



City of Alexandria
Office of Historic Alexandria
Alexandria Legacies
Oral History Program



Project Name: *Alexandria Legacies*

Title: *Interview with Courtney Brooks*

Date of Interview: *March 21, 2002*

Location of Interview: *Unknown, possibly the Alexandria Black History Resource Center*

Interviewer: *Conducted in collaboration with The Company of Sisters, Inc.*

Transcriber: *Unknown*

Abstract: *Although Courtney Brooks worked for the Records Center of the General Accounting Office, his real interest as an adult was in activities that he started in childhood. One was playing drums in the Armstrong High School Band. The other was playing sports in the neighborhood. He played in his own band, the Courtney Brooks All Stars, and others all around the country. In 1946 he started a semi-pro football team, the Alexandria Rams, which was integrated by 1951. A decade later he started a football team for boys coming out of high school. He was also instrumental in starting a baseball league for youth. In all of these, he experienced and advanced the shift from segregation to integration. Today he is still helping his neighbors by volunteering at a food mission, directing the Blues Society, and organizing neighborhood festivals.*

Table of Contents/Index

Minute	Counter	Page	Topic
<i>Not indicated</i>	<i>Not indicated</i>	3	Introductions
		3	Early Childhood—Family and Neighborhood
		5	Education, Introduction to Music
		6	Recreation and Entertainment
		7	Career in Government and Music
		8	Family
		8	Government Work
		9	Integrating Football
		11	Youth Baseball
		11	Historical Times
		12	More About Family
		12	Other Community Service Activities
		15	Musical Activities
		16	Mrs. Brooks
		16	Concluding Remarks

Introductions	
Interviewer:	Today is Thursday, March 21, 2002. This is an interview with Mr. Courtney Brooks of Alexandria, Virginia.
Interviewer:	Good evening. What is your name, please?
Courtney Brooks:	Courtney F. Brooks.
Interviewer:	And your address is?
Courtney Brooks:	#### Wilkes Place in Alexandria.
Interviewer:	Now, Mr. Brooks, tell me, where were you born and when were you born?
Courtney Brooks:	I was born right here in Alexandria, Virginia, November the 17th, 1923.
Early Childhood – Family and Neighborhood	
Interviewer:	Tell me, who lived in your household. Was it your mother, your father, grandparents, cousins, or who?
Courtney Brooks:	My mother, father, and my sister.
Interviewer:	Tell me about your playmates.
Courtney Brooks:	Oh, well, we had a lot of kids running around up and down in the area of Payne and Cameron Streets, Payne and Queen Streets, and all of that area. Those were the people that everybody...at that time everybody had a place. If you lived in a certain area, that was your area to live and play and [inaudible] friends. And you were actually, you would be against, maybe even if, like if it was a baseball team or something, against people that lived in the other areas.
Interviewer:	...remember the names of any of your playmates?
Courtney Brooks:	Oh, sure! J.L. Jackson, Chip Burke, Jimmy Floren. We even started, when we were young, we even started a little social club, and we had about 10 or 12 guys in it. And those that I named and all [inaudible] Ellis, Oliver Ellis, and Joe Johnson, and two or three others that we had in the club. Percy Palmer was another one. Oliver and Chip Burke, both of them were in the club.
Interviewer:	What kinds of things did this club do and what was the name of the club?
Courtney Brooks:	The club was called The Caesars. And we would have dances. We had a trip to the beach. And we would have just social gatherings, just to have something to do in the city.
Interviewer:	So this is when you were a young adult?
Courtney Brooks:	Yes, in the early teens.
Interviewer:	Early teens, all right. What church did you attend?

