

Interview With: Douglas Talbot

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Name of interviewer: Heidi Jacobs (HJ)

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HJ: So I'm going to start this again. I'm Heidi Jacobs and I'm here at the home of Mr. Douglas Talbot in Grosse Pointe Shores and it's October 29th, 2016. Thank you for agreeing to talk with us about this. I see you've got your scrapbook and I'd love to talk about that. Maybe we'll just cover these questions and then we can go from there to make sure that's working, okay?

DT: Okay.

HJ: So what I wanted to start with was, I was wondering if you could tell me the name of the person you knew from the Chatham Coloured All-Stars

DT: Name of the person?

HJ: Your uncle? We're talking about your uncle --

DT: Okay. Ross Lavera Talbot.

HJ: Could you spell his middle name for us?

DT: L-A-V-E-R-A

HJ: I'll probably ask you to spell some things just for the transcript.

DT: Okay, hopefully I'll...[laughs]

HJ: So I was wondering if you could tell us about him, for example, where was he born and where did he grow up?

DT: Okay, yes, Ross -- my Uncle Ross was born in 1910 to Benjamin Augusta Talbot and Mary Ellen Terrell in Chatham, Ontario.

HJ: Okay.

DT: He is the youngest of three siblings - he had an older brother Benjamin Terrell, and my father Douglas Arthur was next, and Ross was the youngest.

HJ: Okay. And was the family from Chatham for a long time? Was it...

DT: Yes.

HJ: Okay.

DT: Yes. They - Benjamin Augusta's parents lived in Chatham also.

0:01:57.2

HJ: Okay. That's great. Can you tell me anything about his family? Do you know about his parents or brothers and sisters?

DT: Benjamin Terrell, his oldest brother, lived in Chatham - he lived in...that...151 - I can't remember the name of the street now in Chatham. I think it was east - it was east of King Street.

HJ: Okay so it's sort of in that east side of town?

DT: Yes.

HJ: Around the ball park area?

DT: So... umm. And Benjamin worked in quite a few different jobs through his life. He had one son, Donald Talbot, who lived in Chicago, Illinois.

HJ: Okay.

DT: And of course he had two grandchildren: Jay Talbot and Frances Talbot. And the name Frances goes back to quite a few of our ancestors.

HJ: Okay.

DT: The middle child was Douglas Arthur Talbot which is my father, and he moved to Detroit and married my mother, Harnetha Sibert.

HJ: Could you spell that name too?

DT: S-I-B-E-R-T

HJ: Great, thank you.

0:03:40.7

DT: And he had various jobs working during the Depression, and he worked for the WPA - his last job. And that was [President] Franklin Roosevelt started that to get people to work during the Depression. And he was killed on the job. He was killed a week before Christmas. And my mother, let's see, my mother was [pregnant with my brother, Reginald], and I was two years old. My sister was five. I have a picture of both my Uncle Ross and my father. Other than that I can't tell you very much more.

HJ: Okay, well that's a lot. And you're talking about --

0:04:57.5

DT: Except for I didn't say that my Uncle Ross passed away in 1971.

HJ: Okay. 1971. That's good to know.

0:05:05.4

So do you know anything about sports in either your dad or your Uncle Ross's family? I know he played baseball, but was sports a big part of the family do you think?

DT: I - you know - he never talked very much about his playing baseball. His mother -- I mean his wife did. Lulu.

HJ: Okay.

DT: Lulu Talbot. Her maiden name was Milburn. 0:05:33.0

HJ: Okay, yup.

0:05:36.5

DT: She would mention it. And the only other time it was talked about or mentioned, like I said, when Fergie Jenkins Sr. would come over and they would talk about who was the best ball player. Other than that, no.

HJ: No? And Lulu, did she play competitively? Or just for fun? Or was she on a women's team?

DT: Uh who?

HJ: Lulu?

DT; Oh no, she was talking about her husband Ross.

HJ: Oh so she didn't play herself, but she talked about.

DT: He would hardly ever - he wouldn't bring it up. She would bring it up.

HJ: Oh she would bring it up. Was she proud of that fact that he played baseball?

DT: Yes.

HJ: Okay

DT: Yes, yes yes.

HJ: Do you know what was interesting to her about the baseball? Why she would bring it up?

0:06:31.6

DT: Oh that he was a good player, yes.

