

DWP CUSTOMER OPERATIONS

LLOYD ADOLPH HERBS

Interviewed by Dick Nelson

One of a series of oral histories covering the growth and development of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power as seen by the participants - its employees.

Produced by

Special Projects Section  
Elizabeth Wimmer, Manager  
Public Affairs Division

Los Angeles Department of Water and Power

1992

CONTENTS

Biographical Notes . . . . . v

TAPE NUMBER: 1, Side One (January 21, 1991) . . . . . 1

Lloyd's birth... His Father... Working on the  
Panama Canal...Father Comes to California... Simon  
and Ivy Marry... Lloyd's First Home... Local  
Churches... 40th Street Neighbors, CA 1926...  
Lloyd Sells Newspapers... Depression Living...  
Selling Fight Extras... Blacks at L.A. High  
School... Lloyd's Father... Lloyd's Mother...  
Selling Newspapers...

TAPE NUMBER: 1, Side Two (January 21, 1991). . . . . 17

Black Churches... Junior High School... Lloyd  
Works... 1933 Earthquake... Lloyd Meets Faylece...  
Respect for Elders... Astronomy... Hispanics...  
Discrimination... Welcome Watson... Gilbert  
Lindsay... Leon Washington... "Complexion" Divides  
Friends...

TAPE NUMBER: 2, Side One (January 21, 1991). . . . . 33

Jefferson High School... Lloyd Becomes Interested  
in Public Speaking and Drama... L.A. City  
College... 1939 - Lloyd Thinks About the U.S.  
Army... Working at Frank's Grocery Store... Frank  
Dimetreus... Peter Raulis... Lloyd and Faylece  
Marry... Lloyd Works for L.A. County Library...  
Maury Katz... Lloyd Becomes a Shipwright During  
the War... Lloyd Joins the DWP as a Meter Reader  
in 1947... John Bryant... James McLaughlin...  
Sister Agnes... \_\_\_\_\_ McDonough... Black's Not  
Promoted... Political Corruption... Mayor Frank  
Shaw... Joe Shaw... Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr...  
Meter Readers Prepare... Lloyd Goes Back to  
School... Civil Service Examination Announcements  
Controlled... Fletcher Bowron... Changes in L.A.  
Civil Service... Lloyd Promoted... Lloyd  
Studies... The Church...

TAPE NUMBER: 2, Side Two (January 21, 1991). . . . . 54

Duties of Meter Reader... Jonathan... Helping the  
1950 U.S. Census... \_\_\_\_\_ Eichmeyer... Posting  
Bulletins... Favorites... William Moje... Ted  
Zakaryan... Manny Becker... Follow the Rules...

TAPE NUMBER: 3, Side One (February 26, 1991) . . . . . 72

Lloyd Finally Moves to Field Collection... \_\_\_\_\_  
Woodhall... Lloyd Meets More DWP People in New  
Job... Field Collection... Helping Customers...  
Eula Love... Strange Civil Service Interview...  
Racial Problems at the Shipyard... False Declines  
for Job Interviews...

TAPE NUMBER: 3, Side Two (February 26, 1991). . . . . 92

Senior Meter Reader... James L. Mulloy... Samuel  
B. Nelson... Louis Winnard... Paul Lane... Lloyd  
Takes Charge of Mail Room... \_\_\_\_\_ Peterson...  
Mail Problems... "Mail Council Meetings"... The  
Mail Room... William Moje... Special  
Collections... Blaze Beltramo... William  
Plumley... James Derry... John Fashing... The  
Trainee Program... Ben Aimar... Harvey Uribe...  
Martin Luther King, Jr. Funeral Discussion...  
"Follow the Rule"... Speaker's Club...

TAPE NUMBER: 4, Side One (February 26, 1991). . . . . 112

Principal Meter Reader... Mrs. McDonough... Kenny Fuller... Lloyd in Charge of Commercial Offices... To the San Fernando Valley... Herman Davis... Blacks in the Speaker's Club... Arnold Martin... Social Events... Success as a Speaker... Jerry Jones... Charles Robinson... John Gerster... Robert Phillips... Patricia Nagel... Opening Speaker's Club to Women... Carl Tamaki... Tom Trainer... Judy Davidson... Judy Davis... Louis Winnard... Lloyd Assigned to Customer Relations... Jack Lemon... Computers... Mr. Parsley... Shelton Bishop... Commercial Division Splits... Lloyd Retires... Works in Community...

TAPE NUMBER: 4, Side Two (February 26, 1991). . . . . 131

Impressions of Managers... Samuel Morris... Mr. McDonough... Louis Winnard... Unions... Carl Tomaki... Lloyd Featured in Ebony Magazine... Equality...

Biographical Notes

Lloyd Adolph Herbs

Born in Los Angeles, California on August 16, 1920.

Parents: Simon Emmanuel and Ivy Clorine (James) Herbs.

Married: Faylece Thersea Bacon, September 4, 1941 in Los Angeles, California. Faylece was born on January 30, 1920 in Dallas, Texas. Her parents were Florine Missouri and Ida Catherine (Creasy) Bacon.

Children: Michael Maurice Herbs  
Born: June 25, 1942

Grandchildren: Angela Deniece Herbs  
Kenneth Maurice Herbs

Entered Department of Water and Power Service on January 20, 1947 as a Meter Reader, Commercial Division.

Retired on February 1, 1985 as a Commercial Executive, Customer Relations Office.

Education: Nevin Avenue School, McKinley Jr. High, L.A. City College - U.C.L.A.

Affiliations: Former Vistryman - St. Phillips Episcopol Church.  
Past Master, B.F. Talbot Masonic Lodge.  
Member Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity.  
Member, Watts Willowbrook Rotary Club (Rotary International).  
Formerly active with South Central Organizing Committee (SCOC).

This is to certify that I have reviewed this transcript and attest that it is true and accurate. Also, by my witnessed signature below, I grant the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, or its designee(s), sole right to use this material in any way, and for any purpose, it deems appropriate.

Lloyd A. Herbs  
Lloyd A. Herbs \_\_\_\_\_ date

Faylece J. Herbs  
witness \_\_\_\_\_ date

1206 West 83<sup>rd</sup> Street  
witness address

**TAPE NUMBER: 1, SIDE ONE**

**LLOYD A. HERBS**

**GIVEN THURSDAY, JANUARY 21, 1991**

**AT**

**HIS HOME IN LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA**

**THE INTERVIEWER IS DICK NELSON**

**NELSON:** Lloyd, why don't you give us a run down on your early years, where you were born, your parents, schooling, whatever you think would be of interest to us.

**HERBS:** I was born in the Los Angeles County General Hospital. My father was from the British West Indies, Kingston, Jamaica. He had gone to Panama to work on the canal. The Panama Canal was

built by the United States after the French had failed. The United States used American engineers and black laborers from Jamaica and other areas in the Caribbean.

They did not hire American Blacks for one reason or another. That reason I have never been able to determine, but I assume it was because of the cost factor. Many of these people died during the building of the canal, but the losses were not as great as those sustained by the Europeans who'd been hired by the French, because America had developed ways and means of eliminating the tropical diseases.

My father was a carpenter and when the canal was completed, he came to the United States and worked as a carpenter on the east coast. He mentioned that he had heard that Los Angeles, California and Phoenix, Arizona, had better weather and for that reason he came west to Arizona, I think, first, and worked as a carpenter. Then he heard that California was really the "land of opportunity" if you wish to use that term and so he came to California. But before he came to California, he realized he did not have a wife, he didn't have a bride, he decided to contact people in the Islands about a potential girl who he could marry. He contacted a contractor that he knew and had worked with in the islands and this man recommended the James family. My mother's father had been a school principal, held in high esteem in the community. His sons - my mother's older brothers - had left to seek their fortune. One went to England and then went to Howard University after he left England. Howard University is a Black university in Washington, D.C. where he completed his medical

studies. He practiced medicine in New York then returned the islands and became a public health educator until his death.

My mother came to the United States on one of the United Fruit Company ships. United Fruit handled most of the shipping between the Caribbean and the United States. Mom met my father who she did not know, married him against the wishes of her brothers, because they wanted to know more about Simon, a 39-year old carpenter who had pledged to marry Ivy, their 18 year old younger sister. They were married in Phoenix, Arizona in 1918.

They came to California in 1919, lived in San Diego and San Francisco for a short time then they settled in Los Angeles. They lived at a place called Robert's Funeral Home. Some people who met my mother and father were very nice to them. My godmother was an American Negro woman, and my godfather was a West Indian Black. I was born in the L.A. County General Hospital on August 16, 1920.

I first remember living on 21st Street near Central Avenue in a rear house behind a doctor and his wife. I remember that in the neighborhood there were all kinds of people, varied backgrounds I should say. Not all black, many Blacks at that time lived near 12th Street between 8th and 12th Street near Central Avenue. One of the first black churches in Los Angeles was built at 8th and Town, First African Methodist Episcopal Church so it's an indication at that time more Blacks were living in that general area. Some Negroes lived in Boyle Heights - others lived between Temple and Sunset near Virgil Avenue.

The first Negro or colored YMCA was at 9th and Hemlock. It later moved in 1926 to 28th and Paloma. My parents, being of West

Indian extraction and exposed to the British culture, were members of the Episcopal Church known as the Anglican church in the United States or the Protestant Episcopal Church. They attended St. Philips' Episcopal Church which was known as the "Colored" Episcopal Church at 14th and Paloma Street. Several other Negro churches were in that general area.

Most specifically, I remember going to Sunday School at the Episcopal church and also visiting other black churches that were not Episcopal because my parents didn't have a car. We weren't old enough to go alone to the Episcopal church so we went to varied black Protestant churches for Sunday School. I remember we moved to 25th Street and Naomi Street. It was there that I attended kindergarten in the 20th Street Elementary School. I also watched as workers built a library across the street from our house. Helen Hunt Jackson Library. It is now closed.

About 1925 or 1926 we moved to old 37th Street, now 40th Place in the 1600 block, 1667 was the number, and I remember that we were near the Long Beach Avenue tracks. It was a dead-end street between Long Beach Avenue and Morgan Avenue. Incidentally the Long Beach tracks are the same tracks where they now have the Blue Line. The big red cars travelled to Long Beach - San Pedro and other points south and east. I remember it was there that, when I was about six or seven, I walked up to the corner of old 38th Street, at that time there was a drug store owned by J. B. Guest, who was Caucasian, and there was an Italian grocery store operated by the Vacarro brothers and their families. There were all kinds of people in the neighborhood -- Blacks, Hispanics,

Italian, and a few Orientals, Chinese and Japanese, who operated grocery stores.

The other people had various jobs in the area, some worked in Vernon City. Vernon City is east of Alameda. I sold papers and had an opportunity to see kids who came from Jefferson High School, most of whom were Caucasian, take the Watts car and travel south on the Watts line to an area near Florence and Gage. Some of those students attended Jefferson because at that time there was no Fremont High School. I learned all that later.

That's when I sold papers. I remember that one of the principals of Jefferson, was killed on the Ridge Route, I believe in an auto accident. I think his name was Mr. Fulton. I learned a lot about human nature selling papers. I recall specifically an incident where someone told me that on the other side of Long Beach Avenue, what we just called the "Long Beach tracks" -- the other tracks were on Alameda, that a lady wanted a later edition of the newspaper. I was told that I could take a paper to this lady, or to someone over there which I did, and I remember very vividly that as I walked down the street, I passed a lady who was watering. I don't know the reason, but I went to the door at the address I'd been given and knocked and the lady outside said, "Young man what do you want?" I said, "Someone asked me to deliver a paper here." She said, "Young man you passed me by and you didn't say a word." I said, "Oh I'm very sorry, maam." My parents had told me to address all adults by some kind of title and anyone with authority. She said, "Well I don't want any paper." I never forgot that and from that day on I began to speak

to everybody. I later sold papers at 37th and Woodlawn. I remember I was still going to Nevin Avenue School when I got the corner. In 1932 the Olympics came to Los Angeles.

I asked my supervisor if I could sell papers at the Coliseum during the Olympic Games. He said, "Lloyd I can't let you sell papers at the Coliseum, I can, if you wish to risk losing this corner." Corners were very important in those days. You didn't have vending machines, etc. You had a corner and that was your corner and people there knew you and there was a business there and they let you use their restroom, their bathroom. They were very congenial to you if they liked you. If they didn't like you, they would tell the manager they didn't want you there on the corner because you had to use some of their facilities and you interfered with their customers.

When I was selling papers near the tracks, I was selling the Express. The Express was a paper that later was purchased by the Evening Herald. So I was selling, what they called at that time, the Herald Express. If I left the corner I could count my papers and leave some change. Pennies and maybe a nickel or so there so that I could know how many papers I had, how much money was supposed to be there when I returned. I cannot recall any incident where any money was missing. What I do recall, if my money was short or if anything was missing, there'd be a note there-- "paper boy I took a paper, my name is so and so, I will pay you tomorrow." I was never short. Today people hang out around the corners, around liquor stores, grocery stores, etc.