Courtney Brooks:	Actually, I didn't. I started off at Shiloh. But now I'm connected with Church of the Food Bank, Anchor of Hope Food Ministry.
Interviewer:	What were your parents' names?
Courtney Brooks:	My father's name was George. My mother's name was Rosa, Rosa Courtney.
Interviewer:	What did your parents stress most when you were growing up? Was it hard work, or education, or honesty? What did your parents stress most?
Courtney Brooks:	Mostly it was work because they both worked; they both worked at the Bureau of Engraving. I didn't get a chance to really get a lot with my mother, because mother died when I was just 12 years old.
Interviewer:	So after your mother died, who cared for you?
Courtney Brooks:	My father - and we had a cousin named Miss Mary Coleman. She was like our babysitter.
Interviewer:	So, there was an extended family and they pitched in to see that the children were cared for, you and your sister?
Courtney Brooks:	Well, it was mostly my father.
Interviewer:	When you were growing up, did you ever feel that you were discriminated against?
Courtney Brooks:	Oh, yes, there was quite a few times that I felt that. Because, if you went down to the beach, you went down on some certain trips, you couldn't eat at certain—you had to go to the side window. Couldn't go to the front door; you had to use the side door. And then, in the early [19]50s, the city manager told us that we couldn't play integrated football in the city. We had to play our first integrated football game at Mount Vernon, at Mount Vernon High School stadium.
Interviewer:	Tell me about the neighborhood where you lived.
Courtney Brooks:	Well, I was born on Cameron Street, in the 1200 block. Most of the time we lived in the 1300 block of Cameron—that's right at Payne Street. Cameron Street, and there was Payne west to one side, and Fayette to the other, and Queen Street to the north. Everybody knew everybody. Everybody were friends.
Interviewer:	Were there businesses in your neighborhood?
Courtney Brooks:	Not really business. Maybe a barbershop, one little restaurant, grocery store. They didn't have the big chain grocery stores then. Later on they did have one that they called the Sanitary. (That's the Safeway now.) Then, after that, a couple small restaurants opened up, but at first there wasn't a lot of black-owned business.
Interviewer:	So were those businesses black-owned that you just told me about?

Courtney Brooks:	The barbershop was. That was [inaudible]. Later on, they opened up one restaurant. I forget the name of it but it was at the corner of Henry and Queen Street, and that was it.
Interviewer:	What type of transportation did you use?
Courtney Brooks:	We used the AB&W bus, going from Alexandria to D.C. At first it was the trolley, then the bus.
Interviewer:	And how much did it cost to ride the bus?
Courtney Brooks:	Well, when I first started riding, going to school, it cost fifteen cents.
Education, Introduction to Music	
Interviewer:	Oh, now that you mention school, tell me about your early education—where you went to school and what you remember about the school.
Courtney Brooks:	I went to Parker-Gray [Alexandria] up to the eighth grade. And then, I wanted to take shop. So I went to Shaw Junior High School [Washington, D.C.] for half a year. I wanted to take carpentry, but they switched me into printing because of the fact that the carpentry shop was overcrowded. And then from Shaw, I went to Armstrong High School [Washington, D.C.]. Down at Armstrong, I played in the band down there. After coming out of the print shop, I played in the band. And they gave us credit for band, and then we took the shop.
Interviewer:	Who were some of your favorite teachers when you were in school, either elementary or when you went to high school?
Courtney Brooks:	Well, Miss Ellen Davis was one of the favorites over here. And then, in D.C., at high school, our band teacher, Mr. Amos, was my other favorite teacher. My harmony teacher, I forget her name even.
Interviewer:	And what were your favorite subjects in school?
Courtney Brooks:	Well, I took harmony. Well, they used band as a subject. And also, as a foreign language, I took Spanish, as a foreign language. We had to take a foreign language to get a credit.
Interviewer:	Tell me a little bit about—you mentioned that you enjoyed the music, the harmony—tell me a little bit about the music program there.
Courtney Brooks:	Well, at Armstrong we had a band, marching band and a classical music band, but that only started in [19]38 because of the fact that before then, all three of the high schools, Cardozo, Armstrong, and Dunbar, they were combined, and in [19]38 Armstrong broke away from its own and had its own band. Actually, at the time, it was seven fellows from over here, seven students from over here in Virginia that played in the Alexandria Junior Elks Band that were playing in the high school band over at Armstrong.
Interviewer:	Now, I know that you have gifted hands; you're a wonderful drummer. Let me see your hands.

