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John Wesley Brown: My full name is John Wesley Brown.

Herbert Jones: Mr. John Wesley Brown. And could you tell us your age?

JB: Seventy-eight.

HJ: Seventy-eight, as of today. A little bit about your place of birth. Where was you born? I know you just told me.

JB: Well, Magtelly [possibly Micanopy or Martel], Florida.

HJ: And about where is that?

JB: That's between Ocala—twenty-one miles on the other side of Ocala and twenty-one miles this side of Gainesville.

HJ: And did you go to school up there?

JB: Well, I went to little school. Little school. I didn't go to school much up there. And after (inaudible) ran away from my dad in 1914 so I didn't go to school any more.

HJ: So where—What year did you come to Tampa?

JB: Twenty-four [1924].

HJ: 1924?

JB: 1924.

HJ: 1924. Did you come straight from home to Tampa?

JB: No. No. Come from Ft. My—

HJ: Tell us how—What led you to get here?

JB: Come from Ft. Myers here.

HJ: Uh huh.

JB: In 1924.

HJ: Had you been livin' down there long?

JB: Well, somethin' about a year and a little better.

HJ: So what made you decide to leave Ft. Myers and come to Tampa?

JB: Well, I'll tell you, it could be a long story, but I'll make it short. At night some boys there, two black boys, the Langston, he had been goin' in them canals with them girl you know? And, well, them "crackers" would see 'em and one another—but this particular time some of them old "downhearted 'crackers'" seen 'em. You know what I mean?

HJ: Right. (inaudible)

JB: Yeah. And the Langston boys. So—people was sellin' their homes. And busload after busload—I wasn't gonna leave, you know, for I workin' at Franklin—Franklin owned a hotel—you know, washin' dishes. I was gettin' along all right. And sellin' their home, leavin' and about two busloads a week leavin' there, goin' different places on them (inaudible). Okeechobee, Belle Glade, Everglades, all that down that Miami coast, by the busloads. And so, they're leavin' so fast but I said, yeah, I expect I'd better. (laughs) I had, about two weeks ago, had got a letter from my sister, was livin' here in Tampa, and I got letter—had done got a letter from her. And I said—I got to studyin' and I said, sure I'd better pull up stakes now. (laughs) So I left.

HJ: So at that time how old were you?

JB: Well, I wouldn't know then, at that time. I wouldn't know how old I was.

HJ: But you was born in—What year was you born?

JB: Well, I see I just got—see, we had our age down in the Bible way back there, and a—it got burnt up, you know. And so in forty-three [1943] and I was here, I was workin' on the dock and you had to have a—

HJ: Birth certificate.

JB: —birth certificate if you worked dynamite. And so I went there on the corner of Estelle and Cass, [there] was a Notary Republican there. And I saw him and I gave my—he writ me up—somethin' (inaudible) me for my birth certificate. Come back, I was born in 1900.

HJ: Okay. So you say about twenty-five years old. A young (inaudible) man.

JB: When?

HJ: When you came here—

JB: Yeah. Yeah. Something like that.

HJ: To Tampa. When you left Ft. Myers.

JB: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. It was somethin' like that.

HJ: So were you on your own when—your own when you came here?

JB: Yeah, I've been on my own ever since 1914, when I left home.

HJ: What type of job did you get as soon as you got here?

JB: Well—when always before, when I left home a—I was a—jobs that I a—of course, when I left home I was farmin', you know. And then when I left home I went to Clearwater and I worked a little around in caddy—you know, grounds, caddy—tote your [golf] bag. Then I worked on a little farm there, out from Ft. Myers. Then, after that I mostly worked in them cafes washin' dishes, hotels, around, you know.

HJ: And that was at Ft. Myers?

JB: No, that would have been Clearwater, when I first left home.

HJ: Okay, so when you—Oh—that was before you made it to Ft. Myers.

JB: Yeah. Yeah. Way before I went to—

HJ: See now—

JB That's along when I first left. See, when I first left home I was wearin' knees—short—knee pants? And them old (inaudible) and a pair of slippers. (laughs)

HJ: You just ran away.

