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Oral History Interview

with

Otis Mackey

Interviewer: Francesco De Salvatore
Narrator: Otis Mackey
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Transcriber: Dr. Donna M. DeBlasio

Summary:

Mr. Otis Mackey discusses his life growing up in Alexandria on Seminary in the 1950s and 1960s; education at Howard University; professional career with Whirlpool; discrimination and segregation.

Notes:

Mr. Markey's wife, Kathleen Jenkins, was also present at the interview.

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General	Seminary; Black Community Displacement; Urban Renewal; Desegregation of Schools; Howard University; Whirlpool Corporation; Family Life
People	Lloyd, Earl; Coach Yost; Dr. Mitchell
Places	Seminary; Chinquapin; Carr's Beach; Negro League Hall of Fame; Glen Echo, Maryland

Otis Mackey [00:00:17] My name is Otis Mackey. The date is June 10, 2026. I'm located in the Kansas City, Missouri, Kansas City Kansas area in Overland Park, Kansas.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:00:36] Great. My name is Francesco De Salvatore. Today is June 10, 2026, and I am located in Alexandria, Virginia. So, it's good to be with you, Mr. Mackey. Thank you for doing this interview with us. I want to start with--let's start maybe with your childhood. Can you tell us some of your earliest memories growing up in Alexandria?

Otis Mackey [00:01:04] Yeah, I can. I was born in Columbia Hospital in 1947; Columbia Hospital for Women in Washington, D.C. I grew up on King Street in Seminary/ Mud Town. My memories of growing up there were pretty happy. In fact, my old house is still in existence across the street from Alexandria City High School. But when I grew up, obviously that didn't exist. There was a building there that was used as a recreation center for us when I was young, had a little basketball court that someone paved there. So, I spent some time playing basketball there and at the center court, which no longer exists; which is by Blessed Sacrament School. The area that they call Seminary was quite country. And my grandmother had an acre or two, maybe three, of land. And she had fruit trees and grapevines and things of that nature. Pretty good garden that she used. So, I spent a lot of time eating what came out of there. And my mom used to can fruits and vegetables, which is the art that's not used today, I guess. I've never met a woman that actually does that anymore. So, you've got to take that in consideration. I actually made some notes, too, so excuse me while I take a look at them. Anyway. I attended school at St. Joseph's Catholic School, which is located in downtown Alexandria. It's still there. I don't know if they've made that an historical landmark or not. The church is still there as well. And I've seen some of your interviews and a lot of my classmates you've interviewed from that Catholic school. It originally was what I would call a Black Catholic school, because the teachers and everyone there was Black. With the exception of the priest, most of the personnel that I talked to was Black.

There's a reason for us going to that school because I grew up during segregation. So, a lot of the educational properties that they gave the school district when we were segregated was used old books

and things of that nature, so my dad felt that I'd get a better education by going to school at St. Joe. I went there through the seventh grade and the eighth grade, I went to a White Catholic school called Blessed Sacrament, which is in the Seminary district, on what I would call the White side of town, so I went to school there. I was actually within walking distance to go there. Spent my eighth grade there and then my dad sent me to an all-Black military school and the only one in the United States was located in Virginia called St. Emma's Military Academy. I spent two years there and in my last two years I actually graduated from Hammond High School, which is still there, which is now a junior high, I believe. So, I didn't get a chance to go to the Black school, Parker-Gray, where my friends--my dad, decided I need to go--and my mom--to go to that school instead. And then from there, I entered Howard University and graduated from there in 1970.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:05:20] Great. I just want to kind of backtrack a little bit and talk a little--you mentioned where you grew up in Seminary. What's the address of that home?

Otis Mackey [00:05:35] 3321 King Street. This is right across the street from Alexandria City High.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:05:43] Yeah, and for those who've never seen the home, can you describe what it looks like?

Otis Mackey [00:05:52] Well, it was actually a small home with no garage. We had two bedrooms, one bath, small kitchen, unfinished basement, and unfinished attic. Before we lived there, I lived a couple of doors down. And mom rented a home. That's still standing as well. It was funny, when they did the remodeling of the area there. I guess I call it remodeling--the gentrification, I should say, of the area. They tore down all the homes on one side of the street, and that's up to Oakland Baptist Church, which I was a member of that church as well, I forgot to mention that, which is still standing as well. But they knocked down everybody else's house and then the lower end folks that lived in Chinquapin, which was a predominantly White neighborhood, they took that neighborhood as well and then redistricted everything to make it as it is today. Problem with that is my daughter lives in my grandma's house, so it would be her great-grandmother. She bought that house from the family, the one that they built to replace the one they tore down. And it's not half the size of the one they tore down, but it's a little bungalow. She actually bought that and lives in that today. But what's happening in the neighborhood there now is that the taxes are so high on the property there that a lot of the older people that were living there are no longer there. So, the neighborhood is going through a change as we speak. I mean, the last time I was there, which was about a year and a half ago, two years ago, there was a home next to the Young's, which I grew up with, that was listed at a million dollars. And, of course, the people that I grew up with back in the day can't afford that. So, eventually all of them are moving out of the neighborhood, as it changes over again.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:08:13] What's it like for you to see that kind of change happening?

Otis Mackey [00:08:17] It's kind of disheartening, you know; for years that neighborhood remained the same. I had an older brother and sister, one 20 and one 19, when I was born, and they were telling me about the neighborhood, how it had changed very little. It just seemed like as it hit the early [19]60s or whenever they started construction on that school, it just started changing. And, I think they built T.C. Williams to answer, to take care of a problem for integration more than anything. So, they built this super school and then closed down all the schools around it. Parker-Gray being one of them and GW at

George Washington being another. They completely tore Parker-Gray down. That was the Black school. But George Washington and Hammond are still there, as far as I know.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:09:19] You mentioned, you know, a little bit about the house you grew up in, which is still there; the home wasn't demolished, right?

Otis Mackey [00:09:32] Correct. It's been remodeled, purchased, remodeled, and the last time I checked on it, it was listed for nine hundred and some thousand dollars.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:09:42] What were, you know, as you think about that house, like what were some of, as a kid, like what, what were some of the, some of your favorite areas of the house? You know, like, how did you, like how did you kind of interact with the house? What are your memories of that?

Otis Mackey [00:09:59] Well, you know I had a dog by the name of Rex. So, I grew up with that dog. We spent more time away from the house once I was able to cross the street, because King Street was still a busy road even when I was growing up. It was a four lane by the time I entered the world. And my memory of it, I had to cross that road to get to my grandmother's and, in between there was a lot of other homes that no longer exists. And my friends living there and we each had dogs and so it was a lot of fun. I spent more time away from the home as I got older and going downtown to the projects because I had a sister that lived there. My brother lived in Baltimore. I also spent time in Baltimore. I didn't really stay in the house too much other than in my own room. I had toys and whatnot. My dad was what you would call a steam engineer. And he was one of the few Black steam engineers at that time. He used to work for a company called Fairmac, which owned Fairlington, which is still there. Now back to my day, those were rental properties. They're now condos, I guess. And it was steam heat. They had radiators in all of those. And I do remember him being paid less money than the other people doing the same job, but he was better at his job than they were. So, they would come and get him to repair stuff. And he finally wound up getting his license in the DC area and started working over there for more money. I do remember that as well.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:11:59] You mentioned your grandmother a little bit. Can you tell us her name? And was it your maternal side or fraternal side?