Courtney Brooks:	Used to be.
Interviewer:	What's your most vivid memory about your education while you were in school?
Courtney Brooks:	Well, the biggest thing was the band because of the fact that the band, it was different, and a lot of things that other students weren't allowed to do, we could do because of the fact that our principal was in love with the band. The band could even go into the lockers in between, in between time. You only had certain times you would go into your locker. If you went to your locker and somebody caught you, one of the school teachers or the hall monitors caught you, just say, "I was getting something for the band." And everything was okay just because you said you were in the band.
Interviewer:	You mentioned that some of your classmates who were also in the band. Tell me about some of those whose names we might recognize now.
Courtney Brooks:	Oh, you mean classmates that were from here in Virginia, or the classmates that was in Armstrong, musicians period from the [19]30s on.
Interviewer:	Well, just tell me about the ones that you want me to know about.
Courtney Brooks:	Well, there was a gentleman, piano player named Charlie Rouse. Of course, Duke Ellington came from Armstrong. Billy Epstein came from Armstrong. The Clovers came from Armstrong. They had quite a few name musicians that came from Armstrong. In fact, one year we even had a music festival out at Saint Luke's and we had close to 30, 40 musicians that all came from Armstrong. And even some of them are still around today, like Nap Turner, at WPFW, and Al Swales at WPFW—both of them came out of Armstrong.
Recreation and Entertainment	
Interviewer:	What kinds of things did you do for fun when you were growing up?
Courtney Brooks:	Well, I played, I liked baseball. Baseball was my main game. We tried to play baseball because we really didn't have a football team over here, besides the high school team.
Interviewer:	And where were these games played?
Courtney Brooks:	Well, we had one field at the corner of Queen and Fayette called the Laundry Field. Any space where you could find enough area to play, to start a game. They had a field right in front of old Parker-Gray High School, which is where the Charles Houston Recreation Center and where the houses are. Across the street, there was a field there where we played ball. And then there was another field at the intersection of Payne Street and Madison Street where there was a big field called Lafayette where they played baseball.
Interviewer:	What kind of entertainment was there in segregated Alexandria?
Courtney Brooks:	Well, entertainment, really—they had the movie and there would be shows once in a while. But the main thing was every Saturday night there was a

	dance promoter named Julian Dove and he would have a dance. And the main attraction that would be in the area. And he would have somebody at the Elks Hall every Saturday night.
Interviewer:	Who were some of the entertainers that would come to Alexandria?
Courtney Brooks:	Well, these were the rhythm and blues days and you would have Ruth Brown, Chuck Willis, the Clovers, the Orioles—everything, everybody that was a recording artist. And then, at that time, a lot of the acts that came through, they didn't have their own band. They might have a guitar player, so in the late [19]50s, or [19]50s. My band, the band that I had, we would always be their band. They would say "The Orioles and their band." We were always their band. We were the house band for Julian Dove.
Interviewer:	And what was the name of your band?
Courtney Brooks:	It was under my name.
Interviewer:	The Courtney Brooks Band?
Courtney Brooks:	The All Stars.
Interviewer:	The All Stars. The Courtney Brooks All Stars.
Courtney Brooks:	The Courtney Brooks All Stars.
Interviewer:	Tell me what it was like growing up in Alexandria.
Courtney Brooks:	Well, by being the only place I really knew, I had a good time here. There was a lot to do. Like we say, we played ball, have the dances. We would have a lot of Friday or Saturday night affairs, that there were two to three different clubs would have. We'd get together and have affairs with each other, along with each other. There were three other clubs our same age at that time.
Interviewer:	What was your relationship with your father like?
Courtney Brooks:	Great! In fact my father was the one that got me started playing drums. He was a drummer too.
Interviewer:	So he taught you to play drums?
Courtney Brooks:	Yes, he got me started in the band. Actually at that time there was a fellow named Earl Lucas. He was in charge of the jump [inaudible] with the Elks band, the Elks Hall.
Career in Government and Music	
Interviewer:	When you were growing up, what did you want to be?
Courtney Brooks:	At that time, my big thing was to try and get a job in the government. I didn't know that the music, that I would get hooked up with music. And that it would last like it did, or carry me as far as it did.
Interviewer:	Well, now that you've mentioned your career in music, let's talk about it.