HJ: Yes. Was he modest? Is that why he didn't bring it up?

DT: He was, I guess modest about it although I don't understand that because he wasn't modest about anything else [laughing].

HJ: Okay so when he argued with Fergie was he saying that he was a better ball player?

0:06:48.0

DT: Right, yes.

HJ: Can you tell me anything you know about his involvement with the Chatham Coloured All-Stars? Did you hear any stories?

DT: Other than him playing? No.

HJ: Okay. So one of the other things that we're interested in is the life after he played with the Chatham Coloured All-Stars. Can you talk a little bit about his family?

0:07:15.1

DT: Yes, he and his wife had one child although it did not survive - it died the next day. They never had any other children. And he worked as a chauffeur for a man named McGregor.

HJ: Okay.

DT: Who owned a sugar mill in Chatham.

HJ: Okay.

DT: And thereafter, he left and he bought a farm. Fifty acres on the 10th Concession, right off of Highway 40. He was told that he would not make it on the farm according to the other farmers because so many other people who had the property failed. But he had a better idea and the other thing is my uncle loved a challenge. And he met them head on. His idea was to have a poultry farm and not rely on crops so much, but poultry. And he did. He started a poultry farm and he had some crops too - he grew field corn, alfalfa, tomatoes, potatoes, and he also raised pigs.

HJ: Okay.

DT: He became very successful at this. He actually became - he wound up with 150 acres in that area.

HJ: Wow.

DT: And he became a well-to-do farmer.

HJ: Is that mostly because of the poultry do you think?

0:09:23.8

DT: Yes. Because he was shipping it out too. I have to say that to substantiate his well-to-do: I was in the US Army and I was investigated for top secret clearance by the FBI and they check

relatives. So they investigated my Uncle Ross and my Uncle Benny and some of the other relatives. They all thought I was in trouble because the FBI was up there. And my Uncle Ross had Provincial Magistrate I. B. Craig write a letter to my commanding officer vouching for the character of my Canadian relatives. In the letter he referred to Uncle Ross - my Uncle Ross -- as a well-to-do businessman and very good reputation. And to give a sense of his wealth, in the year 2000, my Aunt Lu needed some money and my uncle had passed quite a few years before that, so she sold 50 acres - a parcel of land - for 250,000 dollars.

HJ: Wow.

DT: And then after, my aunt passed away, there was another remaining 50 acres and it sold for 260,000 dollars. So it gives you an idea of his accomplishment after baseball.

HJ: Yeah. Wow.

DT: He also commanded respect. I remember as a youngster, wherever we went, it was "Mr. Talbot." You know. It was always "Mr. Talbot." So...that's more or less all I can think of. You have any other questions it might jar my memory.

HJ: I'm interested in - you were talking about your Uncle Benjamin.

DT: Uncle Benjamin.

HJ: He played for the All-Stars too, didn't he?

DT: 151 Wellington Street.

HJ: Wellington!

DT: That's the name [of the street where Benjamin, Douglas Sr., and Ross lived while growing up]. [DT addition]

HJ: There you go!

0:11:38.0

DT: Yes, he married - heck, my uncle married three times.

HJ: Your Uncle Benjamin married three times?

DT: Yes. But he only had a child by his first wife, Donald, like I said. And Uncle Benny worked in - and I don't have it in front of me, but I have information of where he worked and everything. Extensive voting records.

HJ: Wow.

DT: I have all that, through the years. But I think he worked for the Chatham Transportation for a while, as a bus driver. He also raised, in the back of the house there he raised rabbits and sold those. Skinned them -- sold the meat and sold the skins.

0:12:36.5

He was a bragger. He was a bragger and he loved life. He liked to entertain and he would go to the States a lot. United States a lot. Other than that, not much. His son, Donald, married a woman from Chatham. Her name was Barbara Jean -- I can't think of her last name at the moment. But they both lived in Chatham.

HJ: Did he talk about his baseball at all?

DT: Occasionally he would. I didn't spend a lot of time with my Uncle Benny. When we were on the farm, we lived with Uncle Ross.

0:13:37.1

HJ: Ross. Okay, great. So did you play sports - your Uncle Ross did he play sports or games at all when you knew him?

DT: No, because like, he was born in 1910 and I was born in 1937 so you know his sports days were over.