JB: Yeah, man, I was a small kid. But, boy, I mean, I had a man look and (inaudible) you know. Yeah. Because, when I went to Ft. Myers there wasn't nothin' there but a package store. It was wet, you know. Good old store. You get a half a pint of booze there for thirty-five cents. Thirty to thirty-five. Half a pint. And I'd go in the place and get my own liquor. Buy it, you know.

HJ: (inaudible) How many years before you came back here to Tampa? After you left Clearwater and you went to Ft. Myers—

JB: No. No. I left Clearwater I—When I first left Clearwater I went out there on Indian Rocks Beach, you know, and worked out there around them hotels. Then I come back into Clearwater. So I left Clearwater for good—I left Clearwater and went round on a road camp.

HJ: Yeah.

JB: You know, man was buildin'—puttin' down—curbin'—

HJ: Right.

JB: —on the main drag. So another guy was comin' on back laying bricks out of Oldsmar, you know, into Clearwater. I worked with this man a good while, 'bout five or six months goin' there.

HJ: Okay. So when you first—when you left Ft. Myers and came to Tampa you was on your own—

JB: Yeah.

HJ: —where'd you go from there?

JB: When I left Ft. Myers and come down to Tampa?

HJ: Right.

JB: Now, of course, I had been on my own when I left Ft. Myers and I was on my own when I got here to Tampa in—well, let's see, round here—got a job—the first job I got was workin' with my brother-in-law, workin' a—Tampa Gas.

HJ: So your brother-in-law was already livin'—

JB: Yeah. Yeah. He and my sister was stayin' on 802 Carson, in front of the (inaudible)

HJ: How—was there any barbershops, black stores—

JB: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

HJ: Somethin' near there?

JB: Yeah, barber shops up and down Central—black barber shop.

HJ: Can you remember any of 'em?

JB: Well, there's a one fella—he stayed here in Tampa. His name [was] Henry—I forgot his name, but he cut my hair when I was along—when I first came here (inaudible) 1924.

HJ: So he had his own shop.

JB: Well, I don't (inaudible) but was barberin' in there. I don't know whether that was his shop or not, you know.

HJ: So your first job was what now, once you got here?

JB: Oh, workin' a—Tampa Gas Company. Layin'—puttin' down piping, you know.

HJ: Did they treat you all right?

JB: Yeah.

HJ: How'd the white people treat you?

JB: Yeah. My brother-in-law had been workin' out there and got me a job out there. Really, we got along all right. White foreman, you know. They had a lot of blacks out there. You know, had to dig the ditches. See, I think they was puttin' those pipes down about that deep in the ground. Gas pipe, you know.

HJ: Do you remember World War I?

JB: Well, I know when they goin' to—that's when I was—

HJ: You wasn't of age then.

JB: Huh? Well, that's when I was in Clearwater. During World War I down in Clearwater I hadn't give it a thought. Wasn't thinkin' about no war.

HJ: They didn't come get you?

JB: No. No, wait a minute.

HJ: Hmmm.

JB: And so, 1918—I workin' out from—no, wait a minute. I'm ahead of my story. I was

around Bartow. I, you know, followed them construction jobs. You know, they would build bridges with this same man. When I got out from Clearwater. And so I got a letter from my sister, she wanted me to come home because she was gonna get married, you know. That was in 1918. I wasn't figurin' on goin' home yet, you know. So—I went on home. And the guy was on the east coast—he never did marry because he stood her up. You know what I mean. He was on the east coast and said, "[I'm] Comin' home," said to sister, now he never did show up.

HJ: Never did.

JB: Yeah. So I went home around there. Run from home to Gainesville and back and forth. So I had two brothers to go to the number one war. And since the lengths of time they was registerin' from eighteen to forty-five. And my daddy had got a job down here on the Manatee River, a place called Palmetto. Out from Palmetto, a place called Ellenton. He got a job down there, was workin' for a fellow that owned a farm, a white fellow. And so I raced home and at eighteen and come on down to Ellenton. And so I was waitin' on my draft card, you know, questionnaire. So after a while my questionnaire come. This fellow I was workin' for, Brown, he had a big hardware store there, groceries and everything. That's where I was workin' for him. So he filled it out and sent it back. So I was waitin' on my draft card. Peace declared 1919.