Otis Mackey [00:12:15] What I'm going to tell you is basically on my mother's side. My dad's people are from Oklahoma. So that's another story altogether. But my grandmother's name was Goldie, G-O-L-D-I-E, Wanzer. And she was married to my grandfather, William Wanzer, nicknamed Bonnie. And I think that's the way he dressed. He dressed up pretty, pretty neat. And I guess that's a slang for a guy that looks good in his clothing. And then I was talking to my daughter, she's our genealogist of the family. And I did not ever know the name of my great-grandfather. And it looks like his name was Wallace. And then there's a note here says that my great-great-grandfather's name was Joseph and married a lady named Hannah. So, Joseph and Hannah was as far back as we can go right now. But I understand the Wanzer family came out of Fauquier County. And they have been in the Alexandria area or Seminary for quite a while. It appears that most people that live there was working at Episcopal High School, which is still there, at one point, either doing maintenance or in the kitchen or something. I do remember that growing up. I had an uncle that worked in the kitchen and when I was a kid, I used to go up to Episcopal to watch them play football. That got me interested in playing football. And he would be making these cinnamon buns and hot cross buns or whatnot. He'd give me a big old bag of it. And I'd go and munch on

them and watch them play football, looking over the wall. That was my uncle, Uncle Roland, called him Bussie, and he lived next door to my grandmother. All their houses were on Woods Place, or Woods Lane, which wasn't paved. They did put gravel down in there, so hence the name Mud Town. You know, when it rained, obviously, that particular street got muddy. They didn't have sewers, and some of the houses, most of the houses, had outhouses and whatnot back in the day. And that was on the other side of King Street. And then on my side, everybody had indoor plumbing.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:15:06] You mentioned your grandma canning--I assume produce, but yeah, can you talk more about what she cooked, what she canned, like what were some of the things that she did in the kitchen?

Otis Mackey [00:15:24] She canned tomatoes and squash, whatever she raised in her garden. And I do remember her having a wood stove, believe it or not. And I own a pellet grill. I don't know if you know what that is. And I was using it one day and I was trying to figure out, because I've got a real old one. It's about 20 years old. Doesn't have any temperatures on it or anything. I thought to myself, how did my grandmother regulate the temperatures of that wood stove? I remember her sticking something in there to move the wood around, and it was things that you used to pick up what we call a heating element on that wood stove back in the day. Obviously, ours are now either glass or coil. I used to wonder how she'd come out with these four-layer cakes and these great tasting apple pies and cherry pies and whatnot she would bake. This was in the [19]50s. [19]50s and early [19]60s the house was wired for 220. I remember that she got her first electric stove and it might have been late [19]50s. She had a porch built onto the house in the back as well as the front and the porch on the back she had a ringer washer. I still remember that ringer washer which is a coincidental because I started working for a company that made appliances, and actually made ringer washers—the Whirlpool Corporation. I worked for them for 37 years and retired here in Kansas City from it. But I always thought about her and that stove and that ringer washer.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:17:22] What are some memories you have about your grandfather?

Otis Mackey [00:17:25] I have very little memory of him. He died when I was three years old, unfortunately. My grandmother had a lot of grandkids. I was toward the end. I think there's one--about three or four that were younger than me. But most of them are older than me, some of them have passed, but most of them are older.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:18:00] Are there family traditions that you're like what were some of the traditions, rituals, things your family did throughout the year?

Otis Mackey [00:18:11] Besides July 4th we had a big picnic. I remember dad built a barbecuer that he used in the backyard and we'd fire off our fireworks in the back. My next-door neighbor was also my cousin Clarence Wanzer and he'd allow us to shoot fireworks and whatnot across his backyard, which it backed up to us. There wasn't anything back there then. And we did that. That was one big thing we looked forward to. And when I was younger, probably about four or five, six or so, my dad and I had an uncle named Bob Manuels. They're both from Oklahoma and they wound up marrying sisters. So, my dad married my mom and Uncle Bob married her older sister, Aunt Bernice. And Uncle Bob and Aunt Bernice lived in McLean, Virginia, which at that time back then was quite country. So, they would go together and buy a pig or two, raise them, fatten them up, and then they would slaughter them and do whatever they do to divide the meat up. And I remember being up there, that was a big deal. And they

would make all kinds of food out of it, crackling and hog's head cheese and whatnot, up there in McLean. But now you drive through McLean, you know. There's no farming going on up there at all.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:19:50] That's very different. Yeah, it's very different now.

Otis Mackey [00:19:51] It is, but that was a tradition, too, as well. And obviously, Thanksgiving, when I hit my teen years, we had a turkey bowl where we played our fathers or older people that lived in the neighborhood. And by then, the neighborhood had kind of changed somewhat. But there were still some people around living in the new houses that they built. Now, you know, most of those people have passed on because I'm almost 80 years old, but it's hard to find a lot of the people that I grew up with, you know. I have to keep track of them on Facebook. But that was some of the things we did. And obviously we played a lot of sports--football, basketball, more than anything.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:20:49] Yeah, sounds like you're out and about a lot in your childhood. Can you maybe talk more about the friends you hung out with and what did y'all do in Seminary or outside of it, what are some of your memories?

Otis Mackey [00:21:03] Well, besides eating everybody's produce that was growing on the trees, the apples and the peaches, cherries and whatnot, we played sports, baseball, and we actually used the Episcopal school's field. They had like a little baseball field that we could walk on and play. We used that to play baseball and played basketball in the neighborhood. And we used to play against some friends we had in Chinquapin. You know, we'd have a football game--our neighborhood versus their neighborhood. With all this fist fighting and all of that, we just played ball and then went home. And then we wound up going, I wound up growing up in a school with a lot of them at Hammond as I grew older. But we did that, and I have a friend that I hope you interview here, David Spencer. We have been friends since the first and second grade. They lived up on what we call the Fort. Which is where you guys have a park or something there now that used to be a Civil War fort of some sort, earth fort, we find cannon balls—not cannon balls, but shot, steel shot and some Civil War artifacts digging around up there in the woods. And of course, there's Lee and David, Lee Young. The Young family used to live up there, as well as the Belks. There were some Casey's up there and some Cravens. They all used to live up there back in the day. Now, no one lives up there because it's a fort. My family and some of my ancestors are buried in that cemetery that's located up there.

That's basically what we did. Had a lot of fun growing up. And went downtown. We had our own basketball team at one point. And we played the kids from the Berg in the middle part of the city in a rec league. I forgot who our coach was, but there was a recreation center for the Black kids on Pendleton Street, I believe. Pendleton Street Rec Center. And I'm going way back. Yeah, yeah, we used to play there, and they had a little league and they came to our spot to play. We played outside on a blacktop court that they built in Seminary. And I found out that that school I mentioned earlier that was like a school building there--at one point that was a school for Black kids that lived in that area, the closest--I don't think Parker-Gray existed then. You could go up to the eighth grade because I remember my mom only had an eighth-grade education and in order for her to finish high school, she would have to catch a bus or somehow get a ride to D.C. And they had finishing schools over there for her. So, she never did that, obviously, but then I can't remember when Parker-Gray was built, but my brother went there. He graduated probably in 1943 or something like that.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:24:52] I'm curious, you mentioned Chinquapin. I'm just curious, who are some of the people you knew there and just generally what were the dynamics between Chinquapin and the Seminary area?

Otis Mackey [00:25:09] Well, Chinquapin, I understand that was built by the federal government or someone to house people to work in the torpedo factory, which existed in Alexandria at that time. And it's Whites only, obviously. But basically, those people that lived there were in the same income category that we were, you know. Everybody was struggling back then. I mean, you're not getting rich living in either area, I guess not the richest part of Alexandria; it wasn't at that time. There were a few troublemakers that lived there, but most of the kids there, we were separated by a fence, I remember that. But you could go around and go up a street and they had a big hill and we used to go there and sleigh ride and nobody don't say anything to the other unless it was one of the troublemakers. I remember those two boys, Mickey English and Jimmy English, but I wound up playing football with Jim English at Hammond, but other than that, we got along pretty good, didn't have too much trouble.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:26:29] Yeah, interesting, interesting. We haven't talked--I mean, you've mentioned your mother and father here and there, but maybe we can focus a little bit on them. Can you tell us a little more about--we can start with your dad, maybe? You tell us little bit more about who he was.

