



INTERVIEW WITH DOROTHY WALLACE: CHATHAM COLOURED ALL-STARS

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HJ: So today is November seven-- no 18th, 2016 and I am here at the WISH Centre with -- Can you say your name for the record so we have it?

DW: My name is Dorothy Wallace.

HJ: and we're just going to ask you some questions about the Chatham area and baseball players that you may have known at that time. And the community and all of that. So if there are any questions that you don't want to answer, we can just skip those and that's not a problem.

DW: Okay.

HJ: Okay..

DW: Okay

0:00:35.0

HJ: So I'm going to start with some background questions - can you tell us where and when you were born.

DW: I was born at 62 Degge Street, 1943.

HJ: Can you spell the street name for me?

DW: D-E-G-G-E

HJ: Awesome. Thank you. And did you grow up here too?

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DW: Yes. I was born on Degge and then came over the railroad tracks to Wellington Street. And then I lived on King for a little while, then back on Wellington Street and this area has been my whole life.

HJ: Wow. And can you tell me when you were born too?

DW: 1943.

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HJ: 1943. Excellent. Can you tell me a bit about the neighbourhood where you grew up? What was it like? What were some of the important places in it?

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DW: It was very much what you would consider a black neighbourhood. And everybody - I mean everybody was -- cared for you. It just -- when you stepped out of the doors, you knew where you were at, who was around you. You are always aware of your surroundings. And the people knew you. And it was wonderful. And not just because I am at the museum now, but this has been with me all my life. I can tell you who lived next door to us, who they were, all of 'em. But my world changed when I came over the railroad tracks, on Degge Street and then coming to Park and then to Wellington. It changed my world -- my world meaning I no longer - I knew who -- my name and went to school on Degge, to Victor Lauriston. But coming over to Wellington Street, that was when I knew that I was black. You were told. You knew: there was no ifs, ands, and buts about it. And when you're a young person you don't realize all those things. So I left a lot of friends 'cause I was in a different school area. And so it was kinda hard but still, in all, you do what you have to do in the circumstances.

HJ: Can you explain about the railroad tracks - what crossing means?

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DW: Well, on Degge Street, I had my own little community of people that I knew - and friends. And there was no -- I didn't know that I was black. It didn't seem to be an issue in school. And if there was, our principal, which was Manny Morgan, took care of it. But when you came over, that changed just that little street in between Degge, Park, and Wellington. It was totally like - to me - it would be like maybe Windsor going to Detroit or that type of thing, you know? It was like you knew -- you were told you were black. In no uncertain terms. It just - the mannerisms -- it was just a different upbr-- culture -- I don't know. It still baffles me today. What that was -- why that would strike me so hard, but it did.

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HJ: Were there more white families on one side of the tracks than the other - or what was the difference between the two?

DW: Well, first of all, it just was. I can't really explain - I knew that I was Dorothy Wright, but when you came over, you were put in a position where to fit in you had to really take on a different attitude. You had to be tough. You couldn't be - like you had to take on a different -- I just can't -- you just had to take on a -- harder -- it's just hard for me to explain. But it's still dramatic to me today and then 'cause I think I got harder when I came over to Wellington Street because I never experienced the N-word ever being said to me on Degge Street. But when I hit Wellington, oh yeah. You heard it. Not just from the white kids, because I went to Victoria Park School, but you just heard it and it was unreal to me. Because I didn't understand. And it was never, ever brought up in our house because my mother was part like - her grandfather was white and my mother was black plus the ethnic word for native is now - what is it - indigenous. And so she had those makeups. And she did not allow us - if we were fighting in the street about the N-word, when we got home we got another whipping because she said what part of me do you want? Because I am all of these. You're out there fighting over the N-word - half of me is that and I'm like which part of me would you like? So that was my upbringing. But over here, yeah. The N-word was -- it just was.

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HJ: That's really interesting. Can you talk -- maybe this connects a little bit with that -- about your memories about sports in the community?

DW: Oh yeah the sports was everything. I'm not so much -- I'm not a -- I never did play baseball. I did play, but mine was track and field.

HJ: Okay

DW: And I loved track and I did do track and field up until when I went to high school. And then

after high -- I only went to grade 10 and that just didn't fit with me and I didn't do anything more other than support those that wanted to go into that, but mine was track and field.

HJ: Okay

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DW: And in my family, my brother Alan...And Alan -- baseball and sports was very much part of our life. And my brother Edward, definitely through all the clubs that they had, yeah, played baseball for all the Jaycees in Ontario and all the clubs that were going. And that and the hockey. Yeah, hockey too. So that very much - not so much basketball. You know, it just wasn't. Because where we were raised was you know, across the street at [Taylor Park – correction made by DW], before they put up the basketball thing over there, that used to be baseball. So at the Taylor School, all of us learned how to play the game in the summer and that. So baseball was very much -- and watching the games. Everybody supported the games and things.