HJ: Peace?

JB: Yeah.

HJ: The war was over? Huh?

JB: Yeah. Yeah. 1919.

HJ: Well, did you ever come over to Tampa when you was livin' in Clearwater?

JB: No. No.

HJ: You never did?

JB: No. Oh, wait. I might have come to Tampa. When we come to a place they call Cross Bayou and we had a long bridge to build. And when we got to [St.] Petersburg we built him a little cover there. And this here was the next stop. And we done been there and then build a right-of-way, you know, for 'em to detour, you know. And there's a fellow in Bartow they called Lightnin'. He was a white fellow and he was over there. He was asphaltin' them roads through there. So, he had quit. And sent for my man to come over and take that job. Wasn't for that. I was right here in Tampa, you know, right here. And see—Oldsmar.

HJ: Oldsmar.

JB: Yeah, Oldsmar, Florida. Just little Oldsmar. That's right at Tampa. (laughs)

HJ: Yeah.

JB: Yeah. At that time, you know. And so we had to go over there to Bartow.

HJ: Yeah. So what other kinds of jobs was there in twenty-five [1925]—1925, when you came? I know you said you was handling the pipes.

JB: Well, when I left there they—puttin' down that pipe job, as far as I can remember. I think I got another job down there on Tampa Street. Stovall Building. They was puttin' another two story up on that Stovall Building.

HJ: Right.

JB: And on Nebraska [Avenue]. See how that floor is, go beyond this outside the road?

HJ: Uh huh.

JB: That's what—in other words, that's the kind of floor they was puttin' up there. And so where—t was rough, you know how rough concrete—

HJ: Right.

JB: —and so they had them big machines.

HJ: Umm—

JB: Yeah. Yeah.

HJ: A (inaudible).

JB: Yeah. Yeah. So that was my job. Carryin' down that mud and bringin' up stuff to this fellow runnin' that machine, you know. And gettin' up that mud. Some elevator. Way up there. I think about seven or eight stories high. Them last two stories better than eight stories. And I do that job till, you know, until it finished. And then the Florida Hotel. And then the Temple Terrace Hotel. The next job I got, the Temple Terrace Hotel. I worked there about—

HJ: About what year was that?

JB: Huh?

HJ: About what year was that you worked at Temple Terrace Hotel?

JB: The same year.

HJ: The same year, twenty-five [1925].

JB: Yeah. No, in twenty-five [1925]. So I worked there at that job. Only got about two days and I taken sick. I had to knock off. And I went home and stayed about two weeks and a half before I got well. And a—now I got well enough to go back to work. And [if] I ain't mistaken then, I think I went to work with my brother-in-law. He had a 'little truck of his own and plumbin', you know, runnin' around fixin' pipin' and you want, stoppin' the leaks. I worked with him a good while.

HJ: So he had his own little service goin'?

JB: Yeah. Yeah.

HJ: What was his name?

JB: Well, he was for a company, you know, for another man, but he was—yeah, you know, for a company. Yeah.

HJ: Okay—Any of your friends—Did you have any friends? What type of work was they doin'? You know, the other type of jobs, you know, not just the jobs—

JB: Well—

HJ: What other kinds of jobs was black men doin'?

JB: They—

HJ: Where else was they workin'?

JB: Well—

HJ: What kind of places?

JB: Well, you see, durin' that time there was a lot of this construction work going on, buildin' houses, poundin' mortar, makin' mortar. You know. And them old blocks. A lot of block work goin' on along in there. And that was—some of my friends was doin' that kind of work.

HJ: What about the shipyards? [Was] anybody workin' down there?

JB: Well, that—all that was over when I come down. See that shipyard was around twenty-two [1922] and twenty-three [1923]. I didn't get here until 1924.

HJ: Yeah, but were no blacks workin' down there?

JB: Well, you see, I wasn't here then, I wouldn't know.

HJ: I'm sayin' when you got here.

JB: It wasn't runnin'.

HJ: Oh.

JB: It was over with. Wasn't no ship buildin', nothin' goin' when I come out. That was all over.

HJ: There wasn't no dock work?

JB: Yeah, a little dock work. Yeah.

HJ: Any blacks was out there on the docks?