Courtney Brooks:	Yes, well, music...I've had a chance to meet a lot of people and I've played a lot of different places. There's only a few states that I haven't been in. In fact, I've played all the states from New York—the Apollo Theater in New York, all the way across the country to the [inaudible] Ballroom in California. I recorded with the Griffin Brothers. And also I recorded with Chuck Willis and his band.
Interviewer:	Where were these recordings done?
Courtney Brooks:	Recordings were always done in New York City.
Interviewer:	Tell me about life traveling as a performer. What was that like?
Courtney Brooks:	Well most of the time you were driving. You might sometimes have a jump of six or seven hundred miles from one night to the next night. In fact, one weekend we even had a jump that carried us in one day, Thursday, on a Wednesday...Wednesday night we played Denver, Colorado, and we had to be at the Apollo for rehearsal at six o'clock Thursday the next day. So that was quite a jump.
Interviewer:	When you traveled, where did you stay?
Courtney Brooks:	There were a lot of cities that had motels at the time. Sometimes you may even play two or three cities. It all depends on how close they were before you even had time to spend the whole night. Lot of times you might do all your sleeping in your vehicle while you were traveling.
Family	
Interviewer:	Now, tell me, did you marry?
Courtney Brooks:	Yes, I got married, quite a while back. In fact, January the ninth was our fifty-eighth anniversary.
Interviewer:	That's wonderful. And do you have children?
Courtney Brooks:	One child.
Interviewer:	And that is a...
Courtney Brooks:	...boy, Ronald.
Interviewer:	And do you have grandchildren?
Courtney Brooks:	One granddaughter.
Interviewer:	And great-grandchildren?
Courtney Brooks:	I have a great-grandchild on the way. I think it's in about three months.
Government Work	
Interviewer:	You mentioned earlier working in the government. Tell me a little about the time you spent working in the government.
Courtney Brooks:	Well, I worked with what they called the Records Center when it was part of the General Accounting Office, and that was out in Suitland, Maryland,

	most of the time. And later part, we were traveling across the Woodrow Wilson Bridge we went to Suitland. But my first job was with the Under-Secretary of War in the State Building.
Interviewer:	How long did you work there?
Courtney Brooks:	Well, I worked with the government from [19]40, [19]43 until I went in the Army. Then I went back with them until I went on the road in [19]53. Then I went, I resigned from the government and went back in the government when I came back off the road in 1957. And I retired in the late [19]80s.
Interviewer:	How would you describe your career working in government?
Courtney Brooks:	Well, it was okay. It wasn't what I really expected or really hoped it would be. But you had to take what you could get.
Integrating Football	
Interviewer:	Now, I have heard that you, in some sense, were a pioneer in Alexandria, and that you were the founder of some very special activities and groups here. Can you share that with us?
Courtney Brooks:	Well, in 1946, along with other fellows, we started a football team called the Alexandria Rams. We had a team before [that] we called the Romans. In [19]46 we started a team called the Rams, and, a semi-pro team which was for people that weren't playing pro ball. There weren't any blacks playing pro ball then. We played up until [19]50, and in [19]50 we had a chance to play integrated football. They wouldn't let us play in Alexandria, so we had to play our first game in Mount Vernon, at..., in Mount Vernon, in Fairfax County, at Mount Vernon High School stadium down on Route 1.
Interviewer:	And what was your role with this football team?
Courtney Brooks:	I was the business manager.
Interviewer:	And that involved doing what kinds of things?
Courtney Brooks:	That involved making arrangements, scheduling games, scheduling the facilities—anything that had to do with the business part.
Interviewer:	Do you have some newspaper clippings that would show your football team, and the coach, and maybe your schedule?
Courtney Brooks:	Yes, I do.
Interviewer:	We'd love to see those.
Courtney Brooks:	Well I have, I have quite a few pictures. I have pictures of the team and I have some pictures of the first integrated team. And also, I forgot to mention that in 1964, Alexandria Rams carried a team down to Charleston, South Carolina. That was the first integrated team, multi-racial team, to ever play in Charleston, South Carolina. We broke the color line down there in September of 1964.
Interviewer:	So was this considered a semi-pro football team?