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HJ: Oh - so I missed a question which actually relates a little bit to that. Can you talk about some of the important places in the neighbourhood?

DW: Oh Stirling Park.

HJ: Stirling Park.

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DW: You have to talk about Stirling Park. Stirling Park was an awesome place in my youth. They had swimming pools there on both sides. They had like a wading pool for mothers who wanted to come to the park and bring the little babies. And they just had like -- maybe they just had two or three feet of water. But it was connected through a walkway so you could get to the other side of the pool and it was for the bigger children. Well I had an incident where I almost drowned in the deeper end and so that kind of took away my swimming appetite so I really... But Stirling Park -- and they had like what you have in a park. Lots of things to do. And it just wasn't in the summer time. In the winter time they would flood it and we could go ice skating. And it was open to the public. And then if you -- I should ask Joan Stirling who that little man was that used to make sure we could go in this little hut and he would always have wood burning so if you got real real cold with your ice skating you could warm up in there. And he -- Mr. Stirling - he made sure that those activities was for the community. And how that got let go, it's like I don't understand that. To where you look at it now, it's a shame. That we had such -- such a gift, and it's gone.

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And it's no different than our park over here at the [Taylor Park – correction made by DW] where it was at. We call it the school. And that's where we had our summers. And it was important too. And we always - at the school -- we would call it, we had two ladies that supervised us. So that you weren't getting away and acting a fool because King Street was a busy street - you weren't going to be playing in the street, you were behind those gates. And one name was Evelyn Wright and the other lady's name was Jean Simmons. And they took -- really, they got paid -- but they took care of us in the summer. I remember all of them: Blanche Pryor, Claudine -- they were our supervisors and they kind of mentored us in many ways. So the summers were very active at the school and plus Stirling Park

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HJ: That's great. Thank you. So sports were popular in this community - hugely popular. And I know your brother was involved in sports. Were other -- Can you talk about your brothers and other family members who were involved in sports?

DW: Alan for some reason felt like

HJ: Was that your brother?

DW: Yeah. Alan. Yeah. He did the Black Panthers. I think that's what they were called. I always remember they looked like jail suits, the ones that they had -- the pinstripes. And he would try to keep that going. And I remember all of those guys. Well, I remember Earl Chase, I remember Horace Chase, and I remember Charles Hearst and Mel Cross and who was out in the field would be Danny Robinson, Junior Robinson, Little Ronnie Williams, Alan May - oh it was -- oh and I remember Chuck Gibson - yeah. They all played ball and went after the 1934 - tried to keep that going. And it was Alan he did manage it and they did go and do and they did go to Sarnia and play different things. Now Eddie, Eddie was a different all together, meaning that he went with the clubs. And with the clubs I mean like the Jaycees, [Moose Lodge, and the Legions – correction made by DW]. He was in all the sports activities that were given that were open to him from the city.

[Other members of the Panthers team: Bill Robinson, John Robinson, Johnnie Matthews, Chuck Cooper, Lorne Foster, Abbie Scott, Jim Simmons – addition by DW]

HJ: This would be in about the '50s?

DW: Yeah, yeah. Late '50s. Going into the '60s. And also his hockey. His hockey is what got him out of here. It's no different I think, him and Fergie Jenkins. They were all in those clubs. And those young men, were very much - had good people around them. Good coaches, good managers. People who gave up their time and everything. And I just thought Eddie excelled and embraced it and went on. And as you know is now retired, but he did enjoy his childhood. He'll tell you it was wonderful. And when he talks about it, he really thanks Chatham for what they gave him. And he feels like why can't other people appreciate Chatham for what they've done?

And they kind of abandon it. And it kind of bothers him in that way. But to me, it does too but not in the same context that it does because he was involved with it.

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HJ: Um, did you see any challenges or difficulties for people in your community participating in sports and did that change over time?

DW: Yes it did. When the sponsorship and then when it -- it seemed to me that the young people of Chatham now when they took the clubs -- when the clubs stopped sponsoring, and the men stopped mentoring, it just seems like it is now in the hands -- and it's all about money. And a child shouldn't have to feel that he can't play because of this thing called money. And it has, as far as I'm concerned, it has did more damage than help. And I see - I fail to see anybody playing baseball like we played it in the streets - we played it in the parks - we were all over the place. Young men were when I was coming up. So when the next ones came up, they knew all about baseball. They knew the positions and different things. Where does a child go today to find those things out? Other than okay you gotta go to Detroit to see somebody play a baseball game? Or do you have to -- do your parents have to spend so much money for you to be engaged in playing a game of baseball on a diamond in this city? I mean, it wasn't that way. And you weren't told you gotta get out because you didn't pay so much money to be in there. And, like we had parks - like we had Victoria Park, we had Stirling's Park, we had like I called the school, or the [Taylor Park – correction made by DW] as some people say. So I had three parks. And then we had Tecumseh Park. You can't leave out Tecumseh Park. And you can't leave out the girls because the girls had their own team back in the day and they played up there mostly on Thursdays. And they would play teams. And there was an all-Japanese girls' team. And I did try and talk to Shirley and Shirley Wakabayashi and I asked her did she have any pictures or anything of that team. And she said no, but she thought that at some time that all their pictures were taken in their -- by the Chatham Daily News so she asked if I had tried that, but I haven't had a chance to.