HJ: Okay. Did he encourage others in the family to get involved in sports at all?

DT: Well, there wasn't many in the family. There was three brothers and only my cousin Donald and myself and my brother and my sister. And ... and not really.

HJ: Okay. Nope, that's fine. I want to switch a little bit and you talked about spending some time in Chatham or at his farm. Do you remember anything about Chatham at the time when you were growing up? Did you go to any sports events when you were there or community events?

0:14:40.7

DT: Not that I could recall. No. Not any sports. My uncle would follow baseball though. Major league baseball on television and we'd talk about that all the time. Yes. And of course he followed Fergie Jenkins all the time. And Fergie gave him something - I don't know what it was, but it brought tears in my uncle's eyes. I can't recall what it was.

HJ: Fergie Jr. gave him something?

DT: Ye, Fergie Jr. gave it to him.

HJ: So he followed major league baseball -- who was his team? Who did he follow? Was he a Tigers fan?

DT: Well of course it's Chicago Cubs because...

HJ:

Oh the Cubs, because of Fergie, okay.

That's great. Can you say anything about memories of Chatham? What it was like at that time?

0:15:33.0

DT: Yes, it was a lot smaller then -- I haven't been in Chatham in quite a few years, but the last time I was there I was so surprised that the city had moved out almost close to the 10th Concession. But no, it was very small and it seems like almost everybody knew everybody back then. I recall an odd thing for me, being from the States, that when we went to the movie theatre, we had to stand up and sing "God Save the King" to King George then I think, back then. And nothing was open on Sunday back then. Everything was closed. And I remember my uncle would - if he bought liquor he had to go to a liquor bank. I recall that. Liquor was not sold in the stores at all -- I don't know how it is now.

HJ: It's barely changed. You still can't get it at...

0:16:50.7

DT: But other than that, it was a clean city. It had some newer houses, some older houses. And like I said, just about everybody knew everybody. I had -- there was cousins that I never knew that I met, who weren't Talbots, but from the extended Talbots. I was doing research on Ancestry.com and I that's how I met Kenn Stanton.

HJ: He's a cousin sort of?

DT: He's a cousin of mine. We share the same great-grandfather.

HJ: Okay. Wow.

DT: So, my grandfather and his grandfather were brothers.

HJ: Okay, okay.

DT: Never knew him before. And he - I don't know if you ever read his report on all the Talbots?

HJ: I read the section on Ross, yeah.



DT: Yes, and like he said, his family and my family lived not that far from each other, but they were never mentioned. And that's because his part of the family were very strict religious people and my aunt and uncle were not [laughing] nowhere near like that.

HJ: Because he was - at that time it was Buxton?

DT: No, it wasn't Buxton, it was -- I can't think of it right now. I should have wrote all that down.

HJ: Oh, that's okay. Do you remember anything about sports in the community in Chatham at all? I know you didn't go to any games, but did you get a sense that it was important at all?

0:19:00.3

DT: You know I could never find it. I did some research. Understand that my Uncle Benny and Uncle Ross also played hockey, but I could never find it. Find that. Because it was mentioned.

HJ: Okay.

DT: That they did play.

HJ: Okay, well that's good to know. That's also something that we're also sort of researching with Boomer so we may run into some things. I'll let you know if we do, for sure.

DT: All right, okay.

HJ: So in terms of the Chatham Coloured All-Stars, do you think this is a story people should know about?

0:19:38.1

DT: Most definitely since the sense of the time, the years that it came about and the accomplishment that they being the first of an all-black team to win like that, I think sure, it should be part of history that people know about.

HJ: What do you think is remarkable or interesting about that story?

0:20:11.3

DT: It was remarkable that - I'm sure that there were some odds that they encountered in playing in -- which reminds me of coming from Detroit and the States were during those years and of course now it's starting to come back -- racism was out there. I was always amazed at how it wasn't in Canada and Ontario, but my Uncle Ross said, "Don't kid yourself. It's there."

And he talked about some of the things that he's encountered through the years. So. But I think they probably had a hard time. To maybe even get to play.

HJ: Yeah. We're piecing together some pretty interesting, horrifying stories about what they did go through.

DT: So the accomplishment is something that should be told in the history.