JB: Well, I'll tell you about the docks. I never did know about the docks until way later years—

HJ: Afterwards—

JB: After I taken sick them two weeks, nearly three, I got up and walked around. I didn't know where I was goin'. And I walked up down there around that place, corner of Franklin Street, called the mail line. And a guy—I walked in—beckoned for me to come there. It was on a platform. He had a twelve by twelve, he was standin' about this high, about twenty foot long, wanted me to help push it. (laughs) On that dock. I said, "Man, man—I—you can cussin' jumpin' up—" I walked away, like, laughin'. (laughs) Yeah, sure.

HJ: So you've been here since 1925. Okay.

JB: Twenty-four [1924].

HJ: Twenty-four [1924]. Well, what'd you do from twenty-seven [1927]? About 1927, where was you workin'?

JB: Well, the—you know—

HJ: Highway—

JB: —type jobs.

HJ: Yeah.

JB: Yeah.

HJ: So you stayed with them?

JB: Yeah. Till the jobs come, you know. You'd stay on a job until it come, and then you'd probably get another job.

HJ: Yeah. Anything else you can tell me about—where was—you know, where would you gather? Where was you all gathering at? You know.

JB: You mean—

HJ: Where was all—you know, after work and everything, where was everybody gather—what was the gathering spot?

JB: Yeah, I understand. There was a place up on Houghton and Central [Avenue]. Them were the street, you know. Up and down Central. Cass Street—boom, you know, everybody's happy. Different types of places, you know. You'd go in and get a beer or drink of pop or somethin', you know. And (inaudible) the same way. Goin' and comin'.

HJ: All right. Can you tell me about the streetcars? You rode the streetcars?

JB: Well—yeah. During that time I didn't learn too much about streetcars. But they was runnin' around here a long time before they took 'em off, the streetcars.

HJ: What about schools? Was there any schools here?

JB: Oh, yeah, there were schools here, but I didn't know too much about any schools.

HJ: Okay. Do you remember anything about land (inaudible)?

JB: No.

HJ: Okay, what about housing? Where did most of the blacks live? Did they live in houses—

JB: Yeah. Yeah.

HJ: Or was they rentin' or—

JB: Yeah. Well, they lived off—

HJ: They were mostly rentin'.

JB: Yeah. We lived in houses. You'd rent 'em, you know. But a—

HJ: Some blacks, did they own? Did—was that—

JB: Some of 'em did.

HJ: Some did?

JB: Some of did. Some of 'em rented.

HJ: Along about twenty-five [1925] to thirty-five [1935], was there any really popular and powerful black men or women around?

JB: Well, I imagine there was, but you know, I never—

HJ: You hadn't really gotten to know too many—

JB: No. No. No.

HJ: Could you just tell me about—from whenever you want to start talkin'—

JB: Well—

HJ: You can go as far back as you can remember, just about Tampa, just tell me whatever.

JB: Yeah, well, there wasn't too much about Tampa that I know because I never did get about much over Tampa, you know, when I was (inaudible). Just bein' around I wasn't—

HJ: Was the police bad?

JB: Oh, yeah.

HJ: Run you down in the street? Did you have to be off the street at a certain time?

JB: Well, no. But what I mean they—they were strict, you know.

HJ: What would they do?

JB: Well, they used them old sticks, you know. Rough you up.

HJ: What would you have to do for them to rough you up?

JB Well, you know, be cussin' and goin' on. (inaudible) And arguments on the streets, you know.

HJ: But if you was just walkin' with your wife, maybe walkin' to church or somewhere,

they wouldn't bother you?

JB No. No. No. Wasn't nothin' like that.

HJ: And what was it—there wasn't no lynching goin' on, was there?

JB: No. No.

HJ: Because I remember it was goin' on in Ft. Myers, you said.

JB: Yeah.

HJ: None of that was goin' on here though?

JB: No. No.

HJ: So, basically, most of the black people was all right. You know.

JB: Yeah. Yeah.

HJ: I mean—it was pretty safe.

JB: Yeah. Yeah.

HJ: Nobody come runnin' in the house—

JB: No. No. No.

HJ: —pullin' you out of your house or nothin'?