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HJ: Okay, because that's a really interesting story too.

DW: Yeah. The girls were good. They beat some team that was out of Florence. I would get that information from Murray Scott because Belva [Belva is DW's sister] talked to him - her husband - and Murray was there when they played those girls and won that championship from that top team of girls that were playing.

[note from DW: Her sister Belva's teammates included Rosetta Alliett, Donna Lucas, Dean Crosby, Claudine Pryor, Hattie Cross, Frances Wright, Joyce Hodge, Joanne Hodge]

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HJ: What year would that maybe be?

DW: I'm thinking as I recall, I'm thinking maybe '57, '58, around in that area, maybe even '56. You know, along in there. But it definitely it was something back in the time that doesn't even get recognized. And we had people in the neighbourhood like, Mr. Pryor. I mean, who'da thought that he played on a baseball team? And then we had a woman and her name was -- I know her as Mrs. Faubert [Ethel Wellington Faubert]. And she was white. And she played ball with one of the teams. She just died here not too long ago.

[note from DW: The team Ethel Wellington Faubert played for was Maple City Laundry. She played short-stop, and they won many awards.]

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HJ: What was her name?

DW: She would have been Wellington. I'm trying to think what her first name would be because we always had to say very correct - you know: Mr, Mrs. You were not. But to me, her name was - her maiden name was Wellington and she married Faubert.

HJ: Do you know how to spell that?

DW: Faubert? Wellington would be just like Wellington, but Faubert I imagine would be F-A-U-B-L-T? Something like that? I know her daughter Ann. And if you -- but she was some player. And never played with the bl-with the coloured girls. I mean I shouldn't say "coloured" 'cause that's -- with the black girls. See, this is what gets me. I'm Dorothy. I don't get this. I'm not black, I'm not brown, I'm not beige. I'm not -- and for these labels. It really bothers me. Because when you look at me and I tell you who I am, do you have to compare me to -- I mean, your skin is white I guess -- but really, are you white? I mean that kind of thing really gets to me. But Mrs. - I call her Mrs. Wellington Faubert so that I remember all of who she is and that is a story. And it was just the people around ya. Yeah.

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Like you mentioned Mr. Flat Chase yet I don't remember -- I remember him just vaguely.

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And I remember Ross Talbot because he was married to my husband's first cousin. So she was a Wallace and they were all and I remember that name. And so I got to know Ross Talbot. And he was a very nice man.

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But your kind of story is about Boomer and Joy, and Blake - I mean, everybody knew that family

if you were at Stirling Park because Boomer was over there doing whatever he was doing at that time which was baseball. And Joy, as she didn't get off work, it was the duty of everybody that was on board to be on board because Blake was over there and everybody wanted to take and play with Blake. So he kinda bonded everybody in the neighbourhood. That's just who Joy and -- we call him Boomer -- were. So you kinda knew in him being a postman and stuff like that. So that's how I know some of the players off of the team.

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HJ: That's great. So sports I'm guessing was very important in this community?

DW: Yes.

HJ: Can you talk a little about why sports was important in the community?

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DW: We didn't have any other activities other than the church. And the church was the head of the community. And other than that, we didn't have -- you went to church, and you worked -- I worked in the church, meaning like they had support through the youth and trying to do with the youth. But it was something to do. And in the winter time, a lot of them, like, we couldn't afford you know, to go to the arenas, and the arenas were so far away, so we were lucky, the majority of us, to go to Stirling Park. But being that some, like my brother, had to travel from here, clean out to the community centre where the Sports Hall of Fame is. And they would dredge and bring all their bags and everything trudging through the snow, trying to get out there. And him and Herb and Mel. You look at them and say yeah, they succeeded, but they worked at it. It wasn't just handed to them. And I think that's what made them stand above. And then too, it just was something for them to do. And that's - it was just that everybody supported 'em. And if they were playing, it was something to go and sit in the bleachers and see them play ball.

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And yes they would pass the hat around and what you had you put in there because they needed balls, they needed bats, and a lot of them bought their own gloves, would even buy their own bats. It wasn't like they were sponsored by a club. They weren't. It was just "come as you are" and play as you are. And it was like that even in hockey too where you think oh you need pads. No you didn't have money for pads. You went around and got catalogues. And you also asked for catalogues.