Otis Mackey [00:26:47] Yeah, he was a World War II veteran that came to Virginia from Beggs, Oklahoma, from a big family. And I think he had 14 brothers and sisters, and I couldn't name them all, about to sit down here trying to write them down and stuff. But he came up there, obviously looking for an employment opportunity. And he went to Langston University, and that may be where he started learning to actually get that license to work on boilers and whatnot. He did something to get that when I came along, he was doing that, and work in construction. And I don't know whether I mentioned Uncle Bob; I don t know whether he and Bob came up at the same time or not, but I do know they were from the same area. So, they must have known each other when they arrived in Washington, D.C. And dad, you know, he and mom were married for years until I was about 15. And that's when I came back from a military school and he wasn't there. So, he evidently had moved to Washington, D. C. And that is where he died, 1716 Euclid Street and remarried. And I have a little sister, I haven't mentioned her, who is the same age as my daughter, my oldest daughter.

My mother actually was born in Philadelphia, and the only explanation I have for that is that they were probably up there working to make money. Grandma also had relatives that live in Philly. I don't know if they're still existing. I know they're there; I just have not had any contact with him since I was a kid. Mom could play the piano by ear. Her dad went out and bought her a piano and she would play hymns and songs from the [19]40s, [19]30s and [19]40s that she knew and u to this day that piano now belongs to my daughter, oldest daughter. Probably needs to be tuned, but she does have it. It's one of the things she got from mom. Mom was a real neat person. She loved people. You know, when we were going through integration there and I was playing football, I had a kid by the name of Bill Crickenberger, gave me a ride home and one day he pulled up in the driveway and he smelled mom's chicken. She was frying some chicken. He was kind of leaning around, we had a back porch, and I said, well, man, thanks for the ride, and he kept talking, and she walked to the door and looked at him, she said, “You hungry, boy?” And he was, so he started giving me rides, especially on Wednesday, that's when we had fried chicken. Be there and feed them. She fed everybody in that neighborhood just about, you know, make a meal

out of nothing. So, they were quite extraordinary, I guess. Besides my older brother and older sister, they had the most influence on me than anybody.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:30:37] How do you think they influenced you?

Otis Mackey [00:37:38] Well, mom influenced me with her patience and tried to get me not to fly off the handle at everything and think things through. And I've got the peanut gallery in here now. She's telling me that she was in her 40s. That is correct. She was like 40 when she had me. Why are you in here? Get out of here.

Kathleen Jenkins [00:31:00] I'm hearing the rest in here now and you're saying that.

Otis Mackey [00:31:02] Yeah, well, you're not supposed to talk. He said it's okay. He'll edit you out. So, she was quite sweet. So, my dad was kind of a disciplinarian, ex-drill sergeant when he was in the army. So, he wasn't real hard, but he was hard. I didn't really want to get beaten by him for anything, in particular. I kind of told the line. And he told me that whenever you start a task, try to finish it. And always get things done so you can enjoy whatever you want to do later. I was always that way about schoolwork and whatnot. And, I guess that's, and sending me to good schools. And that's what got me into Howard University, because my grades were fairly good.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:31:58] What were their names? I don't think you mentioned their full name.

Otis Mackey [00:32:01] Name? Gladys Marie Mackey, Wanda Mackey, and then Otis Mackey which is my name.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:32:10] And your dad built your house, right?

Otis Mackey [00:32:14] That is correct, yeah, from what I was told. Okay, he actually bought the land from Clarence Wanzer, my neighbor.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:32:28] Who was your cousin, right?

Otis Mackey [00:32:30] Yeah, and then got someone to help him, you know, make the foundation for the basement and all that, but he actually built it himself. I'm told.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:32:48] That's incredible, that's incredible. What about the two siblings you grew up with? They were much older than you but what are some of your memories of them.

Otis Mackey [00:32:57] Oh, boy! My brother, I used to spend summers with him. He graduated; he was quite an athlete. He graduated from Parker-Gray. There's a picture of him in Kansa City, believe it or not, on the wall. And we have a Negro League baseball museum there. Part of the museum is dedicated to other Black people that did whatever in sports. And I can't remember the guy's name from Alexandria at the moment, slips my mind, but he was a basketball player and one of the first ones to play in the NBA. In fact, they've named the gym or something after him.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:33:44] Earl Lloyd?

Otis Mackey [00:33:45] Earl Lloyd, yeah, but he played on the basketball team at Parker-Gray with Earl Lloyd. And then my nephew was out here visiting, and I took him to that Negro League because he

wanted to see that. And as we were going through it, I saw that picture of my brother. I didn't even know it was there. I said, “Hey man, your dad's in here in this museum.” And sure enough, there he was hanging on the wall with Earl Lloyd on the Parker-Gray's basketball team from that era. He went to Morgan State playing on football scholarship and he, not too long ago--well some time ago, because he was alive then--they had a deal for players that graduated from Parker-Gray or played football in the area and he was honored as a person of distinction in football, and I went to that with him.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:34:50] What was his name?

Otis Mackey [00:34:52] His name was Robert Matthews. Everybody called him Tex, T-E-X Matthews, so he's in the Hall of Fame of something, whatever Alexandria has... And then you asked about my sister.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:35:07] Yeah.

Otis Mackey [00:35:08] Goldie was kind of a firebrand. She, that's the one, she lived in the projects and whenever I got in fights down there in Alexandria, if I was getting overwhelmed, I headed to her house and people would stop running as soon as they saw where I was going. She'd come out of there and tell me, you come, take another step, something going to happen to you. She was something else. She made quite an impression on me too. She used to babysit me back in the day.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:35:48] Yeah, so she lived in the projects, which housing project did she live in? Do you remember?

Otis Mackey [00:35:54] I'm sure it's not the Berg, because it was not too far from St. Joseph's School.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:36:01] What was the cross street? Do you remember?

Otis Mackey [0036:07] I think it was Alfred and Columbia? Columbia? I'm not sure. I'd have to go look.

Kathleen Jenkins [00:36:12] Because I'll take a few minutes.

Otis Mackey [00:36:13] I know the address was 733 North Alfred Street.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:36:18] It was, sorry, say that again.

Otis Mackey [00:36:20] 733 North Alfred Street, yeah, yeah. Oh, it wasn't the Berg.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:36:27] No, no, I don't think that was the Berg. That was near Parker-Gray. Okay. I think that was Ladrey. I think they call it Ladrey.

Otis Mackey [00:36:41] Yeah, I don't know what they called it. I'm trying to think of a school next to it.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:36:47] What are your memories? I mean, since you spent so much time, that time in your life, you spent time with her a lot there. What are your memories of the housing projects and where she lives?

Otis Mackey [00:36:55] Well, obviously, the kids that were there, Eddie Gray, and there's a few others that I remember. Keith Say, in fact, I went to college with him, and we're still good friends. He's a lawyer now. He lived down there. And a lot of the kids--that's also near, not too far from that swimming pool that they built for Black kids after two of my cousins drowned in the Potomac River, the Johnsons,

brothers. It was a guy named Mr. Burke. I can't remember Mr. Burke's first name, but my aunt, Geneva, my mom's sister, actually took us down there for swimming lessons. And Mr. Burke wound up living out there and he bought a house out there in that redevelopment in Seminary, you know, after they built T.C. Williams. He got a house out there, I don't know, because originally it was for people that lived there, it was supposed to replace their dwellings at the time.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:38:08] And you mentioned going to Catholic schools up until you went to the military academy.

Otis Mackey [00:38:18] I went to Catholic schools until I finished 10th grade.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:38:22] Right. Yeah, can you talk about your experience, you know, attending those schools?

