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Wendell Addision/Byron T. Waters
Kay LaWall interviewee

Mr Waters talks:

Some of Mr Waters earliest memories of his childhood are that he came from a broken home, my fater raised myself and my brothers and we were both atheletically inclined. I think atheletes is what really grew us up cause we loved playing all kinds of ball as a result in Perkins square, in the neighborhood we came up that we were able to really show and identify with some of the other athletes and we had something to occupy our time, but I think also it was a fault in this way is that I still went to see my mother everyday and my father and I ate both places that why I weigh so much today I weigh about 282pds at one time in my life i was fortunate enough to play with the Harlem Globetrotters globe team and the indyanapolis clown with is a base team which is pro I never made the pro team but I did play the farm team

Some of Mr Addisons earliest childhood memories are I was very fortunate in my childhood, I had a father who a , well he made, well he did good, during hard times and he was able to provide us with most of the necessities that we needed. And he also like most of the kids around Christmas time they would always come to our house to see what we had because they knew that we had most of the toys and anything that they needed or whatnot. It was six of us altogether 4 boys and 2 girls.

I lived at 517 N Schroder st and later yrs. we moved to 617 Brewen st. But it was , well we was on Schroder st , I would say that it was hard times on Schroder st, but it wasn't the worst thing that people had at that time I think we ate good, we had what every other kid had, but then we moved to Brewen st we had more because you could things progressing.

My father was making more money then see, we was living on Schroder st wewas in the 30's. , DURING the depression, it was hard times. But after we move d it was after the depression, he was making more money and whatnot and we had we just had a beautiful time, it was just beautiful, when we moved to Brewen st. we just had a beautiful time, everybody had what they needed and we also are the type of family were we didn't depend solely on the support of my father or mother we went out there and hustled for our selves

The kind of odd jobs we did was Arabing. We had a yell that went like this "watermelons, red to the rind old lady. " "Potatoes 5¢ a quarter pd." Thats right! We really hustled. We use to take, we'd get a load of wood we sort it up in our basement and the next morning we'd go out and sell the wood, everybody in the neighborhood, they liked what they saw, they always helped us, we could sellout right in the neighborhood, like sometimes we go and get a load of wood, we'd sell out of that, and we'd get a load of ice we sell out of that and we'd go and get a load of vegetables and we'd sell out of that. So it was just determination and whatnot and just like I said these kids nowadays they don't know what they have.

Mr Waters says:)

But I liked to identify with something Mr Addison said since we grew up in our childhood together, he hasn't given you all the information. I remember the time, when you worked for a hat factory, we all worked and we was 16 and we all worked, we worked for women's hospitals you know we was making 16, 15 or whatever, but we all worked. The woman that he married, she worked, she was a
nurse, and we all did it together and it wasn't no big thing, we had a good time we pulled, we worked together, I think this is going to happen with the Reagan administration, that although the Blacks are going to hurt and the poor are hurt, I think that they are going to collaborate and come together, it might be a bad thing in one way but I think it'll be a good thing in another way and we'll learn again to survive, and keep your doors open and love one another, your neighbors you know, and we helped one another because, that's what we did then, and we all came out good, and it was bad times, he went in the air force and I went not in the air force, all of our brothers and sisters went into the air force and we did a thing you know, So what I saying is this, that it's nothing different now then was before only the people, the community pulled together, we worked together we tried to get something going together and I think this same thing will happen again, because its hard times I mean look they had welfare, but it wasn't publicized as much as it is but we had people on welfare. I rember when they use to give preserves on welfare, I wish they give it again, cause I liked to get some of that preserves, but all in all we all made it one way or they other, we were young, we came out of the service, we all got jobs we was lucky enough to work for the government, and whatever I hope that ahyou know who ever's coming up now be able to do some of the things that we did. I don't feel ashamed about nothing you know that we did cause it was just what happenin then and what's happenin now I think they can pull up and get it together.

They both got involved in the military because of the opportunities involved due to the fact that we had never been in the service and you could never get a job. I think that it would help to get a job if you had military experience at the time when I went in I was thinking of making a career out of it an my brother came in six months after me, in the air force.

Segregation really never gave me any problems, in the service, but I think that, its definitely segregated in the service. When I went in there I had a purpose to do and that's what I did.