Courtney Brooks:	Yes, actually that's what they called it, semi-pro. You didn't get paid anything because you weren't making...there wasn't enough money coming in to pay you. Lucky to pay the officials and pay the rental of the stadium, and buy uniforms.
Interviewer:	Now how would you describe the talent of some of the young men who played on your team?
Courtney Brooks:	We had some fellows on the team that could easily, if it hadn't been a little too early, they could easily have made the professionals. We had some very, very good football players.
Interviewer:	Can you remember the names of some of them?
Courtney Brooks:	Well, there was Sonny Stokes, which was one of the best running backs that we had. There was Horace Burton, who played with the Rams and he also played in Canada. If I went down the list, I'd be here half the night. We were just talking this evening about some of the fellows that were on the original team. William Willis and Chip Burton, and the Davis brothers, Sammy Gelum. I just hate to try to call them all because I know I'm going to forget somebody. And Llewellyn Brown, and the Evans brothers, Andrew and Buddy. Gerald Thomas. And then we got them into the league up in Pennsylvania after...in 1953 we got them in the league in Pennsylvania. We were the only team in the league that wasn't based in Pennsylvania. So every other week we were playing a team from Pennsylvania would be coming to Alexandria and all would be integrated. Most of them were completely white. All of them would be an integrated team.
Interviewer:	So you'd spend your weekends traveling to these games?
Courtney Brooks:	Well, every other week...we'd leave on Sunday. We'd leave Sunday morning early because we went into Pennsylvania. Maybe have a two- to three-hour ride going and coming. Our longest jump that we ever had was when we made the ride down to, the trip down to Charleston, South Carolina. That was the longest trip.
Interviewer:	What kind of record did your team have?
Courtney Brooks:	Oh, they had a good record. They had winning records. Maybe they didn't win the championship, but they had just about a winning record every year. They had a very good team, a very good team. And then, after I left in [19]53, when I went on the road, and when I came back off the road in [19]57, the Rams were still playing. They were in the league [inaudible]. Buddy Ford and I had traveled up to Pennsylvania and got them in the league. And then in [19]57, when I came back off the road, there was a lot of the youngsters just getting out of school, and the Rams had so many players they didn't need them; they didn't want them. So, then I started another team that we called...named them the Romans. And we had just about all the high school kids coming out. And we started. And, we were in the Boys Club league in D.C. starting in 1957. In fact, that year we won the

	championship.
Interviewer:	So, actually, you had a profound influence on many of the young men growing up in Alexandria.
Youth Baseball	
Courtney Brooks:	Well, I don't know influence I had. I had a lot of connections. Because I also had a Little League baseball team that I handled—twelve and under.
Interviewer:	Tell me more about that.
Courtney Brooks:	Had kids that was playing soft...playing baseball, and all of them were twelve and under. We were in a league. That was nice. We had something for the kids to do. Other than that, there was a group called Jack's Market that financed the team, got us uniforms and all. But it was really nice. Actually my son was one of them. And Jack Martin's two sons. And Joe Johnson's two sons, the twins, Joey and Joel. I know I'll miss some names. And Pierre. And Bobby Goodman. All of them were in twelve and under. And we played teams in D.C. Had to go to D.C.
Interviewer:	When you look at all that you have accomplished, what is it that you are most proud of?
Courtney Brooks:	I really couldn't say. I think maybe the best thing that I think about is the big discussion and big argument we had about playing interracial football. The city manager said I could only play over his dead body. And so....
Interviewer:	And he died?
Courtney Brooks:	He passed. And when he passed, the next year I scheduled all white teams the whole year. I didn't schedule black teams all year. And after that, we had integrated football here, starting in 1951 on. We had an integrated team. In [19]50 we played the first game. Our team was all black and we played a team out of Falls Church, called Falls Church Hawks. They were the all-white team. And that's how it started in 1950.
Historical Times	
Interviewer:	There are some moments in history in which we all remember what we were doing at the time of a particular event. Where were you and what were you doing when President John F. Kennedy was assassinated?
Courtney Brooks:	I was at work. In fact, I forget exactly where it was I was working, but I was at work that day when it happened. I was supposed to be at work anyhow. I think we were off that day because of the fact of the parade and of the fussing going on. But I was here, right in town. But I was watching on television or something like that. I wasn't actually on Constitution Avenue where it happened.
Interviewer:	Now what was your involvement in the Civil Rights Movement?
Courtney Brooks:	The biggest thing I think was the fact that playing interracial sports in [inaudible]. I wouldn't say bringing them, but being one of the people that