HJ: Did your uncle ever talk -- you said that he said, "Don't kid yourself -- these things are in Canada as well" -- when you said there's racism in Canada -- did he ever talk about things that they ran into in the baseball team? Or was it just more later?

DT: No, it was later.

HJ: Okay. Is there anything else you would like to -- I mean, that's the end of my questions, but I know you've got this really interesting looking album. Are there things that you'd like to talk about? Or tell me?

0:22:01.7

DT: Well, the only - the thing that I recall as a young boy that my uncle - everywhere he went, he had an air about him that I'm either superior to you or equal to you. Which actually helped me. And I had a nephew and a niece that -- and a brother that also lived on the farm and helped all of us in our lives through the years to overcome obstacles. To make us feel like we are someone. So that and hard work. Because he worked the hell out of me on that farm.

HJ: Did you spend a lot of time at the farm? I sort of got the sense...

DT: Every summer up until I was -- from the age of eleven - no twelve, age of twelve 'til about sixteen. Every summer. And he took us because he and my Aunt Lu took us because of course we didn't have any parents. We were orphans, so, and but he [inaudible] to all of us and to hard work - you can accomplish whatever you set out to. And that's the way he lived life.

HJ: Yeah. Interesting. Interesting stuff. So what else would you like to tell me about your Uncle Ross?

0:24:11.7

DT: Well, I think that's probably about it. You know I remember one summer. He had this Ford tractor and it kept breaking down and he sort of had a temper.

HJ: Did he?

DT: Yes. And we would be sitting there and -- because he incorporated me in almost everything he did. And he was trying to fix it and he cursed it out you know, just called it all kinds of names, the tractor. But then he'd turn to me and say "I'm trying to do this" or "I'm doing this" or "doing that," but he would not stop until he had that thing fixed. So I think I mentioned earlier if a challenge came his way, he's going to overpower some kind of way. And that's probably why he was so successful in being a farmer. That when they said he wouldn't succeed. So.

HJ: Probably helped the baseball team too.

DT: Probably during that period of time. Unfortunately I wasn't around then. But that's about it. He was very kind. He treated my sister, my brother, and me -- he and my Aunt Lu, like we were their children. Yes, so. And since we grew up sort of in poverty because of the fact that our parents were gone and we were living with different people, it was -- showed a different kind of life when we lived with them, what could be done, what could be accomplished. So he passed on some good information. Inspired all three of us.

HJ: Yeah. That's lovely. It's nice you know because we just have these pictures. It's...

DT: I have that picture --

HJ: Yeah. Is this him here in this picture do you know?

DT: Now I don't know any of those. That's not him I don't think.

HJ: Okay.

DT: That's not him. No. And you can see this - I don't know if you want to keep it on?

HJ: Sure I'll keep the recorder on. Just for the record, you're showing me some family photos.

DT: This is Ross's mother and father. This is Benjamin Terrell. This is my father Douglas Arthur. And this is Ross.

HJ: Wow. So he's probably under a year old there.

DT: Yes. This is Ross.

HJ: Wow these are great.

DT: That's Ross. And that's also Ross.

HJ: Wow. Quite the spiffy dresser.

DT: And this is Ross skiing in Switzerland.

HJ: Okay. Wow. What was he doing in Switzerland?

DT: With the McGregors. And Mr. McGregor treated him like a son. In fact, he would introduce him to people as his son.

HJ: Okay, he's the man --because you said your uncle was a chauffeur for Mr. McGregor.

DT: They owned a sugar mill. You could probably look that up and see.

HJ: Yeah I think I've heard the name of the sugar mill.

DT: This is him also.

HJ: Wow.

DT: And this is Ross and Lulu.

HJ: Okay.

DT: And the sign at the farm there.

HJ: Oh, interesting. Oh Dresden.

DT: Yeah. Well because 10th Concession was Dresden.

HJ: Okay.

DT: And this is the two of them at the old farmhouse before they tore it down. And this is 1959 and this is the relatives here. This is Donald's wife, that's my sister, and this is -- can't think of -- he's a Dutchman and what my uncle did, he would sponsor people coming over from Europe but they had to work for him for a certain period of time. My first wife, Uncle Ross, my brother. This is Donald...Talbot. Herbert William my sister's husband. That's me -- can't see me hardly. Uncle Ross. And Uncle Ross and Aunt Lu with their dog. They loved that dog -- Mark was his name.