It used to always be drug stores and I think it was prohibition then anyway, but there were always people who hung around the corner and talked to younger fellows and I recall when I first started (I was six or seven) over at Long Beach Avenue. These men would give you a distorted idea about life. They'd say things about what's going on and some of it I believed. I don't want to mention some of the things they said, but they said certain things that you later realized were figments of their imagination.

I do recall a major murder case, a man killed his wife and his best friend. He was defended by Jerry Geisler and was acquitted. I remember when selling papers at 38th and Long Beach when Lindbergh crossed the Atlantic and Hoover beat Al Smith for the Presidency. I remember when my father bought a brand new car on June 1, 1930. Model A Ford. I can see it now. He kept it until he died in 1950. He was not affected by the depression until construction ceased at the end of 1930. I think that year I was going to school with cardboard in the soles of my shoes. I never really had to starve, you might say because my mother cooked a lot of beans and a lot of rice, what we used to call rice and peas which was kind of a staple dish for West Indians. On Sundays, or every other Sunday, we'd have chicken. The rest of the time we bought neck bones and other cheap meat from the grocery store.

I know I have wandered in this presentation, but by the time I got to selling papers over there at 37th and Maple, I remember that the big events were fight extras. When there was a prize fight on the east coast -- most of the fights seem to have been on

the east coast, but we waited until what they call the "fight extra" came out. We'd wait for the fight extras and the delivery men would come in some old Model T's or Model A's and dump them all. We would pick them up and go down the street and say, "Fight extra. Primo Carnero knocked out so-and-so."

I don't remember all the fighters names. We never gave change when we sold fight extras. Because it would be getting darker in the evening and if they'd ask you how much it cost, I think we said a dime for the fight extra. The fight extra really didn't have too much in it. The fight extra had a blow-by-blow account of the fight, but the rest of the paper was just about the same and it really wasn't that much different from the other editions. But it was a fight extra and many people had no radios.

I remember in my house, my father and mother's home, we did not get a radio until the thirties, I guess, when we moved to 41st Street. My father said "The wisdom of the ages is in books and that the radio had a lot of trash on it." He said there may be some good things on it, but you'd have to be selective. But he didn't feel we could be selective enough. But about 1931 or 1932 we got a radio. I remember we got a nice big radio sitting in the front room. The thing I remember about that radio is that when I came home from selling papers, my father listened to the nine o'clock news before we went to bed. I remember that occasionally when my sister and I were home, we listened to some of the soap operas. Because when I was selling papers, I didn't have to go to the corner until three o'clock or so. Even during the summer but then school time was different. I had to be there after school.

I remember we listened to a few soap operas and we were learning to play tennis over at the playground because we had moved across the street from Ross Snyder playground and we would run home to listen. Incidentally, along that time when we moved in 1930 to 1532 east Ford, 38th Street which later became 41st Street, my father did not allow my sister to go in the playground except to the tennis court. Ross Snyder playground was one of the main playgrounds in the City of Los Angeles where blacks could go and be halfway welcomed. Exposition Park, even though it was what we now call part the Central City at that time was a little further west not far from Manuel Arts High School and blacks were not encouraged to be in that area. There was no written rule that said that was the area where blacks couldn't go, but there was sort of an unwritten code. Certain restaurants and stores that were in that area, didn't encourage black patronage.

Manual Arts High School had a few blacks when I attended Jeffrson High School, Los Angeles High, later Dorsey High. Fremont High School didn't have any black students, Washington didn't have any unless they were "passing." If you are not familiar with the phrase of "passing," there are light-complected blacks who are the result of relationships between black and white. Originally from slavery time, I guess.

**NELSON:** Let me stop here, Lloyd, and pick up four or five questions that I have that will fill in things you've said. Your mother had never seen your father in person until she met him?

**HERBS:** That's correct.

**NELSON:** Had they carried on a correspondence or anything?

**HERBS:** No. Through this contractor, through Mr. ... I forgot that man's name, I never met him. My mother later claimed that my father was 38 or 39 when he married an 18 year old girl. He was 20 years older than my mother. Incidentally, my father treated my mom like a little girl. He really didn't treat her too much different than he treated my sister who is a year younger than I and people would come to the house, to the door and she would say, "Yes, can I help you?" and they would say, "Can I speak to your father." It was noticeable that he was older, but he was considered to be a stately gentleman. He was a carpenter, but he later studied real estate. He did a lot of reading. He read the Bible and he read all kinds of books .... because he always said that, "The history of the ages is in books, not on the radio." He carried himself in a certain way and he had an authoritative attitude, if you wish to use that terminology. This man was in charge and later my mother and sister had a problem with this attitude.

When my mother came to the United States, she found that American women, Black or white, had a slightly different attitude than West Indian women did at home.

We got friendly with many of the neighbors. Pop didn't believe in running into a neighbor's house. He was just friendly with them, but I must say this as an aside that he learned to make

wine from an Italian neighbor and he learned to make it I think in the back porch tub or bathtub. I don't remember how they made the wine.

My father didn't believe in drinking or smoking. He said smoking was a filthy, nasty, dirty habit. And later when I was about 14 I got my last whipping with a razor strap because he shaved with a straight razor. My father pulled down my pants and made my sister pull up her dress. My sister still feels a little resentment about that, but nevertheless, that's the way he'd whip. So when I was smoking a cigarette on the playground at the tennis court not any dope or anything like that. There was none of that, just a regular cigarette. He called me and said, "Lloyd come home." We lived right across the street and he could see me easily from the front porch. I came home and he talked to me and whipped me. That was the last time he gave me a whipping, that I recall.

I never smoked again on any regular basis. My wife and I didn't smoke or drink when we got married at 21. The second time I recall smoking was when I got my first promotion in Water and Power in 1958. I got a little bit tense at the time, but I'm jumping way ahead now.

**NELSON:** Let me go to another question. Your mother, I take it, did not work during the marriage?

**HERBS:** Oh no. She later had to work. That's another story. I'm glad you raised that question. My mother came to the United

States to be a housewife, but in 1930 when the depression hit, we were doing all right until about Christmas time. I recall that a West Indian couple told my mother that in order to make it in the United States, that she'd have to work. She couldn't be just a housewife. She said, "But all I know is housework." They told her well that's what you'd have to do. So my mother had to do housework. They taught her how to serve parties and do general housework. They weren't all rich people either. Later, she worked for a few rich people or people who lived in a style that was above the economic status of the Herbs family.

They taught my mom how to set the table for these people, how to do certain things that were considered socially acceptable in serving people and they told her that as far as cleaning up, that's just the same as you clean at home.

So she became a domestic and I recall that my father kept that 1930 Model A Ford. I recall that when mom served a party the lady of the house would give her items that would otherwise spoil. If there was a turkey dinner, the carcass was still there still with some meat on it, mom would bring that home. They'd tell mom, "You've got four kids." The point is she'd bring this home. And if there was ice cream they'd put it in a container and she would bring all the items home. We didn't have a refrigerator, we had an ice box. We'd eat the ice cream, ice milk like a malted milk or something. I remember that part.

**NELSON:** So from the early 30's then she was a domestic?

**HERBS:** That's right. From the early 30's she became a domestic and she's always been eternally grateful, for the fact that she worked with some fine people. Some not so fine, but some of the people would tell her about life and give her things. I recall that she mentioned that she didn't know about social security, for example, which was instituted around 1936 or 1937, I'm not certain. I don't think domestics were included in the original act, however, later she was working for an attorney in the 1940's who told her that domestics were supposed to be on social security if they worked so many hours per month with any one person. She worked for four or five people during a week. Days work, that's what she was doing primarily. Sometimes she would get these extra parties, those people were supposed to pay your social security, take some out of your earnings and then contribute some.

Mom said to me, "You know mister so-and-so told me that I should be on Social Security." I said, "Well mom, he's telling you the law and he's right." And he said her, when she went to her next day's work, to tell those people that she had been informed that they were supposed to pay social security for her. She worked five days a week and I think two dropped her, they said they would not pay any social security for her. She got some other days as time went on and then she started getting older and she couldn't keep up with all that work, but nevertheless, she'd ride the bus from the 41st house until she learned to drive in the forties. She died in 1983. She always said we were supposed to save our money. We weren't supposed to spend everything. We were supposed to save a little bit of it.

I had to give my mother, when I sold papers and later when I was working in the store, half of the money I made because my father told me that I'd have to pay that much to the house. She started insurance policies. When things got very tight, she had to change that policy and so forth. But the thing is I know that she said when she first started getting social security, she said that she gave thanks to the man, I think he was an attorney, I'm not certain though, but he gave her this advice and she said that she was glad that most of the other people went along with it. Some didn't.

When she drew her first social security check, she said, "I never thought that would happen. I thought that I had to save this money to live when I became a certain age." She got minimum social security to the day she died, but she said she gave thanks to God and to Roosevelt. My father and my mom became strong Roosevelt supporters.

**NELSON:** As many did. Okay, you mentioned the 1932 Olympics and not getting the corner.

**HERBS:** It was different at the Olympics. You'd just sell around there.

**NELSON:** Okay, but you made one point about not getting the corner and the man said you could not have it. Was that because of race?

**HERBS:** Oh no. I must say that no I'm sorry if I gave that impression. That was not because of race. The race aspect was that not many black kids went to play on the tennis courts at Exposition Park, where the big parking lot is now or got to go to the swimming pool. The few who lived on the west side got to go to the swimming pool and the big stadium later. But no, it was not because I was black. He was reminding me, like a business person would, to remember that if you have a business here and you can't handle that business plus another one, it is better to keep your own business. That's what he was really telling me. That was not race.

**NELSON:** You may have alluded to it when you talked about the newspapers. How much money did you make on the sale of a paper?

**HERBS:** One penny. I didn't say the reason I started selling papers though. The first time I went around the corner, I was not a paper boy. I just went around there to talk to Walter who was a paper boy. He was about five years older than me and he said, "Take a paper to that man over there." I took a three cent paper to the man and the man gave me a dime. I took that dime back to Walter and Walter said, "Here's his change." I said, "He said keep it." He said, "Are you sure he said keep it." I said, "Well he has gone." I'm six or seven so he said, "Well it's yours, not mine. I'll keep the penny that I would have given you, but you get the rest of it." Well I thought that was the greatest thing in the world. The paper was three cents and I made seven cents.

And that's about all I made there when I was selling over there. I made five, six or seven cents selling five or six three cent papers. The Express at that time was not the big seller. The Herald was the big seller and he had the Herald corner. That's how I got to go to 37th and Maple because I got to have my own corner on 37th and Maple and I received one cent for every three cent paper sold. I made forty cents a day approximately at 37th and Maple for selling 40 papers.

**NELSON:** That 1930 car that you said your dad bought, a new one, had he previous cars?

**HERBS:** He had an old Chevy. I don't know what year Chevy it was, but the mechanism was different than on the Model A Ford. I learned to drive really, on the Model A Ford. I didn't learn to drive the old Chevy.

**TAPE NUMBER: 1, SIDE TWO**

**LLOYD A. HERBS**

**NELSON:** Lloyd, earlier you mentioned attending various Black churches in the areas as you were growing up. Would a Black family have been welcomed in a non-Black church in the area? Just how did that work?

**HERBS:** Most black people were Baptists or Methodists. The first Black church in Los Angeles was the First AME Church (African Methodist Episcopal) now known as, I think, American Methodist Episcopal. It was located at 8th and Towne and it was a strong church. It's now located near Western at 22nd Street near Adams and Western. The other Black church was at 8th and San Julian. It was a United Methodist church. I don't remember if it was Wesley, I think it was Wesley. They are now located at 52nd and Main. Those were about the two first major Black churches. There were different kinds of Pentecostal churches that existed, but the "social elite" went to either First AME or Second Baptist - Independent Church of Christ, St. Philip's Episcopal, or Wesley Methodist.

The black Episcopal church was started in Los Angeles about 1905 or something from what I understand. It started in a store. St. Philip's Episcopal church finally was built at 14th and

Paloma. It was known as a mission which meant that the diocese supported the church. Many Blacks lived in the Temple District. One of the first fire stations where blacks were hired was in the Temple District not too far from west side of downtown.

The thing was that usually you went to the Episcopal church where you started from even if that church moved. That's where your loyalties remain, I think I may have mentioned, St. John's Episcopal Church on Adams, between Flower and Figueroa, not too far or diagonally across the street from St. Vincent's Roman Catholic Church. If you visited St. John's, at the end of the service as you were leaving, they would say, "Oh it was nice to have you here today," probably. Or they might say when you first went in, "You know we have a nice "Colored" Episcopal Church at 28th and Stanford.