	had it started. I think that's one of the big things.
Interviewer:	That was. I agree with you.
More About Family	
Interviewer:	Do you remember anything about your grandmother or your grandmothers?
Courtney Brooks:	I do not remember, not one thing. I was talking about that the other day. We were talking about that and I didn't remember. Didn't even know what my grandmother or my grandfather's name was. All I knew I had an Uncle Lewis and Aunt Laura that lived on West Street. I never knew what my grandparents' names [were].
Interviewer:	Do you have family photos? Do you have pictures of your father?
Courtney Brooks:	I have pictures of my father, my mother, and some of my aunts. Things like that.
Interviewer:	Would you allow us to copy them?
Courtney Brooks:	No problem. Anytime. Any picture that I have.
Other Community Service Activities	
Interviewer:	I've tried to ask you all the questions that I think are important, but is there something that I've not asked you that you are anxious to share with all of Alexandria? Any information that you would just love for us to know?
Courtney Brooks:	No, I mean, well the thing was, in Alexandria, like I said, on weekends it was the sports and everybody would be at the football game. And we had the, other than that, we had the [inaudible] little social club that would have functions and affairs. Those would have a dance every Saturday night. That was the, really at that time...and then we had a spot at the corner of Alfred and Queen, the Blues, the Blue's Drug Store—that was the hangout spot. Other than that...I don't have anything special.
Interviewer:	Well you've been a wonderful influence to many of the young people in Alexandria. What is the one thing that you wish you could tell them, that they could learn about the way you lived your life?
Courtney Brooks:	I don't know what I would really tell them. I would just say, "Do the things that are pleasing to you—things that you think you're doing something. Maybe do something that you think you're doing something to help somebody else." And that's my main thing now is what I'm doing now. I hope that I am helping other people.
Interviewer:	Tell me how you're helping other people right now.
Courtney Brooks:	Right now, like I say, I am part of the Anchor of Hope Food Ministry. We distribute food to the senior citizens. And we distribute approximately, I would say, \$1500 of food every week. This week we even had clothing for the people. Some of the clothing had brand, still had store tags on them, hadn't ever been used. They were all women's clothes. A few kids' clothes,

