand exactly what you're getting at.

03-00:32:50

Rigelhaupt:

But did you know immediately that this was something different? That this wasn't—

03-00:33:00

Moses:

Not until later. There was so much joy over the end of the war that I don't think we thought of the implications of this until later. I knew something about the implications of it, because in fifty-four, the Korean War had been over a year, and I was in military camp for my ROTC training at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, and they were firing rockets over our heads. Something called an Honest John rocket. Then at school, we were being taught in ROTC, and in physics, how to fire an atomic artillery. We were looking at it, oh yes, now they've got an atomic shell that's made smaller that we can control. So we actually were believing that you could control an atomic weapon firing at somebody else. Firing at an enemy. They went through a phase there where they actually thought they could control the power of the weapon by reducing its size and still have incorporated into the arms of the United States. I remember those things well. I remember when the Honest John rocket would go over our heads, scare the bejesus out of us. We would say, "That could be carrying an atomic weapon." Then the cadre, the officers, would come around and tell us how they could reduce the size of the weapon so they could shoot that at the enemy. Thank god that never happened.

03-00:35:09

Rigelhaupt:

How do you remember hearing about the end of the war?

03-00:35:13

Moses:

There were two wars and two endings. Of course, there were three events. The death of Roosevelt was very traumatic, and very traumatic for black people. We had a visceral, emotional relationship with Roosevelt. Even if Roosevelt didn't return it, that's what black people had for him. We could not understand the white people throughout massive parts of America who hated him. We could not understand that at all, because as much as they hated him, we loved him. The death of Roosevelt, I remember. That was April. Then in May, I was in Queens, in Jamaica. I heard about the death of Roosevelt. I was outside the house. Everybody was crying and upset. Of course, we lived in a black neighborhood. Then the war was over literally a month later. The war was over May 8. Roosevelt died April 12. Golly, that's like three weeks or so. Everybody was just running around, going over people's houses and screaming and yelling.

Then when the war was over with Japan, which was August, and the bomb had been dropped just a few weeks before that, I was at Highland Beach, Maryland. A year later, that's when we witnessed the fleet. Again, everybody was half out of their minds with joy. But still go back to what it was. We were going to see our fathers again. Nothing could ever replace that feeling. Then we experienced that joy when our fathers—in the case of the wives, their husbands—came home and we saw them for the first time. They weren't going to go overseas again if they were getting out of the service. Of course, my father remained in the Army. But I thought everything was safe. You were constantly under this fear that something would happen to your father, or at least to my father. The fact that it went on for so long, and then suddenly it was over. It was a weird feeling for a kid. I can't imagine what it would be like for having your father or your husband or your wife deployed multiple times to Afghanistan or Iraq. That must be horrible. Any politician can think there's something good about that.

But I think what we get out of it is an attitude. Charlene and I went to Oberlin College for her reunion. She was very prominent in speaking. They were having some troubles with some of the African American students. I would say some, because there were others that I don't think had any issues at all. But they were having problems with some of them, who were concerned that they were not receiving the kind of education that they had in mind for themselves, and that their socialization wasn't recognizing they were black. Charlene brought up the comments of her father. Actually, not just comments, but the philosophy of her father, who was, of course, as prominent as Martin Luther King was during his day—her father. He used the expression that excellence will transcend adversity. She spoke to a large number of administrators and students and alumni in this large auditorium. She repeated that phrase after about ten different times in various situations. "Excellence

will transcend adversity.” By doing that, she wanted them to understand that you do the very best you can with the situation that you’re presented with, and that if the going gets tough, that’s what will enable you to get by. That’s a lesson in life. I think that she got it from her father. He got it because he was raised in racist America. I got it because we were involved directly in a war, and I also was raised in a racist America. That’s what guided me. It was interesting that the people thought that was something new. That’s what I was amazed at. Why do they think this was some sort of new concept. Anyway, that’s what I got out of the war, having experience in the home front.

03-00:43:40

Rigelhaupt:

You brought up the importance of Roosevelt, and that his death was a moment of loss for the entire country, but as you said, particularly in the African American neighborhood you were living in at the time. Historians have written about the ways—and I’ve even read other oral histories in which people have explained the importance of Roosevelt in opening up industrial jobs and changing the kind of dynamics, particularly around employment and the options that were available to African Americans. I’m curious, did you have a sense—obviously you were young at the time, but that that was something that was recognized immediately?

03-00:44:36

Moses:

Yes. Without question. Roosevelt was considered, in the thirties, at least by African Americans, as the savior of the United States. There was no president in the past or the future that compared with him and the things he did. We realized as time went on that there was resistance to his policies, but we didn’t pay any attention to that. We were extraordinarily confident that everything would be all right, and we were very surprised that everything was not all right after that war. Of course, Roosevelt died before he completed his fourth term. We were very surprised that everything didn’t work out all right.

03-00:45:44

Rigelhaupt:

When you say everything didn’t work out all right, what do you mean?

03-00:45:47

Moses:

We had all these racial hurdles to overcome, particularly education. But I think that we overcame a lot of them because we were prepared as children during that war. Black Washington, you couldn’t believe. We didn’t have any crime like they got now. We didn’t have anything like that. You could walk the neighborhoods. People were friendly. The younger people called the older people “sir” and “ma’am.” That was just customary. None of this stuff that went on now went on then. Frankly, in Jamaica, too, same thing. Even as raucous as Harlem was, it was still reasonably safe. Actually, the war years were better in some ways for African Amer—of course, we did not suffer the casualties that white Americans suffered, because we were kept out of battle, off the battlefield. We have a more positive feeling about the war years than I think any other Americans would have. I don’t think that’s been really stated, that we think it was better. Better for us. We were striving, but at the same

time, we weren't suffering the combat losses that were clouding the lives of our fellow citizens.

03-00:48:31

Rigelhaupt: I have covered the vast majority of the questions I wanted to cover. The way I like to end is to ask two more questions.

03-00:48:40

Moses: Sure.

03-00:48:43

Rigelhaupt: One, is there anything that I should have asked and I didn't? And two, is there anything you'd like to add?

03-00:48:53

Moses: I think I got pretty nearly everything. When you leave, I'll probably remember something else. I think I pretty well covered it. We went, actually, one to four. One hour and fifteen minutes almost. No, three hours and fifteen minutes. Have you done very many of these interviews?

03-00:49:26

Rigelhaupt: Yeah. I'll just pause. Thank you.

03-00:49:29

Moses: Thank you very much. It was my pleasure to be able to be helpful with the dialogue. Maybe somebody will look at it and learn something. So you write it up and becomes a written testimony, and then—are you allowed to edit it? Give your historical viewpoint? Tie it to other things?

03-00:50:01

Rigelhaupt: Yeah. I'll just turn everything off and then I can explain the whole process from here.

[End of Interview]