Mr Addison's purpose was to go in and make a career out it also, but I found that ah... I could'nt make the rank like i wanted to so therefore I chose to come on out after four yrs. The reason was not discrimination it was because it was a freeze. And anyone regardless of race color and creed, they couldn't make the upgrade so like when I was about 2 months getting out I was called in to the office into the orderly room and I was talking to the commander officer and he told me he said well look he says if you will re-up I'll guarantee you seargent. And I told him I says no, I said if I been a corporal all this time I think that I'll just go on out just like I am and this was it, and this was it.

Well when I got out of the service ,it really opened up a whole lot of ave. for me, now I had a choice of the police dept. I had a choice of the fire dept. I had choice of the post office, which I only accepted at the post office. But now when I first came out I tried at martins which was a very discriminatory thing. Yeah Martin's Glenn El Martin's, which was very discriminatroy at that time. I went down there and I found out that ah... one of the persons that I went down with they told him that he had too much education, then I went in and the guy told me he says well you fill out the application and we'll calllyou and says we don't have anything in your classification right now . And I told him several things that I had done in the service and whatnot but he said he'd call me. Now here I'd know after this I had about 2, 3 ore 4 Whites who came in after me and they told them to wait., you know to sit on the side and whatnot and they would talk them later in the day in which they hired at the time my buddies, they hit there at the right time and they were hired and thats why I went, thats why I was interested in Martin's but as of to this day I'm glad I didn't go
because of the folding up of Martin's and the plant itself
But had I been in there, in that circle I would have been
so

Mr Waters says he: I think it might have been fortunate that
you didn't go because at the same time I did work at Glenn
el Martin's 3 yrs. but they laid off and I would like to say
that I was in guided missiles, when I got the job I was qualified
for something better, but ah. I did get the job at Glenn el
Martins I work there for several yrs. and I was glad that I did
work at Martins cause the money was right and after that I was
able to get into the military service which was better for me
in the long run.

Oh yeah there was a union at Martins at the time the union was
ok and no it didn't effect me in any particular way. The union didn't
effect me in any way. But I do think the union helped me more
than it hurt me. And at the time I just come along at the right
time when I was there they had government contracts and the
government said that they had to hire so many Blacks and I walked
in there that day and I had the right credentials and they hired
me right away, the same day. This was around 1956.

From there I didn't go to the post office after I went as a
collection officer for the state of Maryland. My job was to keep
people in the jail. The state put them there and my job was to
keep them there. But I tried not to have any reproccusions with
anybody, other than doing my job. Now I treat you just I would
like to be treated myself, unless you show me other ways.

Yes its true that the majority of prisoner were Black. I would
say 90% of the inmater were Black. I worked at the Patuxant
institute which is in Jessup Md. And most of them were indetermined
sentence, they were put there from 1 day to life so they could
or until they conformed to the standards. That waht the state
would call article B, which they say is unconstitutional. You were
put in there from 1 day to life in other words if you got 18
months and a normal you do 18 months, but you were there until
you conformed to the normal standards, and this was unconstitutional
because an inmate didn't know when he was getting out. And as a
result it didn't hurt the director or who ever was in charge but it
hurt the correctional officer because they had to rebuke whatever
they wanted to do against officers, so the officers hurt, and ah...
in a way it was a good thing because they had to get a high school
education, they had to learn a trade, they had to rehabilitate
ready to come out here in the world, because most of them were
criminals and they started off as juveniles so they ain't
had no chance, so if they get in there and they get there education
they come out and they've a good chance that they might get job.
One thing they had was this live in work out program and they
could work and some of the money went to the institution and the
rest of the money went into not an account for them, and when they
to
so a guy gets out, they let him so they might have a thousand dollars. This is enough to enable him to get a room, he's already got a job incidently, but its enough money to enable him to purchase a room and food and clothing and any thing that he can get together. And if he decides to go straight and narrow, he's alright, but if he decides to mess up again then they can bring him right back, and alot of them come back' on their own resources, cause they felt that they couldn't get it together out there, they be in this place 9,10, maybe 20 years maybe you know so this is the way it happens.

After my work in the prison systems, I went to the post office

Well I thought that the job opportunity would be good and since I was Black, and since the post office was functioning considerable long, I was sure that there wouldn't be any complications because they're doing the same routine. They taking letters, they got the stamps, so I figured that they was on the ball, but after I got in the post office, I wish I had stayed as a correctional officer, cause I feel as though if I had stayed in correction, as long as I had been in the post office, altogether I should have been a captain by now.