Otis Mackey [00:38:27] Well, I remember in the Catholic schools, the nuns were quite strict. I do remember that. And my knuckles still sting from back in the day of placing them on the desk when they go around tippity-tapping everybody's hands. And for some reason in the fourth grade, that stands out more than anything, because one of the fellas that you interviewed, I saw it--threw an eraser full of chalk and hit one of the nuns in the back of the head with the chalk-filled eraser. And you know, they wore those big old habits back then. So, I remember a cloud of chalk went everywhere and she stopped writing on the board, turned around and asked who threw that. Of course, nobody said anything. And then she made us all put our hands on the desk. And she tippity-tapped the entire room until she got back in that corner where myself, Lee Young, and Calvin sat and wore us out. She knew one of us did it. But it wasn't me. So, I remember the discipline more than anything. And I do remember that they were quite hard on your studies. You made sure you had to have your stuff done. And back in those days, if you got trouble in school, you were in trouble at home. If they whipped you, you could get another one in front of the class from your parents back then. Obviously, you don't do that now, and somebody would be in jail for that, but they still do that.

Kathleen Jenkins [00:40:11] The next thing.

Otis Mackey [00:40:32] Do you want to talk about the military school, because that’s what she’s bringing up? The military school was really disciplined. St. Emma's was the only Black military school in the United States. And he had to find that for some reason, I swear to God. Anyway, the only girls--there was a girls' school about four miles maybe, at least seemed like four or five miles because we had to march over there for dances, you know, and we had to dance in a square about at least a foot apart. So, I do remember that, and I got the best grades in my life in that school because there was nothing else to do but study or march or do some farm implement or something, shoveling manure. I did that.

Kathleen Jenkins [00:41:18] [inaudible]

Otis Mackey [00:41:20] Finish. Yeah.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:41:25] She's helping you.

Otis Mackey [00:41:29] I know; she can’t shut up.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:41:31] Bye.

Otis Mackey [00:41:35] But I'll tell you, when I got to Hammond, it was quite a change, man, night and day, and I had not been around very many White kids. And so, when I dressed, I dressed in the clothing that we wore in our neighborhood, and I went up there and everybody had on this collegiate looking stuff, you know, with loafers and this and that. The only other person who was dressed like me was the Italians, Italian students. So, I had to go buy some clothing to kind of blend in a little bit.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:42:16] You said the Italian students, is that what you said?

Otis Mackey [00:42:17] Yeah, they had some Italian students there that kind of dressed like this. Yeah, but it was mostly collegiate kids, type kids and uh a lot of those kids were transient type kids--the parents were in the military--that went to Hammond. I found out this my senior year most of the Black kids that i knew were going to George Washington. The George Washington kids were considered different than the Hammond kids, because I guess they thought the Hammond kids were uppity, you know, because they did have a little money, you know. Some of their parents were colonels and majors or whatever they were in the armed forces and went to school at Hammond and their parents working at Pentagon or something. But just because of that fact, I think that we really didn't have any racial problems whatsoever when I went there. I remember watching that movie. *Remember the Titans.* I don't know if you saw that and it portrayed Hammond as totally opposite of what it was. And it was if we didn't exist, you know. I played for that coach, Coach Yost, before he went to T.C. Williams.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:43:52] Yeah, what are your memories of him?

Otis Mackey [00:43:53] Coach Yost was kind of quiet, really. He wasn't as—didn't yell. And we had other coaches that do that. Coach Yost and I forget the name of one of the coaches there. But he was very quiet. You know, he got his point across and he'd make you run if you didn't listen to it or whatever punishment he had. I fumbled a couple of times in a game and I had to walk around holding that football all day that kind of made me want to hang on to it after that. So that's my memory of him. I got an autographed book from him regarding his time at T.C. Williams called *Remember This Titan* and he's passed away recently. I used to have his phone number. He was living in Delaware and he was a quiet man, but fair. And my times at Hammond, the two years I spent there, I really don't have very many complaints about it. Made some good friends and some of them I'm still friends with to this day.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:45:13] Your family wasn't Catholic, right? Why did your father decide to send you the Catholics or not your father, but your parents?

Otis Mackey [00:45:28] It was really my dad more than anybody…I lost my train of thought. What did you say?

Francesco De Salvatore [00:45:36] I was saying, why did you, you know, because your family wasn't Catholic, right?

Otis Mackey [00:45:42] My dad claimed to be Catholic. I don't think he was. But I never saw him go to Catholic church. But it was primarily for the education at that time. Like I said, and I'm not knocking the education that the kids got at Charles Huston or wherever they went. Because those teachers were exemplary teachers at those schools with the stuff that they gave them to teach with. Everything was second-hand, raggedy, or something, you know, and not up to date. Whereas the Catholic school was at least up to date with what they had. And you know those schools, that school had two grades in each classroom. So, I had to take my hat off to those nuns to keep us both third, like first, second grade, third

and fourth grade in the room. And to keep us both doing work that we're supposed to be doing. And she's the only teacher in there. That's why they didn't put up with any shenanigans. You get popped upside your head or hand or on your rear end or your leg or something with a ruler to pay the hell attention. So that was a good education for me. My grades have never been bad.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:47:13] Your family went, to Oakland Baptist Church, right?

Otis Mackey [00:47:18] Yes. I don't know what family member, but one of them there was a Wanzer that was a founding member of that church. I don't have the picture, but at one point my brother had a picture of the church--I don't know where he got it from-- when it was just the basement with a cover over it. As they got money, they built it up.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:47:42] Do you have memories going to Oakland as a kid?

Otis Mackey [00:47:47] Yeah, I do. I attended that church until I was about, I want to say 18, 18, 19. Then I got too busy to go to church. Unfortunately, you should never be too busy to worship your God. I just thought I outgrew God and I knew what the heck I was doing. I was going to college and I'm still living with my mother and she would be on me to go, but you know, I don't have time, you know. I was working; I had a job or two and just trying to make it, but that's no excuse, although I don't make anybody around here go to church either. Every Christmas they would hand out the little Christmas stocking full of the hardtack candy that they give out and nuts and oranges and whatnot, so I do remember that. I remember going to Sunday school and mom used to make me stay after that and hang for the first service then she would come home make big Sunday dinner. I don't remember my dad being there so I'm assuming he was going to Catholic Church, or so he said. It's amazing that church is still there since 1895, I think.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:49:21] It's an old church in Alexandria, for sure.

Otis Mackey [00:49:52] In fact, my Uncle Lloyd's house was next door to that church; and of course, it's gone. Where Lindsay Cadillac is now—you're bringing back some memories. There's a Lindsay Cadillac or something there now—that used to be an Esso gas station. By that gas stations, there was a place called Tops Drive-In. And Tops Drive-in, you could drive in and hang. The girls would skate out in their little outfits and bring your food to you. Well, back in the day, you know, they didn't serve Blacks. And so, if you ordered food from Tops--this is before I got my driver's license--you'd have to go to the back to pick it up. And I had some buddies or actually cousins working there, and this is one of the few places that had Kentucky Fried Chicken back then. Kentucky Fried Chicken was big. You would order some chicken and I might have ordered a four piece or something and they said, "You have to go to the back to get that." So, when I got back there, I got eight pieces. That's because they had Blacks working in the kitchen, you know, so. After a while, they cut that out, you know, so you could come to front and sit down. When I got into high school, you know, that was one of our hangouts from Hammond.