HJ: You asked for what?

DW: Catalogues. For like -- You'd open them up in the middle and use can rubbers. And they'd put them on Herb and Eddie. That was their shins I guess you'd call them. So that's what they did. And if you touched his stuff you got told about it. [laughing]

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HJ: That's great. Can you tell me a little bit specifically about baseball -- you did talk about it, but maybe some of the teams you remember or watching them play - do you remember how big the crowds were or who came out -- those kinds of questions

DW: Everybody came out. And they did have crowds and they were good sized crowds. Especially if it was played - like everybody after work. Through the week it was something to do. And like I said, on Thursdays. I don't know why. I don't know if there was time off. I don't remember. Unless they were playing some championship things. The girls' team was mostly played up at Tecumseh Park. It was just -- and it wasn't like hardball. They were playing softball. The hardball came at Stirling Park and you went -- everybody just went. Because you didn't know who was going to hit what where. And don't you think that it did. That ball would come out of Stirling's Park and you just prayed that somebody wasn't driving down the street or walking down the street because they could hit. And they were strong and very -- they just had the game. And they -- and it's a shame that it's taken this long for this story to be told.

HJ: Yeah. Indeed.

DW: And I know the community is saying "Why didn't we do it?"

First of all, it is what it is. It was supposed to be told the way that it's being told. And I like that the University of Windsor or St. Clair or whatever name - what is it? Is it St. Clair?

HJ: University of Windsor.

DW: Decided that this was important enough to do. Could we have did it? Yes, if all three sites would have gotten together. But where and how? Because it's just overwhelming. I mean even you have all the resources and facility to do it, it's still overwhelming to you who know -- who think you know how you're handling and doing it. I'm glad that it's being told.

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Because Mr. Pryor, if you went into their house, it wouldn't matter who you were, what you were, if you were hungry you were going to be fed.

HJ: Can you just for the record, can you say his first name just so we know which Mr. Pryor?

DW: Louis. Yeah, it was Louis. But him and Mrs. Pryor were just very much a pillar of the neighbourhood. And they had a large family and we came from a large family so I think that's why we connected. And you were very much welcome no matter, no matter who you were, you were always welcome in, in the community. Same as on -- that's just the way we were. And yes, we were corrected along the way of different things.

I can remember Flat Chase, just like I said, just vividly. And I don't know some of the other ones.

I remember Mr. King Terrell because he worked at the William Pitt Hotel and I did too. He helped me get my first job. I ran the elevator. You're only going up four floors, but [laughing] I ran it anyways. Blowing fuses as I went.

HJ: I bet you were awesome at that. It'd be good.

Actually, I'm going to leap ahead to a question because I know when we were looking at people's interviews and stuff, a lot of them worked at the William Pitt Hotel.

DW: Yes.

HJ: Can you tell me about the William Pitt Hotel?

DW: What do you want to know?

HJ: Well,

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DW: We couldn't eat in the dining room if that's what you're gonna ask me. No. Us girls. Not so much the bell hops. [note from DW: the bell hops did not get their meals included while they were working, but the girls did] The bell hops, they pretty well were bellhops. But if you worked on the elevator yes, you could go upstairs and get your dinner, whatever you wanted. It would be mostly - like they had -- what would I have? Maybe a hot turkey with french fries and a salad. And then if I wanted something they would always bring it to me. I was always fed at the William Pitt Hotel. And I got to know the people that were there. You ran into a whole lot. You'd run into incidents. Like I did. We had a couple that lived in the William Pitt Hotel and I think they said they were very rich people. And they came to the hotel and they were always on the fourth floor and you always wanted to make sure that they came down together. Because you did not want to be on that elevator with that old man. It was just torture. As long as she came down with him you knew you were okay. But if you were locked in that cage with that old man standing back in the corner talking about how he was brought up on a black woman's breast, it -- today it would be almost harassment. But that was part of the job. He'd always stand in the corner and tell these stories and you'd just cringe. But you'd get through it somehow.

HJ: And you were probably glad there were only four floors.

DW: Oh boy oh boy yes. Yes.

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HJ: So I know a lot of the 1934 players worked at some time at the William Pitt. Do you know

anything about that?

DW: I know that King did. I know that the Olbey did. The only reason that the Olbey guy did was because of John. John and his brother being on the team. And I knew that my brother Alan worked at the William Pitt Hotel and so did my brother Eddie. And my father. We all worked at the William Pitt. Eddie as a bellhop and my father as a bellhop and Alan as a bellhop. It was a job.