JB: No. No. No. And then down there to Ft. Myers it wasn't like that. They didn't come 'round—I mean, grabbin' up any kid or something like that, you know, carryin' him—

HJ: Only if you did something wrong.

JB: Well, I mean, they didn't bother nobody but if them two boys—you know, what I mean, in this couple, just them two boys. Well, now one of the boys they got that night, they got him out the jail house, that first one. He was in the jail. Now, see they had changed sheriffs. See, when I first went down there, the sheriff down there they called Sheriff Tipton. See, when I first went down there in 1921. So when I went back during that summer on the river we went back down there in 1922. Yeah, so—There wasn't them...

During the time them boys—why, they changed sheriffs and the sheriff there they called Albritton. (inaudible) And that's when they had the boy in jail. They went there and took the boy out the jail—from under the jail. Yeah. Took the boy out the jail, from under the

jail. That's right. That's what I was told. And then brought him up there in the colored part and you could see four forks—you know, of the street. And you could see some burnt wood and stuff where they put him up there and on the four forks, in the middle of that road, and tried to burn him.

HJ: Yeah.

JB: So he couldn't get down. The fellow there before, Rich Barker, had an old stove porch; they hung him up on the head. So I don't know how they had him hangin' up. But later on they cut him down, they lay him down there by the thing. And some of them, got a sheet from some of the colored people and put over him.

HJ: Okay. Well, let me ask you another question. Now, about how much money was you makin' ? How much was they payin' you about—

JB: Well, I was gettin'—my salary would always be...

HJ: —in the twenties [1920's] and the thirties [1930's]?

JB: Yeah. Down around Ft. Myers?

HJ: No. Here. Once you got here, not in Ft. Myers—

JB: Oh yeah?

HJ: ...just once you got to Tampa.

JB: When I first come down to Tampa I was makin'—I was gettin' around about—oh, on the average \$2 dollars and somethin' an hour. About \$2.20 or somethin' an hour, or somethin' an hour and like that. You know, around that—workin' for the Tampa Gas Company, diggin' them ditches.

HJ: Say what was that pay again?

JB: Oh, about \$2.20 somethin' an hour. From \$2.20 to \$2.30 or somethin' like that.

HJ: And that was in the twenties [1920's]?

JB: Yeah.

HJ: Okay, can you tell me about—were you [here] in the forties [1940's]? Were you here in Tampa in the forties [1940's], the 1940s?

JB: Yeah.

HJ: Do you remember the Tampa riot? The riot they had?

JB: In 19—

HJ: About 1947 or forty-five [1945]? Or was there a riot? Can you recollect?

JB: No, I don't remember no riot that I know that you're thinking about.

HJ: You know, a lot the—all the black people start fighting white people and everything.

JB: Not as I remember.

HJ: Not during the forties [1940's]?

JB: No, see, during—let's see—

HJ: About World War II time, about during the war or after the war, World War II.

JB: I know. I know what you mean. (inaudible) thing to say. There might have been a little scuffle which he—MacDill Field. You heard talk of it?

HJ: Yeah.

JB: Well, then during that time, you know, them soldiers was in and out of town, out there. Well, I think they had a little scuffle among the police and them soldiers and civilians durin' that time, but I don't think [it] amounted to too much. You know, it wasn't too much.

HJ: Just low key?

JB: Yeah.

HJ: Okay. Well, can you tell me anything about the churches? Say, after World War I, say from the thirties [1930's] and forties [1940's], what about—did we have a lot of churches of our own?

JB: Well, I was "out there" durin' the time. You know what I mean about "out there"?

HJ: Yeah.

JB: So I couldn't tell you too much about the—

HJ: You weren't goin' to too many, right?

JB: (laughs) I couldn't tell you too much about them churches. Now, you take from a—let's see now what year now—from 1952 on up till now I could tell you about them churches.

HJ: Okay, well not yet, unless you know, because—Okay—When you came in the twenties [1920s] and thirties [1930s], was there certain places that you couldn't go? You know, that we couldn't go?

JB: Yeah, I understand. Yeah. Well, but now let's see—

HJ: Well, what type of places was there? Was there any places in general?

JB: And down—and oh—Let's see—Well, I'll tell you I didn't do too much travelin' around an my own in the white sections.