And there was also a drugstore, Doc Herter's'; Dr. Herter owned it. And that was where you would go to get, you like sort of fountain type thing. Get hamburgers and what not there. And he was one of the first guys to integrate. He didn't care what color you were as long as your money was green. Ronnie Herter was his son's name. I went to high school with him too. A lot of the kids would hang out there as well, next to a center theater, which is still there, but not a theater. And when I was younger, if we went to the theater there, we had to sit in the balcony; couldn't sit on the main floor. Then they had a Black

theater called the Carver, which was downtown. I'd catch the bus and go down there and see whatever feature they had down there. You know, I was a young kid catching the bus. I'd go to DC. You can go over there and go to the movie about 15 cents, get a transfer get whatever you want and ride all over the city back in the day. I couldn't do that now to save my soul. I'd get lost. You know, the bus or walking. And I got a little older, it was bicycle. So, I started getting around.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:52:40] So what year did you graduate high school?

Otis Mackey [00:52:43] I graduated in 1965. I started Howard that fall, [19]65.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:52:54] Can you tell us a bit more about your time at Howard University in in Washington, DC?

Otis Mackey [00:53:04] I went to Howard and I stayed with my mom and I didn't have a car but get a car until I was 19. So, the neighbor down the street, Fred Martin, Fred and Arthur, they had like four cars, so I catch a ride with him to school. You have to realize in your mind now this was during the turbulent [19]60s and I remember Muhammad Ali was on our campus and H. Rap Brown was on our campus; Stokely Carmichael, some of the Black Panthers were there. It was a different time period then. I was there doing the riots in [19]68. Our school was the only one that had a tank on it, came up through our front gates. All the other schools did not, like American University and Catholic University and Georgetown, none of them. But they sent a tank on ours, because it was a lot of protesting and whatnot going on, I remember that. And so, I had a little militant personality there for a minute. [laughter]

Francesco De Salvatore [00:54:30] What are your memories of the riots in DC in [19]68?

Otis Mackey [00:54:36] I do remember almost get my head shot off by my dad, you know, because I was trying to check on him. When it started, he lived at 14th and Columbia Road. And I went over there to check on him and he pulled a gun out. He didn't know it was me. And he told me to get my butt across the bridge. And everything was starting to burn. I remember trying to get across 14th Bridge because that sent me straight to Seminary. And it was closed down. I finally found a bridge open. And I think it's Chain Bridge, because somehow, I wound up in McLean. Went the long way around to get where I was going. But that was the only one I could get across at that time. And then I was out of school for a while until things quieted down. And I remember going to school, and some of them students had on suits. That's how I know someone had been shopping, during the riots. They never touched my dad's neighborhood. I do remember that, and nothing really happened in Alexandria during that period. I do remember that. And you have to remember, I moved from Alexandria in 1970 and moved to Michigan. Whatever happened after that, I'm not familiar with whatsoever, other than what I read in the paper. But Howard was kind of a hotbed of revolutionary thought and Black power of this and Black power that, back in the day.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:56:16] How do you think those movements and those politics have shaped you?

Otis Mackey [00:56:23] It shaped me to the point where my thought process when analyzing stuff and how it would affect me as a person and being Black versus how it affects the general population of the majority. I never hated White people or anything. I didn't pick that up because I don't think that movement was about that. It was about actually getting more rights given to people that were minorities more than anything. So. it did shape me in that manner. I was never raised to hate people

anyway by my parents and they never told me to hate anybody for anything and I've stuck to that. Try not to hate, understand, try to understand their point of view and go from there.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:57:19] And what did you study at Howard?

Otis Mackey [00:57:23] Started out to study psychology, wasted 30 hours. So, I switched to marketing. Then, at Howard at that time, you had to have a minor that related to your major. So, I had to take 30 hours of economics. And when I did that, I had go an extra semester. I also got married while I was in college. And by the time all that settled, I graduated in 1970 instead of 1969. But that marketing degree--I used to work at the Department of Agriculture, which I worked in export marketing service. I'll tell you a funny story about that. I worked at Safeway from my sophomore year until I started my job at Whirlpool Corporation. I was a checker at Safeway. And a guy used to come through my line. His name was Dan Tierney. At the time I didn't know who he was, but he'd always pick my line because I'd talk to people and make them laugh or whatnot, whenever they were coming through my line. And he'd also have a conversation with me. And one day he gave me his card. He said, "If you ever want to change jobs, look me up." I put his card in my pocket and never thought about it for about a month. Then, one day, I had laid it on this little desk I had at home in my bedroom and I looked and said, "I ought to call this guy." I called him and he I found out he was a director of export marketing and marketing is my field. But I didn't know what export marketing was, so he set up interview and he hired me. And I was still in college, but they allowed me to work. And then when I had a class, to leave, and then come back and they would pay me even as if I was still there. So, it was like a full-time job. And all I did was what work I could get done and then leave and go to school. That's how I finished school. And I still worked at Safeway at night. Because by then, I had just gotten married and had a baby coming. So, I did that until I got my job before. I also sold cookware door to door. And I bet you that program doesn't exist anymore with the Department of Agriculture, where we sold our wheat and other farm products to foreign countries at a reduced price, particularly ones that were destitute a little bit, and actually financed it. We had a company there that was part of agriculture that financed their purchase and everything. In fact, I kind of wish, in the back of my mind, I had stayed there because it was a very interesting job. I got to go to embassy parties and whatnot--at least invited to them. And also go to the embassies to get agreements signed between the countries and whatnot; met their representatives. And you know, you're not supposed to accept gifts from these countries when you're working for the government, but they would bring cases of champagne and all this stuff from their countries, you know, champagne and cheeses and wines and whatnot. And I had to put it in the corner. So, I know somebody got them, but I didn't get any of it. I'd have to turn that in, you know, but it was amazing. It was a great job.

Well, I started working for Whirlpool in 1970. And it's funny, when I went there, they had one guy, one Black guy, out in the field. Didn't have any Black salesmen, manager, none of that. I think I was like the second or probably the second guy they interviewed and hired me to go in their marketing program. And I went through their program in Michigan, but again, this is 1970. So, when I finished the program, they sent me to Detroit. You know, I'm naive, all right? So, I don't know anything about Detroit. My family and I, we go there, and we wound up living in Troy, Michigan, which is probably 15 miles out from the city itself. And there was about four or five of my friends from Howard that went to work for General Motors. We decided to get together, and they asked me where I lived. I told them Troy. And the gasp that came from them kind of set me back. I said, "What's the matter with Troy?" He said, "Man, there's no Black people beyond Eight Mile Road. There's none." And I'd never paid any attention to it.

And I asked my wife, you know, I said, “You notice there's no…we're the only ones in this apartment building.” She said, “I didn't pay any attention, but we are.” And I said in fact, when we went to a shopping center to go to this store called Hudson's, there was no Black people in the entire shopping center, just us. But never had any problem with you know other than not been around some folks. And we were there almost two years. And I moved here to Kansas City in 1972. And, I've been here ever since. Now I'm a Chiefs fan. I used to be a Redskins/Commanders fan, but now I'm a Chiefs' fan.

Francesco De Salvatore [01:04:19] So you mentioned you moved to Michigan with your family. Can you say more about who your wife was, and was your daughter?

Otis Mackey [01:04:29] My first wife’s name is Dolores Robinson and my daughter who still lives there in her grandmother's home, great grandma I should say, home is Andrea Mackey, Andrea Mackey Lewis and she's the one that recommended I do this because they wanted to talk to her and she didn't really grow up in Alexandria. She grew up in McLean, which is where her mother's from. We lived there in Michigan and then here in Kansas City. And when her mother and I split up, I remarried to this crazy person across from me right now. And met her in 1975. So, we've known each other ever since. But Kansas City is a nice area to live in. I really enjoy it. A little less traffic. It's beginning to get a little reputation for being a halfway clean city, a nice city. But I still miss Washington, DC. I miss the beaches. I miss the mountains and the history that is around there, compared to here. This is more of a western type history here compared to the colonial things that went on--Washington's home, Williamsburg, Battle of the Confederacy and Manassas, none of that is there—oh, here--I'm sorry.