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And to run an elevator I can tell you exactly how much I made. I went in at 7:30 in the morning and stayed 'til 3:30 in the afternoon and I got four dollars and fifty cents. And fifty cents of that was around the corner at Laura Secord's having chocolate to get me through the rest of the day. And to this very day, nobody can, the chocolate is not the same. I can assure you.

HJ: It's not as good?

DW: Yeah. But I liked my neighbourhood. I had a sense of who I was. And I still do. And it bothers me when somebody asks me "where you are from?" And I'm from Chatham. "Where were you born?" - Chatham. [inaudible] Chatham. I just know who I am. It took me a long time to get here, but now I know who I am and I defy anybody to challenge me about who I am and what I am and why I am. So I think in the long run, yeah life bumps yeah, but it's got me here. And I guess I'm here for a reason. Maybe it's to tell you about this 1934 baseball team.

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HJ: Everything you are is you're awesome Dorothy. You're awesome.

Where was the -- can you tell me where the William Pitt was? Because it's no longer standing, right?

DW: Where the William Pitt is, is where -- you know where the cenotaph is in Chatham?

HJ: Okay

DW: That's where the soldier stands right up the street here? If you were to stand there, in front of the cenotaph and look straight through, you would see the William Pitt Hotel, then you would see the fire department what was there. But that would be your centre of understanding where the William Pitt Hotel was. It was really -- everybody wanted -- if you came to Chatham, that's where everybody went. They had a beautiful dining room. They had a full service. It was just -- to me -- it was a hotel. And you had to service and that's all I know. No, I never ate in the dining room, but I was eating the same food that they were eating in the dining room as I was in the kitchen. So prejudice -- yeah, at the time. But it wasn't like some places where -- you weren't discriminated against.

HJ: What year about was this?

DW: It would be about 1957, 1958 when I was there

HJ: Sure

I'm just going to go back to our questions. 'Cause we've covered a lot of things already here too. You... I think you've talked a little bit -- one of the questions we have is
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that I know you were born after the Chatham Coloured All-Stars and you talked about Mr. Terrell and King Pryor and

DW: Flat Chase. [DW correction re statement above – it was King Terrell and Louis Pryor]

HJ: and Flat Chase. And Boomer

DW: Yeah, and Boomer. Like most, I think Boomer I knew more than any of them. I knew like Ross Talbot - that was just in passing – “hello, how are you” -- was out to his beautiful home, but that was after Ross died. I kinda got to know his wife more than I did Ross.

HJ: What was his wife's name?

DW: Hmm I can see her, but I can't picture her -- Lou. Everybody called her Lou. She was a very straight - straight as straight can be. And her mother was too. They were nice people. They didn't -- there wasn't that flamboyant when you are blessed the way that he was blessed -- with the chickens and different things. And I knew his brother Ben Talbot who lived across the street who helped out when he could on that All-Stars team.

I don't remember the ones from out of town though. For some reason, I can't. If I had their picture and that I might be able to --

HJ: [rummaging paper] How's that?

DW: Yeah. For some reason is this a Washington? Was there a Washington on there?

HJ: Yeah, I think he was from um...

DW: Windsor?

HJ: Windsor or Detroit. Don Washington?

DW: Yeah. But, no, I can't tell you any more than as I'm looking. And the bat boy -- I keep

thinking I should know him. But I don't.

HJ: I think his name was Jackie Robinson. Not *the* Jackie Robinson, but...

DW: Yeah. But for some reason, those were the ones -- and you knew because those were the ones in the neighbourhood.

HJ: Yeah. And they stayed around.

DW: Yeah. They stayed around and so you got to know who they were. My brother has the story of King Terrell and the story is that he was the third baseman, right? And my brother says he's been -- he's seen a lot of people play ball. But he says you never ever saw a third baseman like that. And even to this day he's never, ever seen a third baseman play the way that King Terrell did.

0:40:41.9

HJ: Are there any examples or things that he did or what was so remarkable about him?

DW: He was so fast.

HJ: Fast? Okay.

DW: Really, really fast. And the way that he handled the glove and the ball. I guess there's a certain - but he said "Awesome." And I'm just telling you that because I think he felt that that was important in your story.

HJ: Yeah. Absolutely.

DW: That that be told. And Eddie got to know King a little bit because Eddie was a bellhop.

HJ: At the Pitt Hotel.

DW: At the William Pitt Hotel. So he kind of mentored Eddie a bit. But you know it made, I think, my brother realize that there's more to your life than just this bellhopping and so I guess my brother listened to all the mentoring along the way because it was successful for him. And that's how he feels. Like Horace Chase. All of them were behind Eddie. And he knew it. As he was going through.

HJ: Behind age wise? Or behind him?

DW: Behind him supporting him.

HJ: Okay, yep.