HJ: Was his name Mark?

DT: Mark. M-A-R-K. Uncle Ross behind the house, the newer house. Relaxing. This is the newer house here. It was - I can't remember what year it was built. And that's a part of the farm. This is a house that he built for the - for one of his workers. And this is a part of the farm. And this parcel here is I think that part that was sold for 250,000. And that's Highway 40.

HJ: Okay.

DT: They also had racehorses.

HJ: Oh interesting.

DT: So this was after my uncle passed. This is my Aunt Lu. And that's one of her racehorses.

HJ: Wow. Where - was that in Chatham?

DT: No, I think this was in Windsor.

HJ: Hmm

DT: I don't - maybe not - it look maybe Dresden Raceway. Maybe.

HJ: Yep.

DT: This is their burial here.

HJ: Oh okay.

0:31:43.0

DT: This is Lulu V. 1914 to 2003. Ross L. 1910 to 1971. And Ross J. was the baby. And as you see he only lived two days.

HJ: Wow. Those are really interesting. And you've done quite the - you're quite the historian here.

DT: This - all this is research that I've done. This part here is just Ross Talbot. And this is my Aunt Lu when she was seven years old. This is the census 1921. And her mother's name was Ella Milburn. And that's me. And here the same picture that you had. This is the letter that they thought I was in trouble. I highlighted the part --

HJ: "A very well-to-do businessman, and he and his wife, they are of very good reputations in this community." Nice.

DT: And this is, you see, all the pictures you saw. And we go up there every Christmas, spend Christmas.

HJ: So you'd spend all summer there, but would you come throughout the year too for different things - like you said Christmas?

DT: Christmas and the summer when I got older we'd visit off and on, you know when I got married for the first time and you know my wife and I would visit. And then when the children, my children were older. This is Donald Talbot right there.

HJ: Is that your cousin?

DT: Right there. Yes, that's Benjamin's son.

HJ: Okay.

DT: And that's my sister. These are Frances, who is Donald's daughter. That is Harnetha who is named after my mother. And that's my sister's daughter. And these are my two children: Leslie and Kim.

HJ: Nice.

DT: And Leslie -- Kim lives in California and she's an accountant. Leslie lives in New York and she has her own company. Consulting company. This is my [ex]-wife, Joyce. And the two girls. And this is - as you can see, they spent - my nephew and nieces spent time on the farm too. After we'd grown up. You know, because this is Harnetha and this is Jay, this is Donald's son, Donald Talbot's son. That's Herb - Herbie we call him. Which is my sister Barbara's son and of course that's Barbara's daughter. These here are, see, that's Ricky, Donald, and I forget her name.

HJ: And that's at Uncle Ross's farm?

DT: Yeah. All this is on the farm here. That's all the family there. And there's a... And that's it.

0:36:15.1

HJ: That's great. Before we started the tape you were talking about your DNA research. I think that's very interesting. Do you want to talk about that for the record?

DT: Well I was surprised, there's two types of - well three types of DNA, actually. This one is AncestryDNA, which is a combination of mother and father. And most black people say they have Indian blood in them. I don't have a drop in me. But you can see I'm 32% European West, 17% Irish, 14% Ivory Coast and Ghana, and 13 other different region. That's a combination of both my mother and father. This is my mother's here which I can't make heads or tails out of it yet. So.

HJ: Hmm. Wow.

DT: And this is my father. Like I said, Kenn and I are working on this and he is now doing research on the Brewster's. But I have a DNA match from a Brewster family member that

proves Ken and I are descendants of William Brewster who came over on the Mayflower and is one of the founders of the Plymouth colony which later became Plymouth, Massachusetts. Kenn is working with the Brewster genealogical society for further information..[corrections to this passage by DT]

HJ: Yeah. Wow. That's really interesting.

DT: And this is actually Kenn's - you know, Kenn's research here. That he has online. I don't know if you went online.

HJ: I think that's the thing, he has four or five pages on Ross.

DT: No, he's got - what is it - thirty-some different segments of different Talbots.

HJ: Okay. I think I just read the stuff about your Uncle Ross.

DT: Because he can go back to the 1700s with Talbots. But they're not our Talbots. We thought they were. But my DNA disproved that. But yes, he - those Talbots started back in Massachusetts which keeps very good records. Even of African American at the time. And so there's all kind of records. One of [the Talbots] fought in the Revolutionary War.