As far as Roman Catholics it was different. The Roman Catholics had a rule of going to churches that were in the neighborhood. That's what you were supposed to do whether you were Black, white, blue or green. You were supposed to go in the neighborhood church. There were not too many Black priests if any at that time. There were very few if any Black sisters. Most of the Black sisters and priests were in New Orleans, Louisiana and some eventually moved to this area. But relative to the Episcopal Church, the diocese decided that they wanted a Black priest so they brought a man there by the name of Father Clighorn. He worked with St. Philips church and the community until his death.

An interesting thing about St. Philips Episcopal Church is that when Father Clighorn died suddenly, there was a question

about the church leadership if Philips was still a mission, so the diocese provided clergy leadership. But as Blacks in the church became more affluent, they asked that they be given another Black priest. A man by the name of Father Moore came there in 1934. Interesting to note, one Black man was selected in 1933. However, 1933 was the year of the big earthquake and it is said that he turned down the assignment after the earthquake, like many others did when it was found out that Los Angeles was supposed to be earthquake prone.

Getting back to that..I attended church on a regular basis, became an altar boy at a young age, and was active in the youthful activities of the Episcopal Church. We went to other Episcopal churches in a group when we were invited. For example, if they invited the choir or if they invited the altar boys to show the other altar boys or vice versa, then we went like that. Same is true with the YMCA. The 28th Street YMCA, which was formerly at 9th and Hemlock, moved to 28th Street and we only went to the 28th YMCA. We did not go to Hollenbeck, Hollywood or downtown, except by invitation.

That's the way most of these organizations were. At one time it was stated that in the United States, the eleven o'clock hour on Sunday was the most segregated hour in the United States because Black people and white people might be together Monday through Friday, but on Sunday Blacks were probably at their own Black church whatever that might have been. So eleven o'clock was the segregated hour.

**NELSON:** Okay let's move on to another subject here. We've gotten you up to about junior high. Where did you attend junior high and move right up into high school and how the family fortunes varied during that time? I guess this would have been in the early 30's?

**HERBS:** I mentioned the earthquake in 1933, but in 1932 about the time when I started my paper corner at 37th and Maple, I was about in the sixth grade and it was at that time that I left elementary school and went to a junior high school.

I lived in the district for William McKinley Junior High now known as Carver Junior High School which is located at Vernon and McKinley Avenue between Central and Avalon. I started there in the seventh grade still selling papers, but during this period I also got a job in a drug store working for a Mr. Bauman who was a light-complected Black man, I assumed he was from Louisiana someplace. I heard some other Bauman's were from there, but he treated me very good and he was a member of the Episcopal Church. Now most Episcopalians were West Indian, but then there were a lot of American Blacks who joined the Episcopal Church from different parts of the country.

Most of these men received their training, not in Los Angeles or California, they received their training back east or south. All doctors at that time had been trained at either Howard University or McHarry University, the other Black medical school. These were the only two medical schools that Blacks could attend back prior to the forties. I worked in the drug store. I made about \$.75 a day, I guess, little bit more than \$.50 a day selling

papers, but on the corners I never sold more than 50 papers unless I made tips and things like that. And so I worked in the drug store while attending school. I went to McKinley Jr. High, that school is now Carver, named after George Washington Carver.

In 1933, March 10th, I will never forget that day, I was on the playground at Ross Snyder at 5:55 p.m. we were playing ball and then the ground began to move. Even though this table is level and flat, so was the playground, but the ground began to actually move like the ocean. I saw the ground go up and down in the center and around and all the boys became frightened. They started running towards their respective homes and I was following them. Then suddenly I realized that I lived across the street.

I said if I am going to die, I'd rather die at home and I crossed to my house. All the chimneys on that street began to move and then began to fall. I remember very vividly, that had the earthquake been at 2:30, 2:45 instead of 5:55, kids would have been killed all over the city of Los Angeles because evidently the schools had been constructed in a faulty manner. Contractors had made a lot of money off of building schools.

Jefferson was one of the most beautiful schools in the area, colonial architecture. What didn't fall down had to be torn down later because it was unsafe. Manuel Arts and Los Angeles High later were condemned after a couple of other earthquakes. We drove to Long Beach on a Sunday after the earthquake and saw Long Beach Polytechnic, it was almost completely destroyed. You could look into the classrooms because the walls had fallen down.

Certain houses had been moved from their foundations. But there was less damages to frame houses than there was to stucco houses. But normally nothing fell except chimneys. Long Beach Poly is the school that I remember the most at the time of the earthquake. I didn't know anything about faults, but I know that much of the damage extended from downtown to Lynwood, Huntington Park, Compton and Long Beach. When I was at McKinley, they condemned part of the building for a while -- suspended operation and the use of it and then they had to rebuild some of it. At McKinley I wasn't too active in extracurricular activities. I went to school, went to the drug store and don't think I started selling papers again, but I had to do chores at home.

This makes me think about grammar school. My father wanted me to learn his trade and he took me on the job when I was in grammar school several times, but when he saw I didn't seem to have any inclination for doing that kind of work, he said, "Well the best thing in America is to study and be prepared. Become a good student as best you can." But I didn't follow that rule. I didn't become a real good student. But when I left McKinley in 1935 I went to Jeff then I began to study a little bit more than I had been before. I became more active in the church and in the YMCA which was the 28th Street YMCA. Incidentally, I later met my wife at the 28th Street YMCA through a group known as the Outdoor Life and Health Association, established by Dr. Stovall who was a leading health educator in Los Angeles and was primarily concerned about tuberculosis. This was one of the diseases that created havoc among Blacks in the United States particularly. He wanted

to teach Black people how to take good care of their bodies so he developed the Outdoor Life and Health Association which had a junior auxiliary for high school and college students. I met my wife at one of the social events on a Friday night.

**NELSON:** Did she attend high school?

**HERBS:** My wife came here from Texas to go to college. Then she found out that to go to college out of state students had to pay a higher fee. She came in 1939. She also found that the only jobs available to young Black girls...and this was true when I was at City College ... they listed jobs in the placement office, for mother's helpers and other domestics.

The kids who came from the south seemed to have greater motivation than children reared here in a supposedly unsegregated environment. Their parents had made tremendous sacrifices for their children. They'd left the south in order for their children to have a better place to live and to grow. They told their children and it was in their minds that I want you to do this and you'll become a school teacher because there were no Black school teachers here then. I never saw a Black school teacher until I was at Jefferson High, there were no accredited Black teachers. Later, before I graduated, Mrs. Whittaker, who had been a music teacher, and Mr. Sam Brown were given opportunities at Jefferson. There were a few others, but while I was at McKinley Junior High School, I saw no Black teachers.

Many kids were motivated to go to college. All kinds of people came to Ross Snyder playground which was across the street from where I lived. I remember that some fellows were gambling on the playground. It was against the law and a fellow said -- (and he was kind of a wild fellow too), "Lloyd I don't want to see you here in this game because I know your parents want you to go to school and study hard." I'll never forget this and I thanked this person, who wasn't the kind of individual that my parents wanted me to be around. They used to say to me, "Birds of a feather flock together." "Show me your company and I'll tell you who you are." "Remember just because you live next door to that person who is black, colored or whatever race, doesn't mean he is the same as you." My father said you are supposed to respect people in authority and if Mrs. Jones down the street, I don't care who she is, she's older than you and she says, "Lloyd you shouldn't be doing that," he said she has the right to come and tell me and if a teacher says you did anything, even if you think she's wrong, the minute she tells me I know you're wrong. That's the way they felt. They didn't do what some parents might do, teacher says something to the child then they feel the child was corrected unnecessarily. If the teacher said it, if any person of authority said it, I'm supposed to obey that. I guess that's why I remember what that woman said, I didn't speak to her when I wanted to sell a paper. But if the lady down the street wanted to chastise me, I had to stand there and take it and then she'd go tell my mother, my father. My mother would whip me, then my father would. That's the way it went. That's the way we were trained all the time.

So when I was selling papers, I tried to do that. I tried to follow the rules. I have never forgotten when I was selling papers on 38th and 37th and Woodlawn, first time I ever ate venison that I know about, because of the butcher shop, it was a drug store, butcher shop and grocery store and the man said, "Lloyd I know you like candy." I liked Milky Ways and that kind of candy and Mr. Goodbars, but he said, "I know you, I put a chocolate bar in here for you," he said, "but have you ever eaten venison?" He said he had gone hunting. I said I didn't even know what venison is. He said, "deer meat," and made a sandwich for me because that's the way they did then. They used to make their sandwiches out of bologna or whatever they had around the store. People that had grocery stores, put in a lot of long hours. Later when I worked in a grocery store is when I learned that you had to work long hours. He said, "I'm making a sandwich for you." That was the first time I ate venison and the last time as far as I know.

The key was that as far as adults were concerned, you always listened to what they had to say. So if anyone said, "Lloyd," they called my name then and then they'd stop and I would listen to whatever they had to say .. "I'm going to tell your mother." As I said, I made no comment, I just listened to whatever they said, but then sometimes I would say, "Well I didn't do that, Miss Jones." She'd say, "Well I saw you and that other boy." And I would say, "Well I didn't do it." If they said you did it then you almost always had to take the brunt of it.

But anyway at McKinley I did not take any part in extra curricular activities because even though I didn't sell papers past the seventh grade, I don't remember exactly if it was eighth grade, ninth grade. I remember doing other things maybe at the church or something like that. The biggest thing I remember about McKinley Junior High School, something I'll never forget, is that I became interested in astronomy and the teacher selected me to take a volleyball and a tennis ball and measure a distance which was almost to Central Avenue because we were comparing the distance between the sun and the moon basically, the planets around the earth and the moon the earth. The planets around the sun and the moons around the various planets. The one moon for planet earth. I remember that experiment because I remember the measurements and I went all the way almost to Central Avenue to put down one ball and then we walked down there and she made a big comparison on the board about the relationship of the earth to the sun and the relationship to the moon and the other stars. And even though the stars looked far away they were bigger and that's when I first realized that the stars that flickered were suns and that the stars that beamed a solid light were planets.

That's all I remember from junior high school. I should have remembered more, in fact, Faylece and I talk about it all the time. That's when we should have learned how to speak Spanish because she had been exposed in Catholic school to Spanish and to Latin. Here I was exposed to Spanish by living around Hispanics.

But a comment I'd like to make here is that Hispanics in those days didn't speak Spanish. They wanted to be "white" Americans. They spoke English, but their grandparents spoke Spanish and would slap them if they didn't answer or respond in Spanish. The naturalization and immigration laws indicated that Hispanic Mexican people were white and that's when we first began to realize there was a difference, I guess it was in junior high school, when we learned about some of the laws in social studies that we were really listed as being inferior -- all Black people, all the colored people. The Spanish Mexican people were superior. We learned that very early in particular. But when we were in grammar school, everybody treated everybody about the same. I must say that. But as we got older we could see a difference.

And then we noticed one other thing when we went to high school. At Jefferson the Black kids could not work in stores on Central Avenue even though Caucasian people now think of Central Avenue as having been a "Black" street. It is now a Spanish street incidentally. But Kress', Newberry's, the grocery stores, hired Hispanics and other Americans, but didn't hire Blacks except to sweep.

Water and Power. I remember that Water and Power when I was going to McKinley, this just came to my mind, Water and Power had an office on Vernon near Central and there was a colored man working there, Welcome Watson. The reason I know his name is because when I became active in the community I found out, I said, "Well who's that man who used to work over there?" Welcome Watson. Mr. Watson was an elevator operator for Water and Power.

I didn't know that at the time. I learned all that later down the line. But he never received clerical pay. He received elevator operator pay. It was a status job I found out...well I found out a lot of things about him and Gilbert Lindsey, but the only job you could get in Water and Power was ... I'm going to Water and Power too quick I guess, but I think about Central Avenue because a man named Leon Washington, you may or may not have heard of, began a program while I was still at McKinley, between 1932 and 1935. "Don't buy where you can't work." Newberry's, Woolworth, and Kress were fairly close to each other. Those stores didn't hire Blacks, but they'd hire Hispanics and Italian and anybody else. The first Black girl they hired, was a girl who later became married to an attorney, I don't think I'll mention her name. She was a light-complected colored girl and some people weren't too sure what she was.

During that same time, I guess I have to mention it because this happened along that time, my father and mother were very friendly with a family. We went on trips together. We have pictures and my wife has seen these. We were kids at Arrowhead in the Ford or whatever car was available. We became very friendly. But Mr. \_\_\_\_\_, we'll call his name, looked like a white man. His wife looked more like Italian and their kids all looked the same. Except later the last kid looked like a light-complected colored boy. But the thing is before that happened when we were all about the same age, I remember we used to go to Grand Central Market downtown on Broadway.