Francesco De Salvatore [01:06:27] I'm just curious, like what are your memories of that time when you became a father? What was that like for you?

Otis Mackey [01:06:36] Best Father’s Day ever. Born on Father’s Day, 1969. Just to give you a comparison, my other daughter that was born out here, of course unfortunately, she's passed away. When Andrea was born, I couldn't go into the delivery room or anything. Then when Nicole was born out here, you know, they let me come in and watch the whole process of what I wanted to watch. I didn't watch at all. But I do remember that. And the only thing I miss--because we got divorced, with me living out here--I missed a lot of Andrea growing up. So, the only time I saw her is when she came out to visit and stayed with me. But we're very close, so she's definitely a daddy's girl.

Francesco De Salvatore [01:07:43] What are some of your favorite memories with her as she was growing up?

Otis Mackey [01:07:50] Going to the beach and hanging with my family. She loved her Aunt Goldie, which is my sister, named after my grandmother. Most of the kids she had--my sister had--children that grew up with me, believe it or not, and they had kids that were Andrea’s age, so she used to be playing with my great-nephews and great-nieces. Now I'm into great-greats. Talk about somebody feeling old.

Francesco De Salvatore [01:08:34] What was it like for you, you were quite young, to move to Michigan, you had never left the Alexandria-DC area, what was that like for you? Was that a hard decision?

Otis Mackey [01:08:47] Yeah, very hard to leave my mom because we always took care of her. But my brother and my sister told me that they would take up the slack because I had to go and live my life. My brother and I kept in touch as well as my sister, obviously; but to let me know what was going on. I helped pay the taxes on the house and sent my mom money every month and make sure she was okay.

But living in Michigan, first of all, I had to adapt to the damn cold. It was really cold. Benton Harbor, if you look that up on the map, is right on Lake Michigan. I mean, you can walk to the lake from downtown Benton Harbor. So, the wintertime that when it snowed, you got that lake effect snow. I knew nothing about that. And one day I was walking outside to get in my car, and I noticed that snow was gathering up past my ankle. And in Washington, D.C., as you know, you still live there, you get like four inches, you're all closed. I was used to that. I went back upstairs and climbed back in bed with mama, you know. So about 8:30, 8:15, 8:30, I got a phone call from Whirlpool, saying "Where are you?" I said, "Well, I'm at home and you guys closed, aren't you?" "No, we're not closed. Get your butt in here." I had to get up and drive in. And when I got out of my parking lot onto the road, it was clear as a bell. They cleared all that snow off, man. You know, they do that. They're used to it. So, and my boss told me where to go to get studded snow tires, which would rip the ice.

So that's one memory I have. and then we moved to Detroit and Motown was still you know obviously big because that was [19]70 and some of the singers and whatnot were still there. You could go to one of those local entertainment centers and see the Temptations or Smokey or somebody singing in one of those clubs or venues and pay like two dollars and watch them go through their routine that they're going to take on the road. So, they're working on their act and you know they're polishing it up pretty good and you get entertained with them for two bucks. They had jazz clubs there too. I saw some good jazz musicians. And that's another thing I miss about DC. When I was thinking about that, when I was 20, 19, 20, whatever I was, and I looked old enough to get in clubs that didn't really card me. And Blues Alley, Mr. Henry's upstairs. And I forget the other, Cellar Door. Not Cellar Door. I think it was Cellar Door; I'm not sure. But they had some clubs that I think are still there that I used to go pay a buck to get in and listen to some pretty good jazz. That's where I used to hear Roberta Flack back in the day. She was teaching at Banneker Junior High over there in D.C. And she's a graduate of Howard as well. So, she performed at Howard at their auditorium there. And I do miss that. They have jazz out here as well, because they got 18th and Vine, which they're still developing in Kansas City. So, you hear some good jazz there. But now I've gotten old, I don't go anywhere.

Francesco De Salvatore [01:13:03] What was it like transitioning to Kansas City? I mean, it just sounds like you had a period of a lot of moving, and I'm just curious.

Otis Mackey [01:13:11] Yeah, well, Kansas City, you know, obviously we were freezing in Michigan. And I remember I moved down here in March of 1972. And when we hit Missouri, we left temperatures of like 20, 15 to 20 degrees. Got down here in March and it was in the sixties. I said, "Man, it's like moving to Florida." Little did I know, their winters are just as bad as Michigan, just not as long. So, March, April, it starts getting warm a bit here. And Michigan, it stayed cold until about the middle of April or May, actually. And got cold early, like in September, where it was still hot everywhere else. The adjustment here also, there wasn't very much traffic. I had to get used to people waving at me that I didn't know back in the day. And housing and everything here was cheaper. So, the adjustment was a good adjustment at that time. And that's why I'm still here, really. I kind of like the area and I learned how to eat barbecue. So, I've been eating it ever since and it's totally different from the barbecue on the East Coast, because that's kind of southern barbecue. This is western, like Texas and here. This is actually known as the barbecue capital of the world. I had to get used to that and I was used to not being around my family. When I moved here, my dad called me and told me I had an uncle here that I didn't know lived here, Uncle Eli, his older brother. And Eli had about, I don't know, I want to say 10, 11 kids. And

they all had kids. I had an extensive family on that side, living here. I started going to their family reunions and meeting a lot of them. I found out a football player, according to Dad, John Mackey, I don't know if you ever heard of him. He was a tight end for the Baltimore Colts back in the day and San Diego Chargers--and he's in the Hall of Fame. He's the prototype tight end that could block and also play as a wide receiver. Found out about him and a bunch of other relatives that are around.

Francesco De Salvatore [01:16:16] And how did you meet your now wife, who's also in the room with you?

Otis Mackey [01:16:25] Unfortunately, my first wife and I split up in 1974. And I have a best friend named Frank Harrison. His wife and my wife, ex-wife, were best of friends. And he was consoling me and about three weeks later, if I remember correctly, his wife left him. And so, we wound up living together in this apartment. And make a long story short. We used to go to this club here. This was during the disco era, I believe. I was in my 20s, about 26, 27, 26, 25, 26 or something like that. And we used to go down there all the time and he was interested in this young lady that happened to be sitting with my lady I wound up marrying later. And that's how I met her at a club in downtown Kansas City.

Francesco De Salvatore [01:17:55] What's your wife's name?

Otis Mackey [01:17:57] Kathleen Jenkins. Everybody calls her Penny and then we had a daughter together named Nicole who passed away about eight or nine years ago. And then she had, four boys, three boys, and a granddaughter. My granddaughter, she had four kids, and the boys kind of grew up with me, and still got one of them here. He's 26, but now I've got five great-grand, and then five, three, three great-grands, four. I mean, how many I got?

Kathleen Jenkins [01:18:41] Neither!

Otis Mackey [01:18:43] Wait a minute, three girls and one boy. That's what it is. Great-grands now. We're starting on them. All my grandkids have grown up. I have two back East too. I still see my first wife and my grandkids back there. We go out to dinner and whatnot. One big happy family.

Francesco De Salvatore [01:19:08] What did you do specifically at Whirlpool? I mean, I know you worked there for a long time. What was your role there? What was your work?

