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Otis R. Anthony African Americans in Florida Oral History Project
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Richard Rishard: My full name is Richard Rishard.

Otis Anthony: And now could you give me next your place of birth and date of birth?

RR: Oh, yes. Leon County, Florida, which is Tallahassee.

OA: Okay, and what year was that, Mr. Rishard?

RR: The first, the third, and ninety-six [1896].

OA: Eighteen ninety-six.

RR: Right.

OA: January 3—

RR: Umm hmm.

OA: —1896. Okay, did you go to school in Tallahassee?

RR: Yes, I went to school in Tallahassee (inaudible).

OA: Okay.

RR: But I didn't amount to much there, but I left home very early. (inaudible) started workin'. I moved out of there. I was comin' to night school in Cleveland, Ohio. I left my father when I was fourteen years old. And I don't think I could have (inaudible). I

traveled all over the United States.

OA: Okay, then during your travels— During your early travels, when you were travelin', after you had left Tallahassee, did you ever come to Tampa?

RR: Not for a long time.

OA: Okay, well, when was the first time you came to Tampa?

RR: The first time I came to Tampa would have either been (inaudible) it was either thirty-nine [1939] or forty [1940].

OA: Okay. All right. When you were in Tampa in 1940—1939 and 1940—what type of jobs was available for the black man?

RR: Well, ordinarily—

OA: Just general variety.

RR: Ordinarily, such as chauffeuring, butlering, and— But I done a lot of cookin', too. So I used to work for, as I said, the former mayor, Mayor [D.B.] McKay. I did some cooking for him.

OA: Okay. And when was he the mayor?

RR: Oh, it was in the early thirties [1930s].

OA: Okay. And so those were the basic jobs that the blacks held.

RR: Yeah, and such as truck drivin' and such things as that.

OA: Okay, in 1939, 1940, was there any schools? What schools could kids go to in Tampa?

RR: Well, I know of this (inaudible) down there. The (inaudible). And Dunbar. And—

OA: Where was Dunbar School?

RR: Sittin' there on Verne Avenue and LaSalle [Street]. Isn't that the name of that school (inaudible)? Dunbar?

Unknown Woman: No, Dunbar right here.

RR: Well, I mean the one over there on Verne and LaSalle.

Woman: That's Carver [High School] over there.

RR: Carver, that—

OA: Okay, in the 1940s, what else was around Tampa? What else that blacks played a part in? Was the [*Florida*] *Sentinel* [*Bulletin*] around then?

RR: No. The *Sentinel* wasn't around, but a lot of this— NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People] was around.

OA: What were they doin' around that time?

RR: Oh, just about what they're doin' now. Doin' everything they could in case a colored person was in trouble and needed help; they'd come to a rescue.

OA: Was there any lynchin's in Tampa that you can remember?

RR: Not to my knowledge, no. No, I don't remember any. There was lots of (inaudible), but I don't know anything about it. And then one of our prominent men was up there on Central Avenue, I used to drive for him. He was a lawyer out of the state of New York, but his home was in South Carolina. He had an office up there on Central Avenue, right—oh maybe, two or three doors this side of (inaudible) Hotel.

OA: Who was this now?

RR: Lawyer, Green.

OA: Was he black?

RR: Yeah.

OA: And when was this?

RR: Oh, it was in the forties [1940s].

OA: Lawyer, Green. Where was his office?

RR: On Central Avenue.

OA: On Central Avenue?

RR: Umm hmm. Two or three doors this side of the, well, I'd say nearer—between Emery [Street] and Harrison [Street].

OA: Did he mostly defend black people?

RR: Yes, he did.

OA: And did he ever defend any whites?

RR: Not to my knowledge.

OA: Mostly blacks.

RR: Not to my knowledge.

OA: Was he from Tampa?

RR: No. He was originally from Georgetown, South Carolina, but he'd been in Tampa for years. I think he died in Tampa.

OA: Well, can you remember any places durin' the forties [1940s] where blacks couldn't go? Was we mostly restricted to a few streets, only a few streets, or was there anywhere in particular we couldn't go in 1940?

RR: Oh, I know places here now where blacks can't go and sit down and get a shoeshine.

OA: That's now?