	but most of them was ladies' clothing. I had five of these big, black trash bags. I had five bags full of clothing. And I received a call today that there would be more clothing, and sweet potatoes and all, from the pickups over the weekend. So that's my main thing now is picking up food. At one time I used to pick up every Sunday night from one of the bakeries. And I do pick up once a week now from BJ's. And one time we used to pick up from Wonder Bakery. That was my main thing—picking up food and stuff for the senior citizens.
Interviewer:	That was exactly what I meant. I wanted to know how you made a difference in the lives of people in Alexandria and you told me. That's wonderful.
Courtney Brooks:	Well, I'll put it like this. One of the ladies one day went down to one of the places where we would go to give them a hand sorting out the clothes. And she got a coat. I forget the name of the store; it was at the corner of Saint Asaph and King Street. That same coat was in the window of the store for \$300. And she got it for nothing.
Interviewer:	So if we know of families that need some of the things that you have, how would they go about getting them?
Courtney Brooks:	Dial my number and I'll know [inaudible] help them get it. Don't have to be a family. It could be an organization that you were having something, a party, or anything.... Might be a small cost And then there are quite a few times where you can get different types of refreshments foods for free.
Interviewer:	And what is your phone number?
Courtney Brooks:	###-###-####
Interviewer:	I remember that you donated food to an after-school reading enrichment program to some students at Francis Hammond Middle School a few years ago.
Courtney Brooks:	Yes. And then one time we had about five...it could have been 5, 6, or 7 trailer loads of food that we used if the parking area out at GW School, George Washington School, to distribute to the seniors, to anybody who came through. And we disbursed food to close to a thousand people that day.
Interviewer:	Courtney, can you talk about how you helped a young lady, a young girl in the community who loved to dance? Can you tell how you helped her get the exposure that she needed to get, and end up going to Europe? Can you talk about that a little bit?
Courtney Brooks:	All I know is that she was dancing. And some program that we had. And one of the programs that we had was, that I got very involved in, was that they had a dinner for me in my honor at the club, the Anchor of Hope, and she was one of the people on the show, on the program. It was just something that came up. If I knew somebody I thought could do something, I would give them a call and ask them to be part of it.

Interviewer:	Can you remember sharing with her mother an application and registration form that you had picked up from the Department of Recreation when you were working there—for the Dance Theater of Harlem?
Courtney Brooks:	Yes, I remember that. And the only thing that really got me was because of the fact they could only take nine people, and they were in alphabetical order, and her last name started with a T. And she got left out.
Interviewer:	Right, but she did go on to classes with Dance Theater of Harlem at the Kennedy Center, and she traveled to Europe
Courtney Brooks:	...tour for the Queen
Interviewer:	Exactly. And you were responsible for that. You were, maybe indirectly, responsible, because you got her in touch with the people that she needed to be in touch with to be able to audition. And had you not done that, maybe her career would not have taken off as it did. You've really done a lot!
Courtney Brooks:	Well, my thing is, if somebody's doing something, any way that I can help, give me a call. If you think that I can help you, help you with, like, refreshments, food, stuff like that, like I say, it's nothing. Two days ago I had so much clothing for the ladies, I couldn't, I couldn't see out of the back of my car. I had five large trash bags of all ladies clothing and somebody, somebody...and then another time, people wanted to have, like a picnic, or a cookout for the kids in summer school, and I was able to get the stuff, some of the stuff that they needed. Lot of times when I can get the items, it may not cost you anything. With the contacts that I might have, I might be able to get it for you for nothing.
Interviewer:	Did you talk about, do you remember anything about your role with the Blues Society and the picnics and cookouts that you would have each year for the Blues Society?
Courtney Brooks:	Well, I haven't mentioned them but, yes, I am with the D.C. Blues Society and we put on festivals every year up at Carter Barron. And we bring in attractions. Like last year the attraction was Roy Gaines, and he and I had played together with Chuck Willis years back. But all the functions that we have, like the festivals, they are free to the public. And we even have had two or three picnics over here at my house where I would have from maybe 150 to 200 people and 15 to 20 musicians. I guess some people say, "We'd have a ball."
Interviewer:	Are you still active with the Blues Society?
Courtney Brooks:	I sit on the Board of Directors with the Blues Society. We have a function coming up the first Saturday in September at Carter Barron, which is our usual, yearly music festival. And then one other thing that I do, too—and we're just making plans—I take the senior citizens fishing. And the city helps me financially to take care of the trips.