We used to go to the Grand Central Market on Saturday nights. They're not opened Saturday nights now. But we used to go at 8:30, 8:00, park the car on Second or Third Street, then go to the market. The Grand Central Market wasn't open on Sunday so there were a lot of things they weren't going to be able to save until Monday, so my mom would get them cheap and then she would say to them even though it was 8:30 and the store was about to close, "Don't give me all that rotten stuff." They would say, "Why I'm almost giving it to you." But anyway we got a lot of things.

Later that man got a job about 1931, 1932, I'm not even sure the year, but Mr. \_\_\_\_\_, that's what I'll call him, I have no animosity towards him because I understand all the motives he had. He got a job and he told my father that he got a job in a place and maybe he should come and check on it, but later he never said anything to my father and my father noticed a certain change. And the reason there was a change was Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ realized that he was hired not only because of his ability to do the job, because he seemed to be white, and then he realized that he had to make a decision about his own family. He had a sister who was a light-complected colored lady and we were also very friendly with them. He had to sever his relationships with his own sister in their family and tell his children, even though they lived in what was the south central area, that they weren't supposed to mistreat everybody, but ignore them if you can because one Saturday night those people still came to the market and they saw us and we were going to offer them a ride. My mom says they literally turned their head. And we'd been so close and I didn't understand what

was going on. There was a lot of things I didn't understand then. Only when I read certain things in books did I know what was going on.

But I said all that to say that this is one of the things that light-complected Blacks got jobs in big places. I'll give you a good example of say a store downtown, Bullocks. Now Bullocks when it did begin to hire Blacks as elevator operators and other jobs, hired only lighter complected Blacks, Blacks who got jobs at say, some bank or certain places had to "pass." I can think of people at Water and Power and and large department stores that had jobs, but when their friends came there or went to that store, they had to pretend they didn't know their friends. They could not encourage friendships or people to come to their homes. They couldn't encourage that because they still lived in the Black neighborhood. "Well we don't have much company," or whatever it is and they couldn't make too many friends. Some people may have liked them and they were able to hear comments about Blacks that would not have been made had people known they were Black. This was happening throughout the entire United States. There are those who claim that one of the presidents of the United States was a Black man. I couldn't think of that either but I'm just mentioning that this is how far this thing went. But in the south, it was determined that if you had one drop of Black blood in you, that you were Black. They didn't care how white you looked and there were a lot of people who were in this category. Families broke up. Families left and went to different parts of

the country, changed their name or assumed variations of their name in order to separate themselves from the family.

This one particular family that we were friendly with, I must say this part, before the husband died and the children were grown and they'd married into Caucasian families, had a son who did not look real white, he looked like a lot of Black men do - light brown skin. After her husband died, she realized she was alone and she called my mother and apologized. She made amends with her own sister-in-law and that younger boy was at a Catholic school which was becoming Black because as Blacks started moving west and south then all kinds of people were moving in and so many people were entrapped in situations where they moved west and then found that other white people were moving away and all the white people couldn't move and so some people decided to stay for one reason or another didn't move. We have neighbors in this area right now and about two or three Caucasian families and one lady especially over at the church told my wife that she and her husband were both school teachers. The Caucasians were moving out of the area at that time, and she said that he said that these people are just like anybody else and we'll treat them nice if they treat us nice. And that's what they did. He died and she stayed there alone. So she's dependent now on a black man who takes her to church and takes her shopping and my wife who will take her someplace shopping or to a special community meeting.

But this other man lives closer. He's married and his wife has no objections. He's not a Roman Catholic, but he feels that this lady was a good neighbor all the time and so they have a good

relationship. She's been sick and I've even planned I was going to do certain things but I haven't done them. My wife says I procrastinate a lot, which I do.

**TAPE NUMBER: 2, SIDE ONE**

**LLOYD A. HERBS**

**NELSON:** Lloyd why don't you fill us in on high school and beyond that.

**HERBS:** What happened in 1935 after I graduated...they used to always call it graduation when we left junior high school and I attended Jefferson High. In September of 1935 we attended what we called "Tent City." We still had tents that were on the athletic field and several of my classes in the tenth and eleventh grade were in these tents because the buildings had not been reconstructed. In track and field, "Jeff" was fairly good, but there was a situation where when several athletes were competing in one of the longer events and they were about to drop out, they'd always drop out behind the tents which were at the north end of the old gymnasium. And that was a very unique thing. You'd see ten fellows get behind the tents and you'd see six come back on the other side of the, what would have been on the east side, of the track so you'd wonder what happened to them but you knew they'd dropped out because they had become exhausted. It was during this time that I started becoming involved in things at the

YMCA and at church. I wasn't working then. I was getting paid about five or ten cents an hour at the Y. Incidentally at the YMCA I never learned to swim because I became afraid of the kids who would throw you in the pool and put a pole out there for you to hang onto and I'd just run and get out of there as quick as I could. So I never learned to swim even though I was active at the 28th Street YMCA.

It was during this time also that at my church in the young people's group the Sunday School Superintendent asked me or selected me, I guess, to be the master of ceremonies for our program. It was then that I became interested in drama and public speaking. And then later in eleventh or twelfth grade where I was taking public speaking and a drama class.

The public speaking class was called "vox populi" (voice of the people). The drama class was called, "Harlequin Players." I became interested in Shakespeare and I did a lot of reading and it was during this time also that I became somewhat cynical about the church.

I'm active in the church, but I used to ask the priest several questions about God and about the relationship of man to God and he said, "Well you don't have to worry about that, that will come later with faith." But it didn't come that way. I went through high school and I memorized passages in Shakespeare, I memorized passages in the Bible and I memorized various other literature and speeches. The man that I remember the most, a man

by the name of Wendell Phillips and I remember his speech, "Toussaint L'Overture." Wendell Phillips was a noted abolitionist and it was through him that I first learned about two blacks in Haiti. Haiti is the only country in the world where black men were able to demonstrate a victory over the ruling European powers. And I thought about "Toussaint L'Overture" and a man named Christophe. I'm not saying they were so good, but they were able to defeat Napoleon. Toussaint went to France and was taken captive. So he was tricked in the end, but that's beside the point. The point is that in the other areas black nations achieved their freedom through the generosity, if you wish to call it that, of the ruling power and the criticism of the world itself. The problem with Haiti, which I observed when I visited the country, is that when building, you must use the knowledge of those who know. Toussaint and Christophe forgot that when you are building on something, you've got to use the knowledge of the people who built the positive. You cannot destroy and then expect to build if you don't have the knowledge and Haiti made that mistake. They sent away the people who could help them. Many of the African nations when they gained their independence, tried to avoid that, but yet there's a feeling that some of the same mistakes were made in Africa.

Nevertheless, I became interested and I became the Southern California Declanation and Oratorical Champion of all the high schools in Los Angeles, primarily through the works of the

abolitionists, Wendell Phillips and some of the Shakespearean literature that I learned. I memorized portions of Shakespeare's literature. Some people say Shakespeare didn't write all this, but nevertheless I think about Cardinal Woolsey in the play "Henry VIII." I began to read more and thought I knew everything when I started going to L.A. City College.

Now that's an interesting thing. I was supposed to go to UCLA, but most of the kids that I went to school with were not going to UCLA. Most of them were going to what they called the junior colleges. They'd just begun to call them city colleges. They didn't call them community colleges they were city colleges. Pasadena is the city college where Jackie Robinson went. When he was at Pasadena City College, I was at L.A. City College. I was never an athlete, I didn't participate. I played a little basketball and tennis, but wasn't good enough.

I began to read a lot and become involved and I was told before I left Jefferson that I would get to be one of the first black radio announcers. The school agreed to it. The school agreed to my audition with these people and my mom supported the idea, but I found that these people had other ulterior motives. In fact those people were homosexual. They stated I read well, but needed additional training and that during this period, I'd have to stay away from the girls. I said, "Well I can understand, athletes are told the same thing, all these fellows, you know, are not supposed to carouse, that's no problem." But they said, "But

when we are finished, you won't want any girls." That was the start of more cynicism about life.

When I left there, I continued in school becoming very cynical. When I graduated from Jefferson in summer of 1938 I was one of those selected as what we call Epbebians. I was expected to become an attorney or a priest in the Episcopal church. I was becoming cynical about religion, some of this cynicism still remains, but I recognized the values of religion and my father was opposed to attorneys, he said, "They're all crooks." And I remember reading in Shakespeare, "Kill all the lawyers." I've forgotten where that's found. I think it was in the "Merchant of Venice," but I am not sure.

So during this period of cynicism, I didn't do too well at City College. I remember Mrs. Smith, who was the girl's vice principal at Jefferson, she told me her husband was a professor at City and she told me to take his class and to do what he said. And she said he is hard, but I took his class and then I dropped out. So during this time, about 1939, I started to join the United States Army. The United States was not at war, but there was talk about America joining Britain and France who were at war with Germany and Italy and I read a book by Homer Lee in which he said we'd go to war with Japan and the Japanese would invade the United States and they would get to the Tehachapi Mountains.

Anyway I decided to join the Army. I went to 6th and Main, that's where the big recruiting station was and they asked me what

I wanted and I told them I wanted to join the army and they said, "You can't. This is not the place for you to join." And I said, "Well the sign says United States Army recruiting." Remember this is not 1920. This is 1939. We're not in a war yet, but he said, "For you to join the Army, you have to go to Fort Huachuca" I said I had heard about Fort Huachuca, Arizona. There was a black regiment there and they were well known in the history of the United States because it was organized there to fight the Indians. And I said, "Suppose I don't pass?" He said, "Well then you are on your own."

I got very cynical and in a very negative mood about the United States Army. But anyway I decided that I would try and intensify my studies and I did to some degree and I studied with a group of youngsters; about five of us and we did very well. The best grades I made were during the period that I studied with this group. We reviewed everything on Saturdays and I had started working in the grocery store, Frank's Market, close to where I lived so I always had to go to the store after school. I didn't have classes between twelve and three, I had all my classes in the morning and would go to the courtroom on the way home. Streetcar fare was seven cents then. I'd go to court, listen to a case then go to work.

Working in the store was when I found out about long hours. They had a rule. They knew that I went to church but they said I could not have every Sunday off. I could have every other Sunday

off for four hours and I could have between 10 and 2. I'd open the store on Sunday at 8:00 till 10:00, go home where my father would take me to church. The next Sunday I'd have to stay at the store all day long but they were very nice and maybe I should have learned to speak Greek then, but it was during the time they built St. Sophia's Cathedral over on Normandy and Pico. During the time St. Sophia's Cathedral was built, I learned about Ahepa - a Greek organization. This was a strong community effort. They solicited funds from the Greek community to build St. Sophia's Cathedral.

I worked for Frank Dimetreus and Peter Raulis who, were Greeks born in Turkey and the thing I was going to say about Frank is that he couldn't speak Spanish very well, but Peter learned Spanish and he had gone to Jefferson. He was about ten years older than me, he's dead now, but he had charisma and a pleasing personality. Frank was kind of quiet like. They were brother-in-laws. Frank was married to Peter's sister and incidentally, they used to live on the other side of Pepperdine College. The store was at Forty-first and Compton at the time. I got to know their sons. One of whom became an engineer.

It was during that time in the classroom that students debated about the values of Hitler and Mussolini. I took Italian during this time too. The smartest girl in the class was a German girl who knew five languages. Very talented young lady, but I remember the Italian teacher saying that we in the United States we didn't fully understand Mussolini and the facist government she

said he was trying to institute an economy for the benefit of the Italian people.

I also had a philosophy instructor who was an atheist and he told us we shouldn't take the philosophy class if we had a feeling that it might interfere with our religious beliefs. I stayed in the class, but I began to understand a lot of things about man and his relationship to the world and to God. It was my intent to be either an attorney or a priest. I still had that in mind, but for each one you still had to have a degree and then I was working in the store and started falling down on my studies and wasn't doing as well as I should have and I decided it would be best for me to start thinking in terms of getting a steady job. And the reason I use that phrase, "a steady job," my mother had said that even though my father was a carpenter and he had a skill, she said that our friends who were colored or black who were able to survive the depression best were those who had steady jobs. She said Mr. "So and so" is a garbage collector. Mr. "So and so" is a janitor and she said somebody told me that I should go and get a job at the City. And I think somebody told the lady about Water and Power too.

Anyway this is what they were pushing to me, the idea of a steady job. So during that time, even though it's still 1938, 1939, I started taking Civil Service exams for all the jobs in the City of Los Angeles. My friends were going into the post office. My friends, my peers, that were older had degrees from UCLA, not

too many from USC, from southern colleges and were working in the post office.

But anyway I took the exam for the post office. I took all the exams at that time so that's the reason I started with the County and then when I met Felice, she was at USC I believe it was at the time, and we got very friendly. I met her at the 28th Street YMCA and I fell in love with that young lady and I have been in love with her ever since so then I asked her to marry me when I got to be 21.