0:42:07.1

DW: Supporting him. Baseball wasn't so bad because that was a summer game and it's associated with blacks mostly. Where hockey -- that's another... And for Boomer to do what he did in the age too. And it wasn't easy. I didn't know some of the stories and my brother is talking now. But I didn't know that it was so bad at our own arenas. I never ever saw my brother play hockey. My sister did. And they said it was all they could do it was to contain her. The same as Gwenny Robinson who is a historian here. The same story she tells, Jean Simmons will tell you that for you know, an evening out they would maybe go to a Maroons game but they couldn't go all the time because it was just too hard on them from the slurs and the name calling that you got out on the ice. It's not only Eddie, it was Eddie, it was Herbie, it was -- they had an international line.

HJ: Herbie -- can you just...

DW: Wakabayashi. And Mickey Gray. All of them. And if you were on that international line. That's what they called it because all the players came from a different place. And from a different country. But were all Canadian guys. And they would call them all kinds of names going through there. And in a way I'm glad that I didn't see it. Because that's a part that he had to go through to get to where his life took him.¹ And it's sad to think that it wasn't corrected. But it was in some ways. Not so much when people came to Chatham and were in the arena. But where it got corrected is when those boys got on the bus to go to other places, they were told "No you're not - we don't allow blacks" or "We don't allow this or that in our arena." And they were politely told, "If they don't play, there's not a game going to be played." And they would have all the guys get back on the bus and then all of a sudden the other people understood: "Well, we paid all this money for ice time, I guess there's going to be a game one way or another."

HJ: And this would be in the '60s? Sort of early, mid-'60s?

DW: Yeah. Just beginning of '60s. Because when they were winning so much. And they really supported those guys. Those guys would -- Boyse and Herd supported those guys. I mean Eddie made suits, aww this is the guy that owns the place - I forget his last name - I just call him Ed. And he dressed them. They weren't going -- they looked like they were going some place. Sportcoats, suits, shoes -- everything. They looked like gentlemen. Now when they put on hockey uniforms I don't know what they looked like. But I know going on trips and that they looked very gentlemanly.

HJ: So it was probably a very conscious decision.

¹ Eddie Wright played hockey in the university system in the United States in the 1960s. He later became the first black head coach in American university-level hockey at the State University of New York at Buffalo, where he worked for four decades.

DW: Yeah. And that's what Chatham did. And where it fell apart I do not know.

0:46:19.4

HJ: So the hockey crowds were not an integrated crowd at all. Were baseball? When you went to watch baseball games, was that a more integrated crowd?

DW: Yeah. Because, well, it was in our own home park. I would imagine that when they went to the white parks, oh yeah. You were going to get the N-word thrown at you.

HJ: Would white spectators come to Stirling Park?

DW: Oh yes. It was very much mixed. Rich people, poor people. I always remembered when Eddie was playing there and my mother worked for this lady and it was W. W. P. Turner and they had the drug store - I shouldn't say drug store - it sounds weird to you young, but we would call it the drug store. Anyway, she would come and watch my brother play ball and tell my mother how good my brother was. Because my mother was a domestic and so she went. And that lady was a baseball fan. And you would never ever think because of who she was. But she did and she was and she helped support it. And I think Mr. Stirling, he was a big part. And you can't leave him out. You just cannot. You cannot tell this story without Archie Sterling. Because he's in the middle of it all. And with all that went down and he couldn't control what other people are saying and doing -- he was there. A very nice man. And he did -- he raised his children right over here. I know Joan well. And I think her nephews and things - if you got a hold of her, her nephews and them could tell you his side.

HJ: I think we're trying to get hold of the nephews.

DW: Yeah. Because I know if Bill was living he'd be very very happy and be very very proud. Because they never ever left the neighbourhood. They could have. You know Mr. Stirling was the mayor of this city at one time.

HJ: Oh yep, right. Mmhmm.

DW: So, but he never abandoned the neighbourhood. He didn't -- it wasn't his -- it's just he knew who he was. And you're kind of raised when you live in this neighbourhood, you're kind of raised that you are somebody, that you have the right to be here. And you are somebody. But in saying that, you don't have to prove yourself by running off to another neighbourhood thinking, or trying to fit in. And I was not going to try to fit in because I done come a long ways you know just coming from Degge Street to Wellington Street. And I was always taught that you take care of your own surroundings. You do the best that you can. I'm very neat. Maybe I dunno -- what would you say -- OCDC? I'm not overboard, but I'm to the point where I know who I am. I try to keep my area clean, and when I pull down my blinds at night -- I was told when you pull down your blinds and shut the door, you don't know what neighbourhood you're in. And I kind of carried that throughout my life. I tried to do that even with the society that I'm in. I just try to

make people aware that hey -- we were human. We weren't sub-human, we were just the same as you, but maybe we did not have this thing that's called, that's so big, is money. And that takes a back step to a lot of things that shoulda coulda. But in the final years of my life, I'm finding, well, was it really that important? Because if you have so much money in the bank, and you got all those numbers, what good is it doing you if you're sick and you can't get there to spend it? It is satisfaction of thinking that you are above because you have monetary means? I don't think so. What good is it if you're sitting alone all by yourself? I mean, say what you want, but the people that are homeless, there are so many of them out there, they're with a group. But you've got the money and you're all alone? I don't know.