RR: Yeah, now. If you go in they would—the boy would shine 'em, but you'd have to pull off your shoes and finally wait until he gets through shinin'. You can't sit on his seat. You can go in there, but you can't sit on the seat and get a shoeshine.

OA: Where is this?

RR: That's right. Well, now let's see, that's on Twigg Street between Franklin [Street]—I mean, between Franklin and Tampa [Street] on the right side, comin' west on Twigg Street. (inaudible) you can't drink it in there. They'll sell it to you, but you can't drink it in there.

OA: In the 1940s, were we allowed on Davis Island?

RR: Oh, the servants were; those who was workin' over there, they could go over there. Ever since I've been there I know colored people to work there. I worked over there a few days but not—I went over to (inaudible) make any record or anything like that.

OA: Did you ever work on the shipyards?

RR: Well, occasionally. In and out.

OA: The docks?

RR: There wasn't no steady jobs there, just in and out, off and on.

OA: About when was the first time you worked out there?

RR: Oh, that was still in the forties [1940s]. In the forties [1940s].

OA: Did you have unions then?

RR: Yes, there was unions.

OA: How long had the union been in operation—the longshoremen's union?

RR: Well, as long as I could remember. But I don't—I never belonged to it myself, but I— They organized, all right, but I never knew much—

OA: Who was the first president of the longshoremen's union?

RR: Well, I couldn't tell you. I never knew him.

OA: Did blacks ever have any problems with the police—like you may be caught after eleven o'clock or caught past certain streets?

RR: Well, in certain parts of the city you would, but in this part of the city, not to my knowledge. I don't know of anybody (inaudible) in this part of the city.

OA: Near Main [Street] and Central there was no problem.

RR: No. I spent most of my time over in Hyde Park and University of Tampa. (inaudible) chauffeur over on the other side between Highland [Avenue] and Central I lived all up and down in there. I (inaudible). I never lived in Ybor City. Facin' Ybor City, right there (inaudible). But all on this side of the river from here back to the bay, all my friends lived here. My own backyard.

OA: Okay. Was there a Tampa riot that you can remember in the forties [1940s]?

RR: No, not to my knowledge.

OA: Anything like that where blacks and whites were fighting?

RR: In fact, I don't remember any what—say a riot—among the black and whites since I've been here. (inaudible) remember. And I'm sorry to say my memories are very bad.

OA: Oh, you're helpin' me out, though.

RR: Well, I'll do the best that I can, but my memories are no good at all.

OA: Could you remember a few local churches that was around in the forties [1940s]?

RR: Yes. Oh, let's see now, (inaudible) of the old ones. The First Baptist Church of (inaudible) Greater Tampa. I forgot what that church is called, Virginia. The church where Sally and them go, what's that church called?

Woman: Yeah, you called it—named Greater Bethel.

RR: Yeah, Greater Bethel.

Woman: Reverend (inaudible).

RR: And then I know of the Methodist Church down there, I think on Harris and Scott [Street]. (inaudible)

Woman: That church (inaudible) Temple (inaudible) on Jefferson [Street] and Scott.

RR: Yeah.

OA: Okay, Mr. Rishard. Do you remember the Clara Frye Hospital?

RR: I know of it, but I never had no personal dealings with it.

OA: You never had to go down there?

RR: No. No.

OA: Was there any other shops, stores, that black people might have owned in the forties [1940s], like a clothing store, or a barber shop that was owned by blacks, or markets?

RR: Well, the only that I know was in (inaudible) during my time. I never noticed any clothier, clothing stores but I know— Only ones I know of of them was—

OA: And maybe general—

RR: —tailor shops and certain things as that belonged to the blacks.

OA: Who owned the tailor shop in the forties [1940s]?

RR: Well, there was two or three that was over on Central Ave. But now, the owner of 'em, I couldn't tell you that.

OA: Umm hmm. You think you remember the names of 'em?

RR: No, I don't remember the—

OA: But it was three.

RR: Right. Two or three.

OA: Two or three on Main Street.

RR: And the famous guy we had over there, he got killed by a so-called deputy sheriff, and he was a negro too. This fellow, they called him Charlie Moon. I guess you know all about him. Charlie Moon and the fellow that killed him over there. He used to be a deputy sheriff. Let's see what they call him? What's his name, (inaudible) that guy who killed Charlie Moon?