HJ: But it was understood to stay in our section—

JB: Yeah. Yeah.

HJ: —if you didn't want to get murdered?

JB: No. No.

HJ: Or was it free for us to walk around—

JB: Yeah. Yeah.

HJ: —in the white section?

JB Yeah. Yeah.

HJ: You know, or it was drive through.

JB: Well, I mean, you could—free to go anywhere you want to go. You know. Of course, now, there were plenty of places open that the black had for their own, you know what I mean? Now, say for instance, down on Franklin or them other streets, I never did know blacks hung around there, goin' in them—Nnever did nobody—goin' in those places down there, you know.

HJ: So that's where—that's another thing I really want to know. What places was there around that you went to? What was the names of these places and what streets was they on?

JB: Well, I try to tell you the names of the places, even the streets. But, anyway—

HJ: Well, you don't have to go way back, just maybe from the forties [1940s].

JB: Yeah.

HJ: Maybe from 1940s.

JB: Well, there was—[1940s]—1940s—

HJ: Yeah, 1940s.

JB: Yeah.

HJ: Let's forget about twenty-five [1925]—thirty [1930]. Let's—World War II time.

JB: Yeah.

HJ: That's where we're at.

JB: Yeah.

HJ: World War II.

JB: Well, I can remember—I'd always go out different places, you know, and go in—I would drink at the different bars that was around.

HJ: Any one particular bar?

JB: No. Any—

HJ: You know, in the 1940s? You know—

JB: Well, now, let's see—

HJ: Somebody you knew owned it?

JB: Little Savoy was runnin' a bar.

HJ: (inaudible) was that?

JB: Down on Scott [Street] and Central.

HJ: Scott and Central.

JB: Off of Central on—right on the corner of Scott and Central.

HJ: What was the name of that bar?

JB: Little Savoy.

HJ: Little Savoy.

JB: Yeah.

HJ: What was it like?

JB: It's a nice bar.

HJ: Was it crowded?

JB: Nice—yeah, it be crowded. And then they had in there some rooms, you know, and they had waiters and, like, you and a friend or two couples or four couples would go in there and they places cut off with rooms. Then the waiters, they can go in there and take your order and come—go back and get it and carry it back in there to—

HJ: Any *bolita* goin' on in these places?

JB: Yeah, it but nothin'—no. Not that kind of place. That was just a place where you could go and have your fun and drink liquor.

HJ: That was basically the only thing—

JB: Yeah.

HJ: —that you was doin' there.

JB: Yeah. And then another boy had another place goin' across Nebraska on Scott Street the same way. Yeah.

HJ: Okay. Well, do you know a Clara Frye?

JB: Yeah.

HJ: Who was that?

JB: Hospital (inaudible).

HJ: That was a hospital. Was it in—

JB: Clara Frye Hospital.

HJ: Uh huh. Was it open—

JB: Yeah, during my time.

HJ: During your time.

JB: Yeah.

HJ: Was it open when you first came here?

JB: No.

HJ: Did you go there?

JB: Yeah.

HJ: Did you utilize it?

JB: Yeah.

HJ: How was it?

JB: Let me see—

HJ: About how many nurses there, and—

JB: Wait a minute. Wait a minute. I didn't know too much about it. They say it was nice—pretty good hospital. I'm trying to think of the year. But, anyway, I had a chance to go there in that hospital for a hernia operation.

HJ: When was that?

JB: Huh?

HJ: When was that? About when did you go in the hospital?

JB: To Clara Frye Hospital.

HJ: About year?

JB: That's what I'm tryin' to think now. Let's see—forty [1940] or—

Side 1 ends; side2 begins.

JB: —and then they had some men there they called the orderly boys.

HJ: So, who did that operation on you?

JB: Well, a doctor called Dr. Smoke.

HJ: Was he black?

JB: Huh? White.

HJ: Uh huh.

JB: And on Tampa Street, over that same buildin'—I think the Citizens Building on the seventh floor. Dr. Smoke.

HJ: Okay, anything else about the forties [1940s]?

JB: No. That—

HJ: Before the war? After the war? A lot of blacks came back?

JB: Oh, yeah.