Interviewer:	Where do you go when you go fishing, when you take them on fishing trips?
Courtney Brooks:	We go down to, I take them down to Solomon's Island. And we have, we've already set up five dates. Just got to get the details together—who's going to drive, what they going to drive, and when they're going to drive. But we have five dates already set up for the senior citizens to go fishing.
Interviewer:	When you go down to Solomon's Island, when you did, when there were boat rides that the people here in Alexandria would go on in the summer for entertainment, what was your role with the boat ride?
Courtney Brooks:	My only role with the boat ride would be if I was connected with an organization, maybe I would set up a date and get the music to play.
Interviewer:	Would you ever provide the entertainment?
Courtney Brooks:	Yes, there have been many a time I did play on the boat, yes. We'd go down to the Marshall Hall. And that was the big thing—to have a boat ride and go down to Marshall Hall, come back.
Interviewer:	Now, would the boat leave from Alexandria or would it leave from...
Courtney Brooks:	It'd leave from Washington, D.C. and it'd stop in Alexandria and go on to Marshall Hall.
Interviewer:	Now, what was the attraction at Marshall Hall? Why would you stop at Marshall Hall?
Courtney Brooks:	Marshall Hall was like a casino. There were like playground rides. There was a gambling casino like they have up at Midway [inaudible].
Interviewer:	So you were able to, you were able to gamble? The people who [inaudible] were able to gamble?
Courtney Brooks:	Yes, they had the slot machines. That was all they had then.
Interviewer:	Do they still have boat rides like that?
Courtney Brooks:	I'm not sure if they have...most of the boat rides now, people just have the small boat rides where they can have more or less like a private affair. They might have two, couple of hundred, but not 4, 5, 600 people like there used to be when they had the big boat ride.
Musical Activities	
Interviewer:	In the community, did you ever provide entertainment for your community, it would have been, I guess, the Seminary Civic Association?
Courtney Brooks:	Yes, we would have, on Memorial Day, we'd have a block party. Then they would block off the street and let us [inaudible] us a stage and we'd have a block party and we'd have four or five bands that would come over that I would get through the Blues Society and they would come over and play for us for nothing.

Interviewer:	How long did the block parties go on? How many years?
Courtney Brooks:	I'm not sure. I think it was about six or seven years. I'm not sure exactly.
Interviewer:	Do you still have the block parties?
Courtney Brooks:	No, you have to have a million dollars liability insurance, which we can't afford to pay for.
Interviewer:	And who mandated that? The City?
Courtney Brooks:	City mandated that, yes.
Interviewer:	Do you remember what year that was?
Courtney Brooks:	No, it's been about four or five years ago.
Mrs. Brooks	
Interviewer:	Is there anything else you'd like to share? Anything about your family, your wife?
Courtney Brooks:	Just that we've been married now 58 years, last January. I guess that's about it.
Interviewer:	And your wife's name is?
Courtney Brooks:	Lois C.
Interviewer:	Tell me how Mrs. Brooks supported you in all of your endeavors?
Courtney Brooks:	Well, she was there, and she...[break in dialogue on tape] a party or something. That's where everybody would turn out on Sunday, for the football game like if it was an anniversary party or something. The whole city would turn out every Sunday that we had a home game.
Interviewer:	So she would support you by coming to the football games and also through your musical career?
Courtney Brooks:	Oh, yes.
Concluding Remarks	
Interviewer:	[inaudible] music?
Courtney Brooks:	I guess so.
Interviewer:	Mr. Brooks, we've enjoyed interviewing you.
Courtney Brooks:	I've enjoyed being with you. I hope that if I've forgotten some names that should have been mentioned, I'm sorry I couldn't remember some of them. Sometimes you can remember the names off the top of your head and then the next day you can't remember the same names because there, like I say, there were a lot of fellows involved in getting the Rams going. And also, when we started the Romans, there was a lot of fellows that [were] involved in that. Roger Anderson was one of them too; he was involved. And [inaudible]—different people like that. They were involved.

Interviewer:	Well, you truly are an Alexandria legacy. Thank you again.
Courtney Brooks:	Thank you for coming by. Thank you for the honor of just being able to chat with you. I hope that things that I've said will not offend anyone because maybe I forgot to mention their name. If I did, I'm still thinking about them. And maybe, if I did forget somebody, maybe we can do another one and I'll get their name in, and I'll be sure to have their name in there next time.
Interviewer:	Thank you.
Courtney Brooks:	You're welcome. [End]