My parents didn't want me to marry until I had a degree in college or until I had reached my majority. At that time males couldn't marry without the permission of their parents until they were 21. Females could marry at 18. I didn't get to 21 until August 16. We didn't know about Pearl Harbor. We didn't know anything about that. We knew there was war because we talked about that in school and the question used to be, "Do you think we will go to war and if we do how long will it last?"

When when Faylece and I got married, my mother didn't agree with it because Faylece was Roman Catholic. She felt I should have married a local girl in the Episcopal church, not a Texan. But it worked out in time and mom began to change. The day she died she called for Faylece to be by her side. So anyway I'm taking all these exams, I took all of them and worked for the county. Then the war came and I'm working at Los Angeles County Library. I'm working at the library with a fellow named Maury Katz, who was a store helper.

Maury took the DWP meter reading exam and went to Water and Power and he came back and told us how great it was and said they give you car fare and they do this and that and if you get through with your work, you're through. But I just didn't think of that. I couldn't take the police exam because the police department said you had to be 21 and I'm not 21 yet. I could take all these others. Now you can take it at 18 or 19, but you've got to be 21 when you go into the academy or something like that. So I took all these exams and I was selected after the war. I'm jumping now.

During the war my father said to me while I'm working at the library, he said, "Lloyd you make \$95 a month at the library. I'm a Shipwright, I'm a carpenter and I'm in the union. You can make \$.95 an hour and that's better than \$95 a month." I said, "But daddy this is steady." He said, "Well after the war you can make it." So I went to the shipyard as a Shipwright Helper and I later became a Journeyman Shipwright and remained so until the day the war ended. All this in 1945. Then I went to Army Air Forces as a civilian at 822nd Specialized Depot. It's in Maywood and I worked there until one day the Water and Power called me in 1946 for a temporary job in Water and Power and I turned it down. I didn't answer. I didn't even respond because I was temporary at Army Air Forces, but that's temporary over at the City and I said well temporary. I don't need to be leaving a temporary job for another and it was about the same. I was making about \$204 a month now and the job with Water and Power, I think, was \$207 or something like that a month.

Then when they finally sent me a certification for permanent, I went to the Army Air Force Commander and I asked him if I would be able to come back and he said, "Yes you could come back, but we are going to be closing all these bases, everything is going to close and you won't have any job here. So you'd better get a steady job. But he sent in a report on a form eligible to rehire. So I started with Water and Power, January 20, 1947. And they had one other black meter reader, a fellow named John Bryant, who had been a messenger at the Department and they chose him to break me in. He said to me, "Lloyd, they have told me that when they hired you, as long as you do the job, as long as you do the work and as long as you do it satisfactorily, that means you'll get to be permanent. You've got to do it real good. And that's the way he trained me -- to read every meter, read them right. Don't put down anything you don't see. Don't take anything that doesn't belong to you. He said, "make sure that you leave everything that you see, the only thing that you take is the reading from the meter and don't touch anything unless it is a demand meter.

So the first book I read with him was near Wrigley Field. The second meter was not too far from there. At that time you were trained individually, man to man and he trained me well. He trained me just like he was training a son or a brother. I later became friendly with his trainer. That's an unusual story in itself.

The man who trained him was a man named McLaughlin. I'll mention his name because we had a favorable relationship.

McLaughlin one day gave me a ride to 49th and Wall and he said, "Lloyd, you know my sister is a Nun at Holy Cross School." I said, "Is that right?" He said, "Yes." I said, "What's her name?" He said, "Sister Agnes." "James," I said, "That's my boy's teacher!" Then he grabbed me and said, "That's your boy's teacher at the school?" I said, "Yes." Faylece and I became very friendly with all the sisters at the school. People at the Holy Cross Church thought I was a Roman Catholic. I took the sisters to the market every Saturday. I did everything in church. I worked with the Boy Scouts. I worked with every group they had there as a parent. Not as a Catholic. As a parent. I'd go to church with them on Sundays and I'd go to church with my mom after that.

It's funny. People at the Episcopal Church would see me with my mom, some of them didn't know I was even married because we got married at the Roman Church. They would ask my mother if I was married. My mom would say, "Yes, I've got grandkids," and that kind of thing.

I worked faithfully at DWP and when I became Meter Reading Supervisor, Mrs. McDonough, the widow of my first supervisors, called me on the phone and said, "Lloyd, I called to tell you that I saw your picture in the Owl. You know Mr. McDonough used to talk about you all the time." He said, "I wanted to do more." I said, "Oh Mrs. McDonough, I understand." She reminded me of the day John and I went to Mr. McDonough and said, "Mr. McDonough they're hiring all these people and we've been here three or four years now and they'd never let us go to field service. That was

what you called a "bid job." We'd bid on everything. Take all the exams there except those exams in which our training was limited. We ranked 1-3 all the time and they still wouldn't hire us.

So I went to Mr. McDonough and he said, "What's the problem fellows?" I said, "Well Mr. McDonough we do well on the monthly report." He said, "I know. I know what you do." I said, "But over at the other building, (because we had four or five buildings downtown then - headquarters was the Washington Building, but we worked out of Boylston). "Don't they know that we do a good job? Why is it we are not selected for field service or something?" He said, "Well I don't have anything to do with that." I said, "Well, can't you tell them what you're supposed to tell them? You're the supervisor. I've taken a lot of classes for supervisor and management classes at UCLA. As I understand, the supervisor has certain responsibilities, management has certain responsibilities." There was no affirmative action then, but my father told me that you had to be "as good as" or "better than." He didn't tell me about this affirmative action. He didn't know anything about affirmative action. He just said, "In America to make it you've got to be as good as or better than. You can't just be barely making the grade." So he said, "Well there's nothing I can do about it." I said, "You can't go over there and tell them?" He said, "If I go over there, they'll cut my head off." This is what my supervisor said, between God and I. I said, "Mr. McDonough, I don't want them to cut your head off." What he was telling me was that any white man that spoke up on

behalf of a Black man in a climate that was not suitable to the power structure, would get his head cut off too. And I said, "No I don't want that. But I'd like to go over there and talk to them." I went over there and I talked to them. Mrs. McDonough and I cried together on the phone as she stated she was aware of all that had happened to John and I.

**NELSON:** Who was this you wanted to talk to?

**HERBS:** I'm not going to call his name.

**NELSON:** Someone in the Department?

**HERBS:** Yes. One of the management executives. But the reason I don't want to call their names is because I don't want the impression to be left that they were always the same because they changed. I would say the man I talked to said, "Well we can't hire any black in that category. It'd be a problem." I said, "We get along with everybody." Then I later talked to that same man about a senior clerk exam. Senior clerk wasn't any higher than meter reader. Some of the senior clerk positions at City Hall were lower and some were higher in Water and Power.

So I saw these jobs and I knew that the fellows were getting them and I said well I'd like to get the opening I remember very vividly a vacancy at the Hollywood branch office. I said, "I'm here for the interview." He said, "Well Lloyd that job is open, but we can't hire you because you're colored." I said, "Why? I

get along with people from all over the city." He said, "Well you can't get it." I said, "Well now that you brought up the race question, I've never discussed the race question with you Mr. \_\_\_\_\_. You have offices on Central Avenue, you have offices on Green Meadows and you have offices in Watts. And you don't have any Blacks? The only man you've ever had was a man named Welcome Watson and he was never a clerk! He was an elevator operator and you hired him." He said, "I know about that." I said, "And I know why they did it. They did it because Leon Washington's newspaper said, 'Don't buy where you can't work.'" They put Mr. Washington in jail because people had him arrested when he'd go in front of these stores and have a big group of people. And they put him in jail two or three times just because he was pushing for that. And I said, "Water and Power went along with that and put Welcome Watson in there in the 1930's and then you let him stay there until he died." Actually they let him stay there because Water and Power had become involved in the political corruption of the City of Los Angeles.

There was corruption in the City of Los Angeles under Mayor Frank Shaw. Mayor Shaw, his brother, Joe Shaw, a real estate broker, ran the City and you could buy any job in Water and Power, L.A.P.D. or almost any department for a price. You could buy a job to be a policeman, an inspector, whatever. The few blacks they had couldn't buy the better jobs. Water and Power was one of the most prejudiced departments in the City of Los Angeles.

There was one Black man, and I don't remember his name. I feel bad I can't remember. He was very active in the community.

He was an engineer and most people over there don't know anything about him now, but there was one man who became a system head of the Department. Head of one of the systems and he knows because I talked to him one day about this man. He said, "I know him. He was an engineer. They made him some kind of a special inspector." And part of it was because of the politics the Water and Power was involved in.

Water and Power wanted to get control of the city distribution rights for electricity. They already had the water, but didn't have electric because L.A. Gas and Electric and Southern California Edison were still in the area. This Black man was an engineer and he knew a lot about things that were happening. He got a fairly good job, but it was not a job that was equivalent to his background and training. Sometimes I get emotional about this, but I try to control myself. I was told by an executive, "We don't hire Blacks for Central Avenue, Watts or Green Meadows because blacks don't want them there." I said, "Who told you that?" He said, "That's what they told us." I said, "You'd listen to that damn slave psychology where white slave masters said a Black man could only do certain things?" I became a little emotional and then I had to cool down. Two or three times I have become emotional at the Department. One time was after Martin Luther King was killed. I said, "I'm doing a good job." I said we were the best meter readers in the City of L.A. and they wouldn't give us a chance. This man said no, because Blacks didn't want Blacks. And he said, "Well I can't help you there. I don't know anything about that." I said, "Well it's a sad day

that in America you talk throughout the world that this is a place where everybody has opportunity and you know it's not true." And I left there crying, I guess.

But anyway I still did my work and I told John we've got to do the work. I said, "Brian, I'm going to get a degree. I'm going back to school." He said, "Well I'm going to get an engineering degree." I said, "I don't know what they have against us. I'm just going to keep reading meters. It's not that bad anyway. Not every fellow there wanted to be something else. Some of them were doing other things. I know this fellow that I mentioned, his sister was a nun, he was a builder and he used his spare time to build houses and some of them used their spare time very constructively. Some went to college and obtained advanced degrees. One became an attorney in the City Attorney's Office, some were in the Public Defender's Office -- these were all white fellows. But one Black person, and I think about him, finished Loyola University Law School, but he had worked as a meter reader. After graduation he passed the bar and later became a Superior court judge. There were some people in the department who didn't think much of meter readers. It had nothing to do with being Black or white. They just felt meter reading was a low down job. Many people in the high echelon felt that way, but they didn't know that many meter readers had tremendous talent, tremendous ability and could do a lot of things.

But it was a steady good job I must admit. It was one of the better unskilled jobs and some meter readers used it as a stepping stone to continue their education and also to advance as best they

could wherever they could. We had meter readers who have done well in all categories possibly except medicine. Somebody told me there was one meter reader who became a doctor, but I don't really recall that particular person, but I do remember that they were in all the other categories because they used their spare time to study.

John became very discouraged and said, "Lloyd, I'm going to transfer because I understand that in the power system there might be a better opportunity for me." So he took a small cut in pay to become an assistant electric tester. I said, "I'm going to keep going to school. I want to get my degree in Business Administration, I'm going to UCLA extension, I'm going to the City college and I'm going to all these schools." I went to Washington High to take some courses in basic electricity.

What I really did during this period was take classes that fit the exam. Management was a little bit concerned about how I could find out about the exams that were coming up because supervision didn't notify all employees. They just told certain ones they liked. But I was at City Hall every Friday, because on Friday they used to put them out and I'd get a copy and then the regular copy would be printed. It'd be out on Monday and distributed to all these different places. But I had mine right away only because I went to City Hall.

That was part of the operation because now we were really truly using the Civil Service system because before I was going to say that somebody in Water and Power mentioned to me about the politics. But you see when Mayor Shaw was defeated, he was

defeated by a man named Judge Fletcher Bowron and Judge Bowron said a lot of people have jobs in the City of Los Angeles and they were there illegally. So Water and Power was caught in this thrust too and many of those people had to either take reductions. I think maybe a few lost their jobs, but some had to take reductions because they had not taken a valid civil service exam and so there were several changes that were made.

But that happened during the elections of 1937 just before I graduated from high school. In fact I happened to work for a black fellow who was a politician who was supporting Shaw. Shaw had the Black community kind of locked up in his hand. They didn't know anything about Fletcher Bowron, the judge, but it turned out that Judge Bowron won the election.

**NELSON:** Lloyd you mentioned that you had talked to your white superior earlier and you had gotten emotional, you had left, maybe concerned about your future if he were a vengeful person. How did that work out?

**HERBS:** Well I didn't get that particular job and I never got to work in a branch office. I kept taking exams but eventually the ironic thing is that later I became Commercial Manager in charge of all the branch offices in the City of Los Angeles Metropolitan District, and I reflected on the irony of the situation. Times had changed.