0:51:51.2

HJ: I wanted to go back to something you were talking about the different parks. We're trying to piece together Chatham at this moment. So you said that there were white baseball parks. Do you know which one would be considered a white?

DW: Jaycees. That's where all the young people, like little guys would learn to play baseball. Like have the different leagues. That's straight up the street on Harvey Street. That has been there for a long time. When I was coming up, Stirling's was the place. Ours was just small activity stuff. It wasn't...um... Tecumseh -- again was the girls. If you played hardball you couldn't play hardball in Tecumseh Park. The girls again were softball so they could control that ball a little bit more than somebody hitting it in the river or going over to Thames Street or something like that. But coming up, those were the main -- Stirling Park was the park. I can't remember any other one. Victoria Park, yeah, that came in later. And they still play over there. But Stirling's Park was the baseball park for Chatham.

0:53:30.5

HJ: I just want to ask another question about the Chatham Coloured All-Stars. So when you were growing up, I know you were born after them. But was there still a legacy of the Chatham Coloured All-Stars?

DW: No. I knew about them playing ball, but did not know about this All-Star thing.

HJ: About like the 1934 thing?

DW: I did not know any. And then it made sense after it was told to us. 'Cause we knew they played ball, but they didn't say where they played ball. Didn't know the extent of this team. And I think -- I'll be honest with you: I think this should be a movie.

HJ: I think so too. Yep.

DW: I really think that it should be a movie. Not to say "oh well, look at what these black guys did." Yes. Well, why not? It is the truth and it needs to be told. And Boomer being the last and

what he did in all his sports activities - I think it should be told. And I think as you are just grasping this, you are thinking oh this is just going to be -- I know you really thought "oh well what can you do with 12 to 14 people." You're finding out that it is a lot: where they came from, who they are. And you talk to people and oh yeah I'm related to him and then finding -- I wish ya -- I know you are gonna get through it. You will get through it. It seems like a challenge, but if anything -- and since I've been alive -- anything comes fast, goes fast. So being that you are kind of treading slowly and thinking "oh where's it end?" -- there will be. But then if you do it right, and take your time and get it together it'll well be worth it. Don't -- my advice would be stay the straight and narrow. And don't deter. And even if you -- and you will, you'll get into quicksand -- and this one and that one -- and there's some stuff that goes on and you don't think that you can tell it. I say: be truthful. And I think Mr. Olbey, if you heard Mr. Olbey's you will. And I think he would. You owe it to these guys to tell their story. And if this is, as far as I'm concerned, a gift. That you tell their story. Then tell it all. Don't leave bits and parts out. Don't leave this, this, this. No. You tell it from their point of view. And they had a life. And they made mistakes like we all do. And they keep -- but they got back up and they played this game to win this. And it doesn't seem like anybody really cares. And it needed to be told. And it's the right time too. And being that this year Canada's going to be 150, well wouldn't it be nice if for the first time some truth be brought forward from that team? And to think that a lot of them just didn't have money, maybe not money for gas for cars I heard that they were on the backs of trucks trying to get in.

HJ: Borrowing trucks.

DW: Yeah

HJ: I think that you have anticipated a lot of our questions.

DW: I hope I didn't do too bad for you.

HJ: No! It's amazing stuff. I mean, some of the questions that we had about the overall impact of the Chatham Coloured All-Stars -- I mean, one of the things I've noticed is that some of the players, like Boomer, became a postman,

DW: Not reaching...

HJ: And the other Harding becoming the first policeman.

DW: Andy.

HJ: Some of the people were able to use their experience and find other alternatives in the careers. Did you sense that made a difference in players' lives?

DW: I always thought that Boomer did that mostly because it kept him in shape. We didn't have such a thing as gyms and things where he'd go and work out. So I think the postman was just

the walking. Because of that athletic thing. And he did do some coaching if I'm not mistaken, but I think he deserves - he does deserve to get this done. And it was almost like it was left to him. I think he was one of the youngest ones on the team. And I think maybe deep down they knew that it was going to be him that told this story. 'Cause they were men who played the game because they loved it and I don't think it was because they were going to get anything out of it. And some people like I said, I'm -- I feel that they took from Chatham and then never gave back to Chatham. I don't want - I want people to know these guys were from Chatham. They played in Chatham. I should say, for Chatham. And they just loved the game and I think their story should be told. And to think that it's been shoved over in the corner for so long and kudos for Blake [and Pat] for getting up and moving forward with it. Because he did not expect this to go the way that it's going now. And I thank the university for that.