Otis Mackey [01:19:18] I started out in their training program. And then when I was in Detroit, I worked on the order desk, and they also had me working. This was part of the training. I worked at a store, a retail store called RCF TV and Appliances. And that was to learn how to run a store and see what they go through to present product to the public, sell to the, I actually sold on this floor as a retail salesman. And I delivered appliances to see what they went through for that and they were preparing me to become what they called a territory manager. And when I started out as a territory manager, actually, they had one other guy that was out there, another Black guy. He was in Chicago. And they were thinking about sending me to down South, but they didn't know how that would go. Because you got to remember this was that we're talking [19]72. So, this is still early and they--I don't know why or how they picked Kansas City, because this is actually South, but they picked Kansas City and sent me down here. And I had to interview for the job just like I was walking off the street, but they hired me and gave me a rural territory. And of course, now I'm calling on these guys that are old servicemen and whatnot and happen to own a store. And they're good businessmen, but you know, they started out as service people. And

here comes this hot shot salesman, you know three-piece suit on, had big old Afro. I'm walking through there. But I eventually gained their trust and earned several awards selling in the rural area.

And then they put me in the metro area, which is primarily the big dealers. And I called on them and the K-Marts and the Woolcos, which are no longer in business, but they were the biggest at that time. I had them as customers as well. And primarily, I trained their salespeople and helped them maintain their inventory with Whirlpool. Then they put me back out in the rural area again, which I really enjoyed more than working in the city, although it was less travel. And I had larger territory; I had like half of Missouri and a quarter of Kansas, so it was a lot of away time from home. But you develop relationships with these small dealers. I mean, I've gone to the children's college graduations, marriages, whatnot, and christening other grandkids. A lot of them I still keep in contact with because now Whirlpool uses, you know, everything has gone to computers and a lot of them, if they don't hit a certain plateau in sales with Whirlpool, they're designated to a guy that's sitting behind a desk and relates to them like you and I are talking. To order and handle problems or whatnot rather than having someone they can talk to face to face. I sit right there in the office and handle the problem before I leave. You know that was my job and primarily I like doing that.

They try to promote me six times out of here out of Kansas and send me to Benton Harbor which I detested. I just didn't like Benton Harbor, Michigan, which is where their headquarters are. I said, "Well, send me to another branch," you know. But after you turned down so many jobs, they just don't call anymore. And then by then they actually had opened up offices and whatnot on the East Coast, which they didn't have when I started working. They used distributors, which were privately owned companies that distributed Whirlpool. But now they do it out there, obviously they don't need anything, they just open up a big mixing warehouse and then hire one or two people and the rest of the smaller guys they just have them call in. I guess that works, but a lot of them, they've lost a lot of the smaller dealers to other little brands that still have salesmen out there.

Francesco De Salvatore [01:24:32] Makes sense. One thing I just realized, we haven't touched upon, but it's kind of backtracking a little more back than what you're talking about, is you obviously remember when T.C. Williams, which is now Alexandria City Public High School, was built. What are your memories? Do you mind if we kind of jump back there really quick? What are your memories of thar development?

Otis Mackey [01:24:55] I never brought this up, but I actually worked over there helping build that school. I just get up and walk across the street. I had a job working construction there for a while, carrying bricks or whatever the heck I was doing. Moving up the crap and unloading it. I do remember that. I remember the school open while I was going to Howard. But I remember kids going to school over there because it's obviously across the street. And one of my friends actually graduated. He was supposed to graduate in [19]66 from Hammond. And I think he had one class to take, or something. So, he wound up doing that at T.C. and got his diploma from there, even though he's in my yearbook as a junior. Other than that, I really didn't, you know, most of my younger cousins and whatnot went to T.C. and I was more absorbed in Howard's life than the fantastic team really. I will say this. I will say this about the…Five or six maybe seven of those of my relatives played on that football team. I do remember that. When I found out about what they were doing, I actually saw something in a *Sports Illustrated* where they ranked high schools and I saw T.C. Williams was ranked either one or two I forgot. I said, "Really?" And that's when people started telling me about their team and then I found out all these

cousins of mine were on the team and I said you know they were all about 10 years old when I was playing so it's kind of funny to see that they're 16 and 17 and they're on an undefeated team ranked nationally.

Francesco De Salvatore [01:27:20] How do you think the construction affect, how did you see it affect the Seminary area and how did it affect your family?

Otis Mackey [01:27:30] Well, as far as me and my family on King Street, it didn't really affect me as much as it did the people that lived on Woods Place, because they were displaced, nowhere to live. And a lot of families moved and never came back. I was thinking about a family, a guy that grew up with my brother was married to a Japanese lady and their kids went to school with me. And I remember when they started that construction--Francine was her name, Francine Franklin, and I forget her sister's name, but they just kind of, I don't know what I lost track of them. I lost track of a lot of people because they were displaced. And never moved back in. You know, they moved somewhere else. And then it affected a lot of the people that lived there. They're just gone and never returned. If you go down Quaker Lane, there are some houses they left there and some that weren't rebuilt and there was a lot of families that lived there. There were families that lived a little further back off of Woods Lane, I think it was called. I'm going through my memory here. Woods is a lane that actually weren't on the lane, but you had to walk a path in the woods to get to their house. They're gone. The Lewis's and Mr. Rooster, I think that was his--I don't know what his last name was, he's gone. All of them just disappeared, you know, once they built those homes there. So, it disrupted the community feeling of that area. It doesn't feel, it just doesn't feel, I just don't feel like I'm home when I go there. And I go there because my daughter lives there. It's just not the same. I don t know anybody on there that lives in there hardly, except for the Young's. Judy Young, who I went to high school with and took to the prom, is still living in her dad's house. And they used to live up on that, the fort. And their dad, everybody got moved out. They displaced everybody up there. And Cravens and all of them, they're gone, you know. It's just not the same community that it was, but Alexandria is not the same.

Francesco De Salvatore [01:30:26] Right. Your grandma's house or your grandparents' house wasn't affected, right?

Otis Mackey [01:30:32] Oh, yeah, it was.

Francesco De Salvatore [01:30:33] It was affected. They tore it down. Right. Okay.

Otis Mackey [01:30:36] They had a great big house, and then they gave her a bungalow. A three-bedroom bungalow. And my daughter, that's what she bought.

Francesco De Salvatore [01:30:46] Do you remember that process of your grandparents' place? Like what exactly led to the demolition of her house?

Otis Mackey [01:30:56] Everybody that lived there had to find someplace else to go because they knocked down all those houses. And the Adams, Bradbees, the Diggs, Belks, Cravens, Casey's. And there's a lot of families, man, gone. I mean, I don't know where the Casey's moved to. And I think you interviewed Michael Casey. He could probably give you that. And the Cravens, I have no idea where they are. I think they moved to Arlington or something. It just displaced so many families that were part of my history growing up. It doesn't feel like a community anymore. You know, where everybody looked out for one another and their families. I could go to anybody's house and sit down, eat dinner, they'd

invite you in. None of that's happening there anymore, other than people I know. But the one or two that are still there, but it's just not the same. It'll never recapture that eventually that all be gone; but the school's there. And I guess it solved the integration problem that Mr. T.C. Williams was trying to fight.

There are some kids, I went to school with Sarah Ragland and I her older sister, Anne. I believe her name was, was the first Black girl to graduate from Hammond, which was before I went there. And so I went there in [19]63, so she probably graduated [19]61 or maybe earlier. She was probably the only one up there, which took a lot of guts. I'm in Hammond's alumni thing, and there's people that ask me when they see me on there. They knew I grew up with the Ragland's, and they all asked me if I knew Anne, which I did not, because she was so much older than me. But I did know her little sister, who was a sophomore or something, when I went and started at Hammond. And I understand, you know, you have to integrate, but you don't have to tear up everything, you know, an entire neighborhood to integrate schools, because you don't want to actually put kids together where they are. And they wound up doing it anyway, because someone told me the racial makeup of T.C. Is mostly Hispanic, mostly Black, and the White students who can afford it are going to private schools. So, you got that big old school there and you haven't really accomplished what you were supposed to. That's what I'm seeing now. Bishop Ireton around there and several other schools that I probably don't know about that are predominantly White. And if you can afford that tuition, that's where they're sending their kids. So, what was the point of tearing up the community, you know?