Woman: I wasn't here, Richard. I heard about it, too. They say his name was Pearl McAden, or somethin' like that.

RR: Yeah, that's it. Pearl McAden. Porter McAllen, he's the one that killed Charlie Moon. I knew Charlie Moon but I didn't know Pearl McAden. They was on Central Avenue. Charlie Moon had several places on Central Avenue. In fact, I can't—

OA: What was the name of his place?

RR: Just a bar room. I couldn't tell you what the name— One of 'em—I think one of 'em was called "Little Savoy."

OA: Yeah, I've heard of that one.

RR: And I don't know what the other one was called. I know he had two or three more before (inaudible).

OA: At those clubs was it any— Did they ever have any big name people through, say like, Ray Charles or somebody like that?

RR: No, not to my knowledge. In fact—

OA: Blues singers?

RR: See, I used to, but I just know that this is probably Ray Charles's home 'round in there someplace. I didn't know that until I read it ten days ago. As long as I been knowin' about it, I don't know. Not any other famous persons that I know of. There's a lot of 'em around here, but I didn't know 'em.

OA: Okay. Let me ask you this question. Do you feel like there were more blacks went to church during the forties [1940s] and the fifties [1950s] than now?

RR: Yes, indeed.

OA: You do?

RR: Yes, indeed. Yes.

OA: Feel like it was—blacks went to church more?

RR: Oh, yes. A lot of 'em did. Well, I guess one reason for that's because it's war time, and most of 'em thought they wouldn't live through it. And (inaudible) see the churches (inaudible). Night and day.

OA: Okay. So is there any final comments you'd like to make about anything that you can remember special about Tampa, just about as far back as you can remember? If so, just take a minute or so.

RR: Well, I think it was more convenient in the older days than it is now. I think it was more convenient durin' the streetcar days than it is for the buses. Because in the streetcar days, we didn't have to stand out in one place for hours and hours and hours. Now you can get out there and it's a big rain or anything and they don't have a shelter to get into. And maybe you have to wait there for an hour or more before you get a bus. But in the streetcar times, you get a streetcar anywhere in five minutes. I never waited over five minutes for a streetcar. And then the rates was so much cheaper than it is now. You could take a streetcar from downtown Tampa and go to the bay for only a nickel. Pretty near the same thing from downtown Tampa and go out to (inaudible)—that's the far end of the city—out to—oh, that place out there—around Sulfur Springs. I used to go out there. (inaudible). a nickel. It was much more convenient than it is now.

OA: Were blacks workin' on the street cars?

RR: They only—no more than laborers. I never saw no black motormans.

OA: Umm hmm.

RR: No, I don't think there was any motormen.

OA: They was workin' with the streetcar?

RR: Oh, yeah. They worked on the line, the track line.

OA: For as far back as you can remember?

RR: Yes.

OA: Did they ever have any problems that you knew about, like maybe—

RR: No, not a one.

OA: —mistreatment from white people?

RR: No, none that I know anything about.

OA: Did they have a special car—

RR: No.

OA: —just for the blacks, or everybody sat—

RR: No. Everybody rode in the same car.

OA: Everybody rode together?

RR: They all used the same car. Wherever you could get a seat on the streetcar anywhere, that was yours until you got ready to get off.

OA: And everybody usually got along?

RR: Oh, yes. We got— We used to get along. And, to tell you the truth, from my personal knowledge I don't know of too many brutalities that (inaudible) since I've been around. There's a lot of things goin' that I don't know about. But such things here as white or race riot, all those kinds of things, I didn't know—

OA: Big fights.

RR: —I didn't know of ones to go on since I've been around. If there was, I'd be glad to tell you. But I don't want to mislead you and I don't want to give nobody else the wrong impression. But as far as I know, during the years I've been here, I've never had a minute's trouble with nobody, no way, shape, or form. (inaudible)

OA: Okay, well, any final statement that you want to make? If not, then that ends the interview.

RR: Oh, I guess that's about all I can tell you.

OA: Okay.

RR: Yeah, I wish I could tell you more.

OA: All right, thank you Mr. Rishard.

end of interview