My first promotion was to Field Bill Collector. They offered me a job as the dispatcher. No additional pay, but equivalent to

the bill collectors, more than meter readers and, as a dispatcher I'd have to be at work at 4:00 a.m. so I assumed that they gave me that job to be there at 4:00 a.m. because they'd figured colored people don't get up early and they are late and all that. I was there every day at 3:30 except once I had to take a taxi right here because my car wouldn't start and I missed the bus. I called a taxi and the man didn't want to come here. I said, "I work for Water and Power and I'm on a special assignment etc. etc.." The Yellow Cab came, the driver took me. He was very nice because I left my lunch in his car and he brought it back to the Boylston office for me.

**NELSON:** During that time you commuted by bus?

**HERBS:** Yes. At first I was taking my car then I had car trouble. Then I decided I could take the 20 minutes to the hour street car or bus, but the 20 minutes to the hour bus got to 7th and Broadway on the hour. That meant if I took 20 minutes to 4, I'd be late because I'd be on Broadway so I said well I have to be at work earlier so I'd take the 20 minutes to 3 bus, I'd be at 7th and Broadway at 3:00 then I could transfer and leisurely get to Boylston and then pick up a City car and go to the Washington building and to 3rd and Spring, pick up rejected checks etc.

It was that time that I started smoking. That job was very interesting. I learned a lot about the Department of Water and Power, especially the Commercial Division. I didn't know much about Water and Power except what I read in the library. I later

learned there was a branch library at DWP. I was going to the public library regularly, but one day I asked the librarian for a special book. She said, "Don't you work for Water and Power." I said, "Yes." She said, "The library has a branch at DWP." I said, "Oh thank you." And then I started getting those books and getting that kind of material.

All of that was very helpful. I studied all the rules and regulations. I studied all the areas that I was interested in. I knew that I didn't want to be an engineer. I remember in school some teachers took an interest in the colored kids and she said if you kids do well you can even get in the service academies. They weren't putting too many Blacks in the academy. She was talking about West Point and the Naval Academy at Annapolis.

One boy in school said he was interested in going to the academy, but I just was interested in being a lawyer then I guess or a priest even though I had philosophical disagreements as far as the Church was concerned. But then I found out a lot of people of the cloth don't have the strong beliefs that they preach about. I found that out later when I was talking and we got married and I asked one Catholic priest about certain things, should Catholics be marrying non-Catholics. He explained certain things to me and I said, "For example the Inquisition was terrible. You folks killed all the Jews and did this?" He said, "Lloyd don't get too emotional." I have a tendency to get emotional. And he said, "Don't get that way. We recognize our errors and I'm sure that the Church of God is the Catholic Church, but it is composed of human beings."

**TAPE NUMBER: 2, SIDE TWO**

**LLOYD A. HERBS**

**NELSON:** Lloyd I wonder if you could elaborate a little bit on just what the duties of a meter reader entailed and how you functioned on say a typical day.

**HERBS:** Meter readers read light and water meters for the Department of Water and Power and at the same time they make a cursory inspection of the premises to notice if there are any deviations or any problems that should be reported to the Department of Water and Power. This is relative to the water box or relative to the electric meter and the conditions there.

**NELSON:** You mean someone stealing power?

**HERBS:** That's one factor, energy theft. In those days there was a considerable amount of energy diversion and the employee was expected to report that. He could not make any arrest, but for example there was a place where I used to go and it's happened in several instances where the person always let me in the front door, but then would say wait a minute or else I'll go to the back and you come around the side. One way or the other. But I couldn't go in with them at the time but one day the gate was open

and I called out and went there and I saw the man pull something from the meter itself. What they had done was use a simple wire and I happened to observe this and I knew that they were stealing energy. Now I could not approach the man about the energy diversion. All I did was make a note in the book that this man was using what is called a "u-jumper." They had another name for it too, but anyway u-jumper.

The inspectors who later went out made calls at night, the man at the front door and a man at the back door and they caught this man and he had to rewire his entire house. I never was very good at electricity or understanding circuits of electricity involved and what brought it to my attention was I'd been reading one book about three or four years and Mr. McDonough called me and he said, "Lloyd, the operating division reported that they found the wiring was incorrect. You should have known about it because I've talked about it." I said, "Well can I go look?" He said, "You look, but don't touch it." I went to the route where I'd been before and studied the circuit carefully.

After attending several classes, I became very proficient in checking electric circuits. We became the best in that area with the exception of one other person who had worked as an electrician and he found more irregular wiring than John or Me. Jonathan became very good. Jonathan is dead now so is John, but Jonathan was really the best but he had a background in electricity. Relative to meter readers, meter readers read the meters, made the necessary inspection, made a report thereof each day. They read approximately 21 books every month and if you had a regular route,

you had 21 books this month, 21 books the following month because we were reading basically on a bi-monthly schedule. If you read regular you could keep a list and you would know the book you would get the next day.

Meter readers were not expected to turn into the office before 2 o'clock. When you were at Boylston you got your book the previous day, but when you were brand new, it took you all day so you went there in the morning and got a book. But after I became experienced I went into the office almost every afternoon at about 1:20 or 2:00. You had approximately 450 meters to read, water and electric, depending on the area, in an apartment house area for example, Park La Brea is a good example. You might have 650 electric meters and only ten water meters. But the average residential area was one electric meter and one water meter. We learned to read in the hilly terrain, and all the local areas in the City of Los Angeles.

What happens is meter readers become very experienced. You'd learn to read by what is called position. I can read a meter if I see the position of all the hands on the four or five dials. It is not necessary to see the numbers. I'd have to go over here in order to read this meter. You have to be careful, you're looking at the side there and it kind of magnifies so you have to be careful about that. So you have to get where you can actually see the face of the meter. This meter in the house has four dials and I can read it, 9, 6, 6, 8, reading from right to left. When you add, subtract, or multiply units, tens, hundredths, and thousandths you start on the right hand side and you put that down

the same way. Some meter readers become very proficient. They can read at a glance, look at it, keep moving, write it down and go to the next meter.

Sometimes customers would call in and say the person didn't read the meter. The meter's over there or yes you could read a meter. I can't do it now because my eyes are not as good as they were then, but from here to that house, I could read the meter easily. I read meters for eleven years so near the end there were times that it took me longer to complete the assignment. It took me longer to walk and it'd take me long because I'd have to go around in order to see the meter, but normally you can see the meter and we didn't use monoculars as much as they do now. These fellows use monoculars not binoculars. Some used binoculars in those days, but I never did use one. I'd use a mirror to reflect sunlight because then I could see on a back porch where a flashlight might not give sufficient light. We learned to read meters under difficult conditions because you were expected to use ingenuity.

The times were different. People used to leave their doors open for the milkman and the iceman when I first started. They don't do that any more because there are few milk men or ice men if any. They left money for the milkman and the iceman. That's one of the things that Bryant always stated when he trained me. "Don't touch anything that doesn't belong to you. Don't touch the people, don't touch anything, just pick up the reading and you do that with your eyes." And as you become more proficient a book

that was scheduled as an eight hour day including transportation. You'd complete them in a lesser time.

As meter readers developed proficiency, it was necessary to be careful that you didn't use the extra time in a negative manner. I recall when I was supervisor of meter readers Mr. Blaze Beltramo called and said, "Lloyd get those fellas away from that donut shop because a man says that he sees these meter readers there all day long." And really what he saw was the meter readers were there getting coffee say at 10:00 or 11:00, 12:00 and what they would be doing would be checking their book because we were responsible for the extension which means the subtraction. Whereas now, with the computer, it is all done automatically.

All they do is put in just like you did on this device here, is to press buttons in order to put the numbers in. We had to write the numbers in and whether it was pouring down rain or shine, we had to learn how to protect the book at all cost, yourself didn't matter, your book counted. If the book was wet, you had to dry it. They didn't want you to bring in a wet book because numbers started to spread and if a fellow got his book wet, he would put it near a heater to warm it up. Once in a while a person might put it in the oven and he'd burn it up. That did not happen too frequently, but it was your responsibility to keep your book dry just as the mailman is supposed to keep the mail dry.

**NELSON:** A couple of questions. One is you talked about car fare. Back in those days you were given a token, or you were given car fare, or you were reimbursed?

**HERBS:** You were reimbursed monthly. The car fare for most zones was seven cents. Each day you made a daily entry when you came into the office as to what book you read, how many meters and the car fare. Some meters were in boxes and people would see meter readers and if they saw a meter reader go by, they might call in a say I saw him go by the meter, I saw him go somewhere else, but he didn't read my meter and he didn't come around to the back porch or whatever it was.

Our meter used to be on the back porch and I could read it through the screen. We learned how to read through the screen with a mirror or flashlight. A dark day, we couldn't use the sun because there was no sunshine, but if you had a powerful flashlight, you might be able to see through. Another thing we did, a screen you can see through the screen and occasionally you may use screens that have larger holes in it. Some of its done by the householder when he would drop his latch or something and it made a hole there, but if depending on where that hole is, there might be a hole that you could kneel down and look up into the meter from that hole and all you need is to be able to see the meter and the four dials.

The reason they increased to five dials is because people began using more electricity. When I started in 1947 television was becoming popular.

They had a new station transmitter on Mt. Lee. People were buying televisions. The minute you saw a major increase in consumption, you knew somebody had bought a television. So what you do was to look on the roof. You see the antenna. And then as people began buying new refrigerators, that's another 100, 150 units, you'd see that and then you'd check it, make sure you read the meter correctly and then you'd asked them and they would say, "We got a refrigerator," then you would write it down. You made little notes for everything.

After 1950 the City of Los Angeles began to complain that the census takers had not covered every house. All the big cities claimed that all the time, but this year the City said the only people in the city who went to every house were meter readers. So we were instructed when reading the meters and making our inspection to ask customers if the census taker had been to their house. If they said yes, we'd make a note in the book. I'll never forget that because I had only been there three or four years then in 1950.

**NELSON:** I imagine you came across a lot of homes that no one was around so you still missed.

**HERBS:** We might have missed them and they might have missed. You couldn't tell because I'll admit that during that time there were homes where there was usually a woman home but not at every place.

**NELSON:** Lloyd, you mentioned making notations etc., I imagine if you had dogs or specific problems, those notations were made somewhere.

**HERBS:** Those notations were made at the heading where the name, address was listed. In those days the book had the name on it. I remember every sheet had a name with it, however, when the customer changed, they didn't change the name. The sheets merely listed the service had been turned off then on for a new customer. One place, I will never forget in Highland Park where a dog was named "Nigger" in the book. This man kept saying "Nigger" to me and I just said, "Good afternoon." It was about noon when I was there and I read the meter and went next door. I'll never forget how nice some people are.

The man next door said, "Hello meter reader how are you today?" He didn't say anything about his neighbor. He didn't say one word about him. He said, "Hot today, isn't it." I'd say, "Well it's a little bit warm," especially with perspiration running off of me. He said, "You want a beer?" I said, "Sir I can't have a beer on the job." "Want a coke? They don't stop you from drinking coke." I said, "Well no. I'll take a glass of water." He said, "Okay. Well, here's a coke." He gave me a bottle of coke and I took the coke and the water. He said, "Meter reader, I want to tell you something. Any time you come to this house and you have to go to the bathroom, if I'm here, you just ask me if you can use the bathroom." Because that was another thing. In a residential area you use a bathroom in a commercial

place, in a store, gas station. In many gas stations, you could use the restroom. Incidentally they can't do that now because there are not as many places because gas stations lock up and all of that. I said, "Thank you sir." And he said, "If I'm not here, just ask my wife." I looked at him, because you know the men don't want you around their wives normally, but he said, "You tell her you want to go to the bathroom or if it is cold and you want a cup of coffee or whatever." There were women who offered me coffee on rainy days. You'd be soaking wet and the lady would be in the kitchen and yes, I'd take some coffee. And I'd taken cokes. Never had anything to drink because you see I didn't drink then, I didn't smoke then either. I didn't smoke the whole time I read meters as I said I didn't start until 1958.

Just before we moved here there were some of my neighbors who used to ask me, "When do you work?" I'd say, "I get up in the morning, I go on the route, I'm usually there 7:30. You couldn't read light meters before 8, but I would get there at 7:30, read the water meters then read all the light meters. Actually if you read all the water meters, when you read the light meters, you usually stay in a straight line all the way down, fairly straight I mean the back yards.

At one time when I used to read this area, I used to read the next street over before it changed, you could almost go from one back yard to another back yard. But as things began to change, people began to put up gates and then they locked the gates.

**NELSON:** There was a page, then, in each one of these books?

**HERBS:** There was a page for every meter.

**NELSON:** For every meter and you would turn it in, then data processing would take care of that for billing, then that book would come back to you in two months?