HJ: Wow. And you met Kenn through your shared Talbot research?

DT: Actually, we met through my nephew, Eric Jarrett who was working on Ancestry.com and this is Eric. At the time Eric was a law student at U of M. He has graduated and is a lawyer in California.

[Note from DT: Kenn's account of our meeting is as follows "But I met through him and said Eric was a law student at the University of Michigan at the time. He put me in touch with his great uncle Douglas Arthur Talbot Jr. in Detroit. Their branch of the family is descended through Lorenzo through his son Willard, and Willard's son Benjamin Augustus Talbot and Benjamin son, Douglas Arthur Talbot Sr."]

HJ: Hmm

DT: [Note: reading a statement from Kenn Stanton] Family tree on page 2: "who earned his living, Benjamin Augusta Talbot (which is my grandfather) earned his living as a cigar maker in Chatham, Ontario in the early 1900s. I met last fall with Doug and a few other members of the family after Sunday service at Christ Church Detroit where I am a choir member. Doug was pleased to share information; he had been researching our Talbot family independently for years. We have gotten together several times since then and shared photos."

HJ: Wow.

DT: So that's how we met. And it's funny how he was saying we didn't know each other existed.

HJ: Wow.

DT: But he has - this is actually both in '46. So he had -- this is my sister when she got married. My brother. And me. My sister and my mother. My father. This is - would be my great-grandfather's death certificate. Willard Alexander Talbot. And -

HJ: So he was in the US?

DT: Hmm?

HJ: Was he in the US or in Canada - your grandfather?

DT: Oh. They had moved -- some of the Talbots had moved to Ohio and that's where he passed away. And this is -

HJ: A family tree.

DT: Zebedee Dunbar Talbot, 1803-1879. His wife was Sylvie Ann Walker. Then we go over to Lorenzo Talbot, 1828-1907, [his wife] Martha Frances White, 1832- we don't know when she passed. This is [my great-grandfather, Willard Talbot, and his wife Mary Elizabeth Cooke]. I have pictures - bad pictures of it, but this is Willard right here. And Willard was the father of my grandfather, Benjamin Augusta.

HJ: Okay.

DT: And Lorenzo would be my great-great-grandfather. And that would be my great-great-great-great-grandfather.

HJ: Wow. That's a...

DT: But I think [Kenn is at] Bulletin Fifty now.

HJ: He's unstoppable.

DT: He's going to write a book.

HJ: Sounds like he's got a book already.

DT: And these are some of the Talbots here, pictures of them. That's Uncle Ross right there. That's Willard, my great-grandfather. That's my great-great-grandfather, Lorenzo.



HJ: That's pretty neat. Well thank you for sharing all of this with me. This is really, really interesting.

DT: Well, it took a lot of work. In fact, this is Bulletin Fifty here.

HJ: Oh yeah. July 2016. His latest bulletin.

DT: Yes. So there you have it. Heidi, if you have any other questions let me know.

HJ: I'm just going to turn this off.

DT: This is me and my father. And my sister.

HJ: Wow.

DT: These are old pictures. This is my mother. And this is my father, modelling, showing how much you can get in the trunk of our car.

HJ: Wow.

DT: That's him also.

HJ: That's good. I wonder if you could really get all that in that trunk.

0:45:29.0

DT: And this is telling about the death of my father here in the newspaper.

HJ: Wow

DT: This is my youngest brother Reginald. And this is also from the newspaper here. [My father] was 31 years old.

HJ: Wow.

DT: And he was killed December - I can't recall now -- December - it was December 20th I think if I recall. And like I said, my mother was pregnant with my brother.

HJ: Wow, that's rough.

DT: Yes. And that's me and my sister. And that's my mother right there. And my brother, Reginald. And I'm the shortest one. My sister and my brother were tall. And I guess I got mine from my mother's side of the family because the men were all short on the other side. That's my sister's graduation from Northwestern High School, her marriage to Herbert William. That's me

and my first wife. That's her, my first wife. And there I was in the army in the 1960s. And my children.

HJ: Hmm.

DT: So

HJ: That's great.

DT: Yes, do you have any other question?

HJ: I'm sure I will at some point.

DT: You can email me.

[END]