HJ: None of this would be possible without Pat's scrapbooks. Have you seen Pat's scrapbooks?

DW: I can imagine

HJ: They're huge

DW: I just remember Blake as a little kid and I just ... [END]

DW: I can't believe how everybody towers over me now. But they were all - you just knew who the family name was. And it's like I was in the Pryor home -- you never ever saw trophies or anything like that ever out. Not with him anyways. But I just think what you're doing it's great. And I think hats off to you taking this on because like I said, right now it seems like a challenge, but it won't later on. When you start to pull it together. And then you'll see it as it really is -- and I mean to think it was going to be about Boomer and now it's kinda -- you've incorporated the rest of the family and then you're seeing this picture and that picture.

HJ: It's getting -- yeah. Every day I get to work on this -- I'm so excited. It's so amazing.

DW: It's overwhelming. And to think that you do have some resources. But if you hadn't have grabbed a hold of this when you did, a lot of this information would have been gone. Because I know I'm getting up there and I talked to my siblings and they're saying, "I don't remember that! How come you can remember that and I can't?!" And I can honestly say I don't know why. Maybe it's today for me to tell you. But I'm telling you, Stirling Park was the place to be. In those years of when these guys played baseball. They had a place to go. And that place was open to them. It wasn't saying no you can't play here. No - that was not the case. Those -- if you wanted to practice, as far as I'm concerned, Fergie Jenkins should be very much thankful to Mr. Stirling. Because he had that mound over there that was two or three doors down from where he lived and he could throw that ball and practice and practice and practice. And you see where it got him. But maybe a lot of things else along the way, but those are his own -- you know -- but you are doing the right thing.

HJ: Well thank you for that.

DW: And at the right time. And like I said, it's a challenge, but you're going to get there.

HJ: And I know - I mean Miriam and I are so grateful for you in particular, you've set us up with all sorts of people and you've been really helpful. So we really want to thank you for everything you're doing.

DW: You're welcome. And just keep us posted as to how things are moving along.

HJ: We will, yep.

0:03:15.2

DW: And it becomes a movie, I want to see it. [laughing] If I'm around

HJ: I want you in it!

Before we close, is there anything else you want to say about the team or Chatham or anything?

0:03:29.7

DW: I think Chatham needs to smarten up a little bit. I think Chatham should realize that we were somebodies. And we weren't charac -- well give us what we're due. I'm not asking for a parade. That -- I'm not asking for that. But I'm asking for a little bit of recognition of some of the things that have been done and who has done them. So many people have gone out of here that should have been recognized and didn't. And I think it's unjust that somebody's gotta grow up -- like Blake at this time in his life, trying to get people to understand who his father was. We send other people to Olympics and we pay for all of that, and yet, we have a team that did this for Ontario and for other sports people and they don't even know it. They don't even know it. They don't even know half the stuff that we did in the city of Chatham. I didn't know it! And all I'm asking for is for you to recognize us enough to give us a place in our history -- in the index -- in the history books and maybe like this story being told should be in our history. So that somebody like me knows that we did something other than once a year talk about John Brown in our history-- and you learn that song and that's it. That's the only black history I got.

0:05:38.7

And I just feel that -- that this is very educational. This just isn't something ohhh a phase. Because what you're doing here is telling somebody's life. So how could that be a phase? It's the truth. And it's history. And maybe it's going to guide somebody else along the way that hey - these guys did it back then, why can't I do it now? And they can. But we just gotta give 'em the information. And that's why I say I think it's good that the University of Windsor got it. 'Cause it's an educational place and I think the people that I have met that are doing this story so far have

been very very good. And I think all in all, like I said before, you are doing a good service. And I just hope that when it's all done, other people besides me tells you this. Because everybody needs a little pat on the shoulder once in a while. Because there's so many -- it's hard for you. And your generation because if you're weren't made aware of it how can you -- if you're not aware of what somebody has done, it's not your fault. It's the time, place, and circumstance. And you have to, when the opportunity comes from this -- not only this -- but as you go forward - - because you're still quite young.

HJ: Thank you [laughs]

DW: As you go forward and your children are going to be better than what you were and isn't that what we're supposed to do. You're not telling them to do everything your way, but you're giving them a sense of this is what was done. You give them respect - now what did you get from this? And that's how -- why I come in here and do what I do. And I don't have the education that you had. It wasn't opened up to us like it is now. Boy if it was then like it is now, I don't think they'd be ready for me. So maybe that's why I'm kinda the way I'm at [laughing] in my life.

HJ: Thank you so much Dorothy

DW: Oh you're welcome

HJ: This has really been great. I'm going to turn this off.