**HERBS:** Right. We read commercials on a monthly basis, but residential on a bi-monthly basis.

**NELSON:** What would be the amount of history on a page? A couple of year's history or more?

**HERBS:** It seems to me there was about four or five years. I can't remember exactly. A history of four years. Three or four year's history because the history is very important. Because when you read a meter and the consumption has dropped considerably then you want to check the reading again to see if you read the meter right and then also you want to check the meter to see if the meter is operating. And you see the meter operates, make a notation as to what then. Or if you found some diversion problem then you'd say jumper found or whatever you might have found.

One thing I've learned about meter reading, it's a liberal arts education. I read in commercial places. I watched various commercial processes. I watched business people, I watched them make garments in the garment center and I also learned how different people are in their relationships one with another. I remember a place on west Pico and the man said, "Oh you've been a

long time meter reader. What are your future plans?" I said, "Well I'm still going to school, taking classes." He said, "Can't you get another job beside reading meters? I understand people get other jobs and they don't seem to be any more intelligent than you." I said, "Well they have a system, basically civil service, but it is not always impartially administered." He said, "I know. You keep studying, keep going to school and above all things remember to do your job and do it well because that record will always be there when you do your job well."

I met people who talked politics, we weren't supposed to get into politics, but it was then that I remember reading a meter at a place and a man said, "Oh you're from Water and Power. That's socialism, give me more of that." I said, "Sir, I'm just here to read the meter." He said, "I know you don't want to talk, but the DWP is really communism. It should be private." I went back and talked to my supervisor and told him what I said to the man, "This is an operation that was purchased by the City of Los Angeles and the citizens of Los Angeles think they can distribute water and electricity at the lowest possible cost and that's good business practice." He said, "That's really communism. Why is government doing that? City of L.A., that's government. Why isn't it Edison Company?" I said, "Well I can't get into that," but I said, "The citizens voted for it."

**NELSON:** What was the structure there in meter reading? You were a meter reader, who was your next superior in the chain of command?

**HERBS:** They had senior meter readers.

**NELSON:** The senior would supervise a number of meter readers?

**HERBS:** No, you could go to any senior meter reader. They checked your book and there was one senior meter reader who was really the assistant to the meter reading supervisor. A man named McDonough was the supervisor and this other man, Eichmeyer, was his assistant. Eichmeyer was a German man and he said, "Lloyd, I don't know anything about colored people, but I'm going to tell this to you, I don't think much of them, but I'm going to give you a "fair shake." You do the job and that's all you have to do." I said, "I understand." Later after I had heard certain rumors that I was under suspicion for deviating from procedure, I asked Mr. Eichmeyer about the rumor. He said, "Let me tell you something. You are a good meter reader because we've checked you. We know you're good. They may have not heard all of the story."

I'll never forget. That's one thing I'll say about Eichmeyer. He may have been prejudiced because he was German and he believed that they were the superior people of the world. He told me when he met a Black man who could speak German he thought it was amazing. But he said, he wanted to be fair. He said I know I can trust you with anything, but before management learned to trust me, they tested me for a considerable amount of time.

Checking is part of what you have to do for any meter reader. We've checked readers whose fathers were in high management

positions and found them doing things they shouldn't have done and we had to discharge them.

**NELSON:** What is typical, what are the checks and balances. Somebody would then go out with the book and check...?

**HERBS:** On a new person they'd actually recheck the book. If you're under suspicion they'd likely check the whole book also, but when you're new they'd recheck the whole book. That means an experienced meter reader would go out and you'd turn in what you'd find. You had to account for a day's consumption, of course.

But then other checks are built into the system. A person complains about their bill, that means an inspector goes out and checks the meter and he checks the conditions. Checks what's there. So then he compares that with the last few meter readings. They are built in checks in the system, if the operating division removes a meter today, and they may remove it for many reasons. People may be doing rewiring. So if the meter reader goes in and says the reading was 1, 2, 3, 4 and there's no meter there, then they know that the meter reader has falsified a record. Put down something he didn't see. There is one rule. Put down only what you see. If you see two numbers, you put those two down and make a special mark for the numbers you don't see for the readings you don't see.

As you became experienced, you could make an estimate of what you thought the consumption was because you're on the premises. If you knew they'd been away, neighbor's say he's been away for

two months or they've been away for six months because they've gone to Europe, then you'd make a note, "gone to Europe," then you'd make a low estimate and tell the senior supervisor, senior meter reader. Estimated readings were entered in red pencil.

Promotions were so far between at that time so many of the senior meter readers were mature men and I was 26 when I started going on 27 and the senior meter readers were 50, 60 and like that. They had a regular job. The depression never did end until the war itself you might say. The people who have recently retired, many of them are fellows who started shortly after the war or just before the war I would say. The war ended in 1945 and there were people at Water and Power who asked me about the war time and why I didn't go into service. One of the reasons I didn't go into the service was because I got married before Pearl Harbor and I became what they call a "pre Pearl Harbor father." I was married before Pearl Harbor, I did essential work. I worked at the shipyard, California Ship Building.

I said this is my record you can know what it is. I said, "Further I'm not allowed to discuss what I did before or during the war time." And so some people still are aware of that and I told them I was in special services for the government and after 50 years then I can discuss it."

The CIA started about that time. This was only just before and there were certain things that people did that we weren't supposed to talk about for 50 years. Most of them did. So somebody asked me the other day why I didn't want to talk about it. I said, "Not until 1995. That's when I'll talk about it a little bit."

**NELSON:** You mentioned some of your supervisors and some of your co-workers at that time. Was there a particular role model or someone that you looked up to in your early years at DWP that gave you particular help or comfort or you said I want to be like him or where he is?

**HERBS:** Well Mr. McDonough and Mr. Eichmeyer. Even though Mr. Eichmeyer was the assistant meter reader supervisor, I never thought that I would be an executive of water and power. I thought I would have gone into business and left the department. But Mr. McDonough, I thought, conducted himself in a fairly equitable manner. He still had his favorites, but I tried to emulate some of the positive things he had done, such as training for all employees so each could do a better job and strive for advancement.

For example, I knew that the rules said that when you get job bulletins, you post them for everybody and I posted them for everyone, but I also started having them sign when I first put the bulletin out. I didn't want a person to say to me, "Well I didn't know anything about this." I'd bring the bulletin out, there's your signature. I'd say you signed, you may not have read it, but you were supposed to have read it. I said I'm not going to have any favorites and that created a problem for me because some thought I should have favorites. I told them that my father didn't tell me that. My father said you should be as good as or better than and I said that's the rule I'm going to follow.

I know favoritism is part of the game. I'm no fool. I know that Mr. Bush, Mr. Bradley, all these people in positions of power select people who they know and that's the reason I guess I got involved in various organizations because if they're two people and they are fairly equal, you pick the person you know and I tell blacks that. I said, "This is what happens" and I said, "Those white people know all the white people." And they are all fairly equal even when they are trying to be fair. They're going to pick the ones they know. But that's the reason I try to be "as good as" or "better than" and also I try to get along with everybody.

So I got along with people in all sections of the City. When I got to be supervisor the thing I remember is that there were letters there. They were still there from the time I read meters, I became supervisor of meter readers in 1967 or 1968, I'm not sure. I guess it was 1968 or 1969 somewhere in that time. There were still files even when I got my first promotion. I used to read all the old files for comments made by prior supervisors and there was still some there that some said, "Don't send that "Nigger" here," and others that said, "That's a nice man you sent here. He carries himself a certain way. He's a credit to your organization." I read all this material and some people have told me about it.

I'm saying all this to say you asked me a question about who I emulated. I didn't really have anybody there that I was emulating, but I think in terms of McDonough. I think of Mr. McDonough as a meter reader supervisor who did a good job so when

I got to be supervisor of meter reading, I wanted to be like him. Possibly, but in a more equitable manner to everyone.

**NELSON:** He exerted an influence on your thinking and they way you conducted business?

**HERBS:** Right. He conducted his business in a certain way. And he was interested in motivating all the employees even though he did not have sufficient power to help me to move, but he showed me how people are supposed to move. He tried to do that. He tried to have training classes. He did that on his own.

Another man that influenced me was a man named Mr. Moje. I didn't know Moje very well, but when I met him, he carried himself like a gentleman and a scholar. He reminded me of some of my professors and I liked the way he carried himself. I assume he may have been somewhat prejudiced, but he was very good. And the men I'll mention that I would say tried to be as fair to me as possible and did a lot of things on my behalf, I would say was Ted Zakaryan and Mr. Manny Becker. They were the ones who recommended me for the speaker's club.

I'll admit I could talk to McDonough about anything. We talked about the Presidents and various social and economic problems. They were all strong conservatives. I could talk to many management and supervisors about varied world subjects, but only after the matter was introduced by the other person. After Martin Luther King was killed, they called me into an office. I was already a supervisor and was told, "The department was

concerned about equitable treatment and fairness to black employees. What should we do about the blacks who want to be off on Martin Luther King's holiday?" I said, "What are the rules?" That was another thing I always told them. Don't make up a rule for me that you don't have for somebody else. And that's true whether I'm a meter reader or an engineer, and I'm not an engineer, or executive or whatever. Don't make up rules for me.

So I said, "You know how I operate. What are the rules?" I said, "People have a right to be off if they are sick, but they can't be off sick and say it's for Martin Luther King. But they have a right if they have time coming, vacation, they can take a day's vacation with approval. They can even have no pay, but no pay without a penalty."

Because no pay normally means a penalty. And I said, "The people say they want to take off and they don't have a category that allows it, then I would say you should let them have the day off no pay with no penalty. I know there's not going to be a lot of activity around here during that time and it so turned out that way and that's the way they did it."

I say follow the rules. If an employee is sick, sick time should be allowed, but if they're not sick, no sick time should be allowed. I am very strong on that subject because sick means you're sick. Dishonest time reporting is unfair to the conscientious employee.

**TAPE NUMBER: 3, SIDE ONE**

**LLOYD A. HERBS**

**NELSON:** Lloyd why don't you describe, if you can recollect the next assignment from meter reading, I understand you went into field collection?

**HERBS:** Yes, after taking several examinations for a period of approximately eleven years, I was finally selected as a field collector. It was an unusual situation. I was the first black to go into the field collection unit. Management had made a determination that I should not go to the field as a field collector, but that I should prepare the work as the dispatcher in the unit. Not a supervisor in the unit, as a dispatcher. I reported to duty at four o'clock in the morning and I was trained by a man I'll never forget, Woodhall, and he taught me everything that he knew about that operation and I must state at this time an unusual event occurred on my first reporting day. My predecessor on the job who had indicated that he was going to retire or that he was ill or something, came to work that day. Mr. Woodhall said to me, "You ignore him and you do what I tell you."

Mr. Woodhall explained every detail of my assignment. I was supposed to send collectible items to the various 22 districts and

make sure that the priority items were sent to every district. One of the problems this created, as an aside, was during this period after I had been trained that I began to smoke. I hadn't smoked before, but when someone calls at the Department at five o'clock or 6 o'clock and says, "I won't be at work today because I'm ill," and I may have already set up all of the 22 districts, I have to then take out the items that have higher priority and make sure they were sent to the field with a person on the job that day. It meant certain items were not worked on.

After completing the dispatch, I had my lunch I guess you would call it or breakfast at about 8:00 and then I was assigned to call those people who had telephones. We used the reverse telephone book to find the customer's phone numbers. Management liked the way I handled the telephone calls. I did most of the telephoning out of the field collection unit. That process has been changed upon over a period of time and some telephone calls are made at night now.

In that unit, though, I began to learn more about the commercial operation because I began to find out what happened to the meter reader books, what happened to the bills, what happened in most phases of the commercial division. I began to read. I always read everything that was available to me and went to the library and went to school and so forth and I always took classes that would help me to move to the next position, because I looked at the bulletins and the bulletins are very specific. The civil service bulletins state what is required and technically they're not supposed to question other areas. They may on the interview

and so forth, but I began to learn quite a bit about the Department in that period and I also began to make a few friends. More friends than I had made previously because people I assume, began to come over and check to see how that "colored" fellow's doing over there who got this promotion in the commercial division.

**NELSON:** As a meter reader you really didn't interface much with Department people?

**HERBS:** That's correct. I interfaced with customers, but I made friends with people in the Department. We were in separate buildings. As a field collector I began to interface with other people in the Department, but primarily by telephone because commercial employees were in their separate buildings.

I began to contact people whom I had not seen in person. I recall one situation. I said, "Yes ma'am," to a clerk, good clerk, but he said, "My name is so and so and I'm a male." I was very apologetic. His voice sounded female over the telephone. I began to know all these people by telephone and I would begin to meet these people formally and they would say, "Oh, you're Herbs, or you're Lloyd," or whatever it might be.

I met all kinds of people during that time and I learned a lot about the Department as I have already said. My next promotion....