HJ: How was it then?

JB: Well, my brother never came back from the war. He never did go overseas. He got stationed at Tampa and he stayed.

HJ: Was there a lot of jobs after the war?

JB: Well, there [were] smarter jobs after the war, I imagine. After—I stayed down there, after the war, down to Ellenton, there, and worked down there a good while. My first goin' to Ft. Myers was 1921.

HJ: Now, World War II, now, in the forties [1940s]—forty-five [1945].

JB: Yeah.

HJ: What about World War II?

JB: Wait a minute. Wait a minute. Wait a minute.

HJ: We left World War I.

JB: Yeah.

HJ: What about after World War II—

JB: Yeah. Yeah.

HJ: —and everybody comin' back from the war?

JB: Oh, yeah.

HJ: Well, were there a lot of jobs after World War II?

JB: Yeah.

HJ: Where was we workin' then?

JB: Out on the waterfront.

HJ: Out on the waterfront.

JB: Right. I worked the waterfront from 1932 to 19—I mean, nearly thirty years, I'd say. I worked the waterfront.

HJ: What were you doin' out there?

JB: Well, different jobs. You know.

HJ: Like what?

JB: Workin' in the—on the ships most of my time. And then a lot of times I'd land out there, you know, on the docks.

HJ: Was there a lot of us workin' out there?

JB: Oh, there was—

HJ: A lot of blacks workin'?

JB: All that was workin' there was blacks. Black workmen, black headers, black pullers, all the housemen was black. Everything was black. Got along dandy.

HJ: Didn't have no problems with the white workers?

JB: No. No. Go on over here we established a union. We had a little problem then gettin' that Union established back in the thirties [1930s]—

HJ: What about that?

JB: Thirty-one [1931] and thirty-two [1932].

HJ: What'd y'all do then?

JB: Uh?

HJ: What'd you all do to get the union started?

JB: They struck. Struck. Wouldn't go to work.

HJ: Who was gettin'—

JB: President.

HJ: —everything together?

JB: President.

HJ: Who was that?

JB: Perry Harvey [Senior]. He's dead now, but his boy's [Perry Harvey, Jr.] got it runnin' right on.

HJ: But he was the head man.

JB: Yeah, Perry Harvey, he [was] head of the union. Yeah.

HJ: Uh huh.

JB: And a—

HJ: Up till—before you didn't have a union. Then, during that time, you all's tryin' to get it started. Was he the head man—

JB: Yeah.

HJ: —gettin' it started?

JB: Yeah. No. No. I'm ahead of myself. They had another fellow.

HJ: What was his name?

JB: Johnny LaBelle. He's supposed to have been the—he was the president and he was supposed to, you know, get this union up.

HJ: What happened to him?

JB: He chickened out.

HJ: Did he?

JB: Yeah. Partly sellin' out to the "crackers."

HJ: Huh?

JB: Partly sellin' out to the "crackers." You know what I mean?

HJ: Uh huh.

JB: And then Perry Harvey got to be the president and then he—

HJ: So did he get run out of town or what?

JB: Well, yeah, he got goin'.

HJ: Did he leave on his own?

JB: Must have. (laughs)

HJ: Or did you all run him out?

JB: No. No. I don't think that happened, 'bout we run him out. He just chickened out and left on his own, I think. Of course, I didn't know too much about it.

HJ: But he was one of the leaders until then.

JB: Yeah. Yeah. He was the first one tryin' to get it started, you know.

HJ: He was the first?

JB: Yeah. And so after this other fellow got to be president, why—

HJ: What was his name again, Johnny—

JB: LaBelle, Johnny LaBelle. And this second one was named Perry Harvey. And who we had the little strike and everything. They tried to go in down there like they had the scuffle up. In other words, they tryin' to bring un-union men down there in trucks, you know, the workers. And so they had a lot of blacks down there tryin' to get a union, you know, you got a little scufflin' up down there. Didn't amount to too much. They all got—they went on back. And so, finally, we got it settled and got a raise. I bet you can't guess how much we went back on a raise. (laughs)

HJ: Yeah, tell me about that.

JB: Three cents. (laughs)

HJ: That was all you got. And then what was you makin' before?