Q: Why don't you think you weren't put up in such a position?

Well I think I was very qualified for because I could deal with these people, I dealt with them everyday, and my job I enjoyed and they, all the inmates, you know they knew, look I was ah... look let me tell you something I wasn't no softy. I could deal with them add they enjoyed what I did, I tried to treat them that I would like to be treated, if I was in the same position, and I could deal with them, not only am I rugged, you know If I have to get rugged I get rugged, but this is not my main program my main program is to treat people the same and I could deal with them I could handle them, I mean you know if I say well you know, "go. ca and lock up, and then when I come up the next morning. I say good morning fellas how are you doing all right what are we going to do today now you want to go to chat and I rapp with them and theyed say I know this guy is alright. I had started to tell them that I had come out of the same program, they did and for a slight querk in faith, I could have been in there and they could have been out there, and they, I think they enjoyed what I was talking about and I loved when I was talking to them cause I really believed them and I had identified with them plus athletically, you know we got a thing going on out there.

We had what known as the Harlem Globetrotters song team and I played with them I had basketball, I wasn't in recreation I wish I had a been though or maybe I could transferred in to recreation.

A union? Yes there was a union thats the postal employs its the only Black union they ever had in the post office. It was definitely an asset, no Black's would have been able to get into the postal union without the nationla alliance of postal union and thats true. I'd like to identify with some one if you don't mind His name is Horse Harrace, he is the presendent of this local
a great man, I think that he was an asset in not only being the president of this union but also for being one of the members was real hard in dealing with it. I would like to say that Mr Horse Harrace and Mr Levy Dossier who was formerly a mail handler, was one of the two most successful people in identifying with the Blacks now I was only in the post office for 20 yrs. which now I am retired, but I would like to say this, in the benefit of the both of them, If it don't be for them, that the National Alliance of Postal service wouldn't be where it is right now. If I had to do it over again I'd do it over again tomorrow, or the next day, or the tomorrow after that and I want to give a whole lot of credit for what they have done and what they succeeded in doing and what they're ideas was as far as identifying with the Black man because they had there a great job. Although I'm no longer an alliance man I still pay dues. I pay 2 dollars a year to belong to them. right now located on north ave. right off of chester st. And any body in the union will tell you I will deal with them. In any respect that I have to all I have to say is this.

Also I would like to say that not only the union postmaster of the Blacks I think have identified with it and I think that Blacks have obtained more now, then anytime, We have more them Black foremen in the postal service then you can identify with all over the world, and they are doing a fine job, I think what they are. Now although I don't work everyday, If I had to go back to work tomorrow I'd pick the post office.
have a lot of federal programs at the time, but you had people who wanted to get together and they got it together and all I can say is this, if there is any way that I can help to get it together I'm willing to help.

My only involvement with the N.A.A.C.P. was that I was a member, I have never really been active but I have been a member. I've always paid my dues. But I have worked with young people at Harlem Park Jr. High school.

My experience that I received as well as gained is, well I can think that I gave the young people, I gave them what they don't get. I gave, cause I lived in the neighborhood, at the same school that I worked. I gave them the rap that they need, see cause I talked the same talk that they here everyday.

I'll tell you what it was that made me get along so well see I lived in the neighborhood with these cats. so I could relate.

Mr. Addison talks about his experience with the postal service.

There were many forms of discrimination and it is still there. I mean you can't wipe it out, completely, its things that are covered up and whatnot, you know, there's quite a few supervisors who are Black. Basically, if you are a fairly intelligent person you can look through and see what's happening. And I've been with the post office for as long as 25 yrs.

Mr. Waters talks about jazz music while memories of Brewen st pop back.

Well I can tell you this, it influence me and him because at the time we was listening to Dave Brubeck, which is a white man, and we was listening to Paul Desmond, and ah... my man on ah... that horn Stan Getz, and all them White boys came to the best coast and they shot ah... what's his name at us chad Baker. he could sing too. And ah... we was getting into it, really jazz was starting to really, it wasn't starting to really cook. You can go all the way back when it was Black and the Whites started filtering in.

Mr. Addison says: "When we really first started it was Charlie Parker, Ah... what's that guys name who played the horn and the tenor?? that we use to listen to all the time and he had a many a record out Lester Young. We use to go to a place up on Bruce st near the Royal Theater."