Francesco De Salvatore [01:35:04] Well I have some last I have a last question to ask you but is there anything But before I get to that question, is there an thing I haven't asked you that you want to mention now before we close on last question?

Otis Mackey [01:35:29] No, I don't see anything. We covered quite a bit of it. I told you where the family basically came from and grandma and great-grandma and great-great grandma ass far back as I could go. I think that's it.

Francesco De Salvatore [01:35:56] Well, I'm just, you know...

Otis Mackey [01:35:58] I hope this is what you're looking for.

Francesco De Salvatore [01:36:00] I mean, I've really enjoyed this time with you, and I feel honored that you shared all these memories with me. I know we just met, you know, so I appreciate you trusting me and giving me the time to share all this because you lived an incredibly big life and you've lived through different historical moments and different cities, different regions. I've learned so much these past 90 minutes. Just to close out, like if there's a memory that you could, you could hold onto for the rest of your life, what is that memory?

Otis Mackey [01:36:39] I guess that memory would be the birth of my two daughters. You know, I'll never forget that. And my memory of growing up with my grandmother being around and older brother and sister, who are gone. Those were great times. And growing up in a neighborhood that was tight knit, and everyone looked out for one another. That feeling is gone now and obviously, the neighborhood's not the same. But I'll miss all that. Oh, I didn't mention. When growing up, there was a doctor, Dr. Mitchell, a White doctor in Fairlington who would come in our neighborhood. I'll never forget him. At least he came to my house. I was quite ill. I don't know what I had. And mom, the lady next door, Mrs.

Sykes, was some kind of nurse's aide or whatever she was. But she considered herself being a nurse. She told my mother to put onions in my socks and a muster plaster on my chest to get me well. And I looked up, as I got older, I had that memory and I looked it up and people, it actually said that people thought that the onions would draw the fever or whatever it is out of your body. And I don't know what the hell a mustard plaster does, I guess open up your chest. So, I wasn't getting any better, and my dad--somehow this doctor knew my dad and he made a house call. You know, and most back then, because we're talking, this was [the] [19]50s, a White doctor would never come to a Black house, for anything, but he would make house calls in our neighborhood. And he went to the house and he saw me, and it smelled like a good hamburger. He told my mom to get all that off me and I think it was quinine or whatever it was. He had some kind of pills he gave me, and I got well real quick running fevers or whatnot. I just never forget that, and I never will forget him either. And I would go to his office to get inoculated for things. And although he did make us wait in the back room and not in the waiting room, because of people's attitudes back then. But he did do that as a doctor, you know, so I'd like to give a shout out to him. He's long dead

Francesco De Salvatore [01:39:24] Where was his office?

Otis Mackey [01:39:26] That was in Fairlington. And then there was a Dr. Mitchell, a Dr. Carroll, who looked after my mother. This was in the [19]70s, until he quit. I used to cut his grass and do his gardening--with my dad, we had a little lawn service. And even when in high school, I cleaned his office and a dentist, who I can't remember his name, I cleaned their offices and I made $20 a week. Man, that was big money. And they gave me-he looked after my mom, health-wise, and then the dentist would fix my teeth and wouldn't charge me. But before then, I had to go to the Alexandria Health Department, and that was even segregated. They had a Black dentist down there, Dr. Taylor, I think his name was. I mean, he never fixed anything. He just yanked it out your mouth. I just wanted to bring that up. I remember that.

Francesco De Salvatore [01:40:39] That's great. No, I'm glad you brought that up and I don't think I've heard those names.

Otis Mackey [01:40:44] Yeah, they're long gone, obviously. But Alexandria has changed quite a bit. Things that I couldn't do, everybody can do now. Some of the memory, I'm thinking of another memory. Brookside Swim Club or something. I don't know if anybody's ever said that. They didn't have any Black members. And that's where we had our prom--Hammond did. And they had to let me in to the prom. I was the only Black guy with Judy Young at that. And I used to remember my friends back in the day, White friends, you know, they would go swimming and whatnot. And obviously we couldn't go to that pool. I'd talk to them through the fence, “We'll go get pizza after you're done. And I tell you, I don't need a tan anyway.” [Laughter] I remember that and the beaches before they integrated. We used to go to--has anybody that you've interviewed brought up Carr’s Beach?

Francesco De Salvatore [01:41:58] Yeah, I've heard it, but feel free to share your experience.

Otis Mackey [01:42:03] Carrs Beach was actually on Chesapeake Bay, although we thought we were on the ocean, because you couldn't go to Ocean City or Virginia Beach, so we would go there. And the Motown, the Motor City Revue, and you’re too young to remember anything about that, but that had everybody on it: Stevie Wonder, Marvin Gaye, Temptations, Martha and the Vandellas, whoever. They would come there and perform on the beach. And charge you like a dollar or whatever to get in. But

they would go to the White beach and charge them like $5 to $10 to get in. I do remember that. I actually went to the Carr's Beach one time with some guys that I went to--White guys that went to high school with and they just didn't give a damn. They just let them right on there and took the money. But it just shows you know, entrepreneurneuralship of who charges what.

But back in the day, there was a Glen Echo. I do remember that, too. And they didn't allow Black people to go to their amusement park. So, we went to Hershey's and Asbury Park in New Jersey, Atlantic City. And that's where I first heard the term Chicken Bone Beach. That's where all the Black kids were. And then you hear that song "Under the Boardwalk." Well, that's where most of the kids would be out of, you know, because they don't need a tan. They'd go under there when they come out of the water. I remember that growing up. And a trip to Williamsburg when I was going to Blessed Sacrament and I had to pack a lunch because I couldn't get out and go eat. I remember that. And of course, mom made me a big thing of chicken, fried chicken and whatnot. I had like two buddies that sat out there and ate my chicken instead of going to the restaurant. There're some things, you know, you don't forget, and you remember when you come back, but you know that was back in the day.

Francesco De Salvatore [01:44:23] Yeah, I mean, it just sounds like you know, it sounds like you and many others endured quite a bit. You know, due to racism.

Otis Mackey [01:44:38] Yeah, I remember the fountains and the downtown stores in Alexandria where they had different restrooms and soda fountains and whatnot down there, you couldn't sit and you know, things like that. But you had to shop. But I also remember places like Little Jim's, which is long gone, but everybody went there to eat. You didn't care what color you were. Fish and oysters and chicken. And I saw a sign. Somebody had a sign from there recently. It's been closed, I guess. And there's a restaurant with a blue roof that's still there. I saw that the other day. I forgot the name of it. Is it Blue Roof Diner? It's still there. That we used to go to. Probably worst food in the world, but it's, it's [inaudible]. It's like Ben's Jelly Bowl. Have you ever been there?

Francesco De Salvatore [01:45:53] I've been to Ben's, yeah. Are you talking about blue--you're not talking about Blue and White Carry Out, right?

Otis Mackey [01:46:03] That's it.

Francesco De Salvatore [01:46:04] Yeah, okay.

Otis Mackey [01:46:05] I can't believe that's still there.

Francesco De Salvatore [01:46:07] Yeah, yeah, that stuff has been around for a while, for sure.

Otis Mackey [01:46:13] Yeah, but you know, you learn from your youth and I just hope that my kids, I know my kids, but my grandkids and great-grands are not, you know, discriminated against or they discriminate anyone because of their color or creed. You're taught that as a youngster and, you know, you need to learn people are just people. So that's my motto and I try to stick to it. Even though our president--I didn't want to talk about him.

Francesco De Salvatore [01:47:00] Mr. Mackey, this has been a great interview. Thank you so much for sitting with me today.

Otis Mackey [01:47:05] I appreciate it. I appreciate how to help you. Yeah, and I thank you for calling. Of course. I would suggest that you talk to David Spencer.

END OF INTERVIEW