JB: I think around thirty cents.

HJ: So you were makin' thirty-three with your raise.

JB: Yeah.

HJ: That was an hour?

JB: On the hour, yeah. And then after then, you know, every time well strike again. We had a strike. Oh, we didn't strike no more. You—

pause in recording

JB: —negotiating—go to a meeting. Go to these meetings, you know, and fight for a raise. You know, what I mean?

HJ: Yeah.

JB: The not him—the whole—Jacksonville, Miami and Pensacola and all them, you know, Southern states, you know. And you all go to a meetin', man. Yeah. That president come back, he never got us a raise when we wanted somethin' if it ain't but a nickel.

HJ: So who was that?

JB: The president.

HJ: That was Harvey?

JB: Yeah. For our union.

HJ: That was Perry Harvey?

JB: Yeah. Yeah.

HJ: He'd do all the negotiating.

JB: Yeah. Yeah. And—now, I don't know exactly, but if I ain't mistaken now that eight hour pay—this eight hours of pay time, I think it was around—I'm rough guessin' now—around \$75 or \$80 dollars for eight hours.

HJ: Then?

JB: Huh?

HJ: When was that? Then?

JB: Now!

HJ: Now.

JB: Yeah. Now! Now! Seventy-five or eighty dollars for eight hours' work.

HJ: (whistles)

JB: Yeah, I'm rough guessin' now; it might not be that much. Because I've been left from down there since twenty-seven [1927]—retired.

HJ: So you worked down at the docks for about thirty years.

JB: Yeah, a little better. Yeah.

HJ: From 1930—

JB: Yeah.

HJ: —to about sixty [1960]?

JB: Till um—me—I mean, seventy-two [1972]. I mean, fifty-seven [1957] and fifty [1950]—

HJ: Fifty-seven [1957] or fifty-eight [1958].

JB: Yeah.

HJ: Well, could you tell me anything else about the docks?

JB: Well, no. About all I can think about the docks.

HJ: All right. Well, one more question. Let me see—okay. During the forties [1940s] and the fifties [1950s] what about—was Clara Frye Hospital still the only place you could go if you was sick?

JB: No.

HJ: Where else did you go?

JB: No. Well, you see I don't know what year that you—

HJ: Forties [1940s].

JB: I know. I know. You're—

HJ: After the war.

JB: You're talkin' about in the forties [1940s] and then after Clara Frye—

HJ: In the fifties [1950s].

JB: Yeah. And then—I wouldn't know what year Tampa General opened up. I don't [know] what year that was. But I know—See, now, I had that hernia operation in the forties [1940s], I think it was, down there to Clara Frye. And then I had another one, you know, a second one. I had the second one oh—about—my wife passed in sixty-nine [1969]. I guess, rough guess, about three months after [she died in] sixty-nine [1969] I had the second operation, hernia operation. I went to Tampa General Hospital then.

HJ: So, one more thing, could you tell me about—back to the shipyards when Mr. LaBelle was the first president, right?

JB: Yeah.

HJ: Okay—

JB: Wait a minute. Wait a minute. The Longshoreman's [Union], I ain't got nothin' to do with the shipyards.

HJ: Longshoreman's—first president of the Longshoremen. About him leavin', could you tell me any more specifics other than he sold out? What made him leave?

JB: Well, I don't know exactly how it was, but I just assumed.

HJ: Just in general.

JB: I can say that—these two things; you can "chicken out" or you can "sell out"—"chicken out" or "sold out".

HJ: One of the two.

JB: Yeah.

HJ: Yeah, I just thought there maybe was something in—you know—

JB: No. No.

HJ: —or said that might lead me to go forward.

JB: Well, you see—I don't know what happened but he left.

HJ: Okay, anything else you want to tell me about after the forties [1940s], about Tampa, coverin'—?

JB: No. No. I—not recently. About all I know.

HJ: Okay. Well, Mr. Brown, then that about ends our—

JB: Okay.

HJ: —interview—

JB: Yeah.

HJ: —unless you want to add somethin'.

JB: No. Ain't nothin' I can add. Leave the tape for 'em. (laughs)

HJ: Okay, well, I thank you. I can cut it off right here.

end of interview