**NELSON:** Let me go back just a second Lloyd, can you describe a little bit, field collection, what is that?

**HERBS:** Field collection is the unit where people have already been sent regular notices indicating they have a bill for such and such an amount. After a certain number of days, the bill is due. The bill is actually due on presentation and at that time became delinquent on about 14 days, but the Department never followed that particular rule. After about 21 days they'd send a warning notice through the mail with a card and then later they prepared a final notice bill which was mailed to the customer. If that was ignored, then a bill collector was dispatched to the premises to talk to the customer or to turn off the service and that's basically how it was done at that time.

We billed on a bi-monthly basis, which they still do. So normally before a collector was dispatched to any residence, the customer had over 40 some days after the old bill had been issued and it was almost time for a new bill to be issued by the time this work was prepared for field disposition. People began to complain about this or that and this is the reason I knew that it was my responsibility to learn more about collection laws and so forth as they applied to the general public and as well as utilities.

I think that the Department was very liberal in it's interpretation of all collection laws and gave people an ample opportunity to pay their bills within the stipulated period of time. Basically that's what it was all about, but you had to

learn more about the commercial division as a whole in order to effectively discuss this with the customer.

**NELSON:** Did you ever run into customers who had a track record of not paying their bills?

**HERBS:** Many of our customers had decided in their own consciousness, you might say, that they would pay the bills after they received the warning notice. Others decided they'd pay after the final notice. In talking to customers over the phone I began to realize that many of these customers were repeaters. When you called them and told them that you had observed the record indicates that their bill is past due, now delinquent, and subject to interruption, they would cite the rules that they knew. They stated, "You cannot turn off the service until you send me another notice or until a man comes or a person comes to collect, my service will stay on." And I would have to remind them that the service could be discontinued without further notice, however, as a courtesy we were calling.

Many of these repeat customers said, "Well you have to do it a certain way," which they thought was the correct procedure.

**NELSON:** Somewhat educated...

**HERBS:** They would become educated, they knew what happened, not according to the book, but what happened in reality. It was your

responsibility to inform the customer of the actual collection rules.

**NELSON:** You said that a collector went out in person. You also said that you called. Your calls, where were they in the progression?

**HERBS:** My telephone calls to those customers were those bills that were actually prepared to go to the field on a given day and there was what we called an "overload." The customer didn't know this, but that was the day when I was calling, that's the day that bill should have actually been in the field, however, the Department had instituted this procedure whereby they were calling customers and then I would make a notation on the bill itself as to my conversation with the customer or the person answering the phone, because they might not give you a name. A person would say, "daughter," and I'd say, "daughter will tell, or son will tell. I'd make some kind of notation.

In other cases, there was no phone. We'd mark those NP. (No phone). That's been a long time ago now and we'd mark those bills in that manner and those were not called because they had no listed phone that we were able to find, but the next day or the next time that serial (now called cycle) came out, that bill was definitely going to the field. I should indicate that as far as the billing cycle was concerned, every customer had an ample opportunity to pay before their bills were sent to the field.

**NELSON:** If you called and got an affirmative response they were going to take care of it, did it then go to the field or you?

**HERBS:** I would mark on the bill what the response was. If it was affirmative, I would say so. However, usually the people would say, "A check is in the mail."

So that meant all those bills had to be rechecked under the bookkeeping system, they had to be rechecked by hand, whereas, it's all done by computer now. In those days, all those bills had to be checked by the midnight shift in the commercial division that rechecked all unpaid bills, all unredeemed checks. They'd check these items and then those are the ones that I picked up at 3:30 or 4:00 in the morning and then took them to the dispatch office.

Every bill had to be checked. All payments received were posted on the evening shift between 4 p.m. and midnight. Postings were made on that evening shift and on the midnight shift, they'd check those bills that remained unpaid.

**NELSON:** Did you feel, in retrospect looking back after 30 or 40 years, that that training as a meter reader was a very positive prerequisite to going into the field collection unit?

**HERBS:** Well it was one of the prerequisites and I felt it was a good one because you met people in the field. Field collectors, if they had to turn off the service, or even if they didn't, were supposed to check and had to know something about the metering

device that was necessary to turn the service off. I thought it was somewhat of a prerequisite. And you learned a lot about human nature as a meter reader.

I told everyone that meter reading was a liberal arts education because I'd read meters and observed all the processes that I had read about in school. I learned a lot about automobile repair, electrical because we went into the industrial districts, the business districts, and then the residential areas, and the kinds of people that lived in the various areas.

**NELSON:** I imagine that when you're with some of your customers, you were probably asked to do things that were well beyond water and power, well beyond your meter reading. Did that ever come up? A customer needed you to fix a tire?

**HERBS:** Well, relative to things like that as a meter reader and when I did go into the field as a field collector, I found that it was to my advantage to be as helpful as possible without placing the department in jeopardy. Later when I became what they called a Utilities Service Inspector relative to complaints about high bills, you find the problem and you're able to inform to the customer, but it might be a little lady who is 65 or 70 years of age and she can't just turn a simple knob and you might do it for her, but really you're supposed to tell her that she has to have someone do this or to have a plumber to check it because sometimes employees put in a fuse for a customer and something goes wrong,

and then the Department is blamed for everything that was wrong in the building or the house.

With toilets, for example, if the field inspector bent the ball or the bar that goes to the ball and the bar broke, then he had to go get it fixed. He couldn't tell her then that she'd better get a plumber because he did it. So then he'd have to go do it. So now they don't do too much of that because they're held responsible.

**NELSON:** But you went on occasion depending upon.....

**HERBS:** Well occasionally, depending on the circumstances.

**NELSON:** Or humanitarian purposes.

**HERBS:** Right. For humanitarian purposes. And I would also add that field collectors have a certain amount of leeway, a certain amount of they could use their best judgment even when turning off the service.

I recall in one particular instance as a field collector the customer was very nice, extremely nice, had three or four kids, and I told her that the service would be turned off if the bill wasn't paid within the certain period of time, she told me she wouldn't get a check until a certain day. I deliberately set the bill in a sequence so it wouldn't go out until the day she said, which was three or four later which meant she was getting another bill to compound it. I went back and she said, "I don't have any

money." I said, "Miss So and So, I'm sorry, but I have to turn off the service." Maybe I was somewhat too sympathetic to the customers, but I felt that it was just a matter of using the, what we used to call "maintaining good will." Because when you're out there, you are the Department. You're the "no good so and so" and so I tried to maintain the best possible good will I could and I found that some were helped, but some tried to take advantage of you. Many field collectors have paid bills for customers and received no recognition for it, but they did it out of the goodness of their heart.

So all the meter readers and collectors were not devils or unconcerned about human nature, but the problems that human beings suffer. They even at times set up a little pool, petty cash fund whether somebody would find out that someone had serious problem and help them. The Department is now attempting to develop positive progress such as S.O.S. ("Serving Our Seniors" and the "Angel" programs). But there have been individuals in the Department who, without the official approval of management did things like that - paid bills and did a lot of things that they didn't have to do.

Relative to changing tires that you mentioned, I recall a lady had a flat tire. I knew nothing about the customer who had a flat tire but I thought about my mother and my wife and my sister I guess. She was having a time and I just changed it, jacked it up. It wasn't too much of a problem, but it took about 20 minutes or so in order to do that.

There are many things that I have done. I'm not bragging on myself, I'm just thinking about what other employees have done.

**NELSON:** Probably typical of others.

**HERBS:** I remember later when I became the Customer Relations Executive, a lady told me that she had a gas leak and I said, "Well you should have your plumber take care of it." She had a business out on Fairfax area, somewhere I don't recall specifically and she said, "Well the Department did it." I said, "But you said it was a gas leak. You said you had a gas leak and then there was a water leak and the Department took care of it. The Department doesn't take care of gas leaks." She said, "Somebody was there and they were from Water and Power." Nothing on the records would indicate that what she said was correct. I checked with the water superintendent and they had a record that indicated that the water department had been out on such and such a date at a given address and that at this address they encountered a minor gas leak and they repaired it.

Back to what I mentioned about field people. They shouldn't have touched it. They should have just told her to call the gas company, but they felt well they could do it while they were at the excavation. The lady was right. Water and Power had done it, but it was done out of the goodness of somebody's heart, but it was also good that that supervisor, or foreman, or whatever he was, had made the little note about it and it was recorded.

Going back to the field collection group, I think about a case called Eula Love case. I was in customer relations when that developed so I can understand the problems that developed at that time in the Eula Love case because of my prior experience. There was a community meeting in south central at a police precinct. There were gas company and telephone company representatives in attendance and they all stated their collection procedures, not mentioning the Eula Love case. I don't know if you ever heard about the Eula Love case.

The Eula Love incident was a case where the gas company representative went on the premises to turn off the gas and the lady said no. They went back again, the foreman went back or some person, and they said no and she became somewhat assertive and threatened the people and she didn't have a weapon other than a shovel or something else. She didn't have a gun. She had a shovel. The gas company representative called the police department. The police department came and she threatened the police officers and they shot her.

That created quite a major uproar in the Black community and it's stated occasionally that utilities will call the police department, which they do, but they don't call the police department to collect the bill. They call the police department because they are threatened and physically abused. That's the only reason. So at times some representatives may decided to call the police department not to turn off service, but to protect the employee. They may have not have needed the protection, but that's a difficult decision to make as to whether you need

protection when a man says or a woman says they're not going to pay the bill and to get off the property and become physically abusive. It's very difficult to determine what kind of emotional feelings are going through the representative and then when the policemen come. But the police said she had threatened them.

An assistant chief was conducting the community meeting. He indicated he wanted the people in the community and these representatives of the utilities which include telephones and so forth, to state how they operated, but not to mention the Eula Love case specifically. Not to mention it, just to talk about their general procedures relative to collections. And I think that all of the representatives presented their cases very well. But the Eula Love case created quite a furor in the total community and in the United States.

It turned out that lady did owe a water and power bill. Our records revealed she had a due bill, but we hadn't processed the bill on that day. But the Department, as well as other utilities, have made their collection practices much more liberal since that particular event. I think far more liberal now than they were at that time and, in fact, the Department, as well as other utilities, are more social conscious. That's the reason that I'm on this program as senior advisor because the Department is aware of that, but I'm getting ahead of the story.

After I worked with the field collection unit, I was on the list.

**NELSON:** How long was that?

**HERBS:** About five years. I'm not positive of that timeframe. Then I was sent back to meter reading, not as a meter reader. I was a senior meter reader and I recall something very vivid about the examination that I took for senior meter reader. Senior meter reader was a separate civil service class. One of the prerequisites, of course, was you had to be a meter reader, but civil service actually conducted the exam for senior meter. I don't think they do it that way any more, but at that time they did and on this particular examination, I was examined at City Hall and there were three people which was the normal custom, on the interview board. One person said, "Oh you have an excellent record or what seems to be an excellent record, however, I have a question to ask you. I noticed that the other interviewers became rather quite. This gentlemen was talking. And he said, "Have you ever gone to a premises?" and the person said, "I don't want you here, go away, leave?" I said, "Well I've had people who've said certain things, but I've tried to in the best of my ability to explain the purpose of why I was there and so forth." He said, "I don't think you understand. If you went to a house and they said, "Nigger leave here." What would you do?

This was the question posed by this particular person as I indicated that the other two interviewers became....well they didn't say....I could look at them and tell. I guess even though I'm brown or Black, I guess my color changed too, because those other two interviewers, their colors changed. But this gentleman was very persistent. I stated I would reidentify myself, restate the purpose of my call and if the person persisted in the attitude

which I would consider to be negative, then I would leave. So he said, "Would you start a fight?" I said, "No." The Department has ways and means of collecting bills and doing things and I wouldn't start anything, no. I would leave and refer the matter to my supervisor.

As an aside to that, I went back to water and power and I told certain people that at civil service they brought up this race thing and they said, "Well you should protest." I said, "I've been here all these years and I'm not here to protest that. I've heard a lot of things, but very few people have accosted me, done anything to me because of my race. Some have said a few things. I didn't think they could do that over there."

I waited and I didn't protest, but when I got my grade, I got about a 99, I was very surprised. And then I thought about the other people who were on the board. I don't know whether the man, who asked me the question, maybe all of them decided to give me 99. I don't know if you're familiar with the way the civil service interviewers operate, but they're not supposed to talk too much, but they talk a little bit with each other after the candidate has left the room.

**NELSON:** I've been on several boards.

**HERBS:** Yes, I've been on them too. So they talk a little about what the ... so I assume they came to a favorable conclusion. But I had made up my mind during the war that I wasn't going to fight anyone about racial or ethnic slurs or any kind of name calling.

I remember when my father and my mother said, "Be as good as you can, to do the best job you can be the best or the best you can." And so I'm not saying that I was a saint. During the war when the thing came up, I almost had a serious altercation with a man and I began to realize in that situation during the war that if I had killed that man, I wouldn't have gained anything because I would have gone to jail. Further, I might not have been able to kill him in the first place, because they might have killed me before I could kill him.

So I talked to that man and I realized that in talking to him that it made me vent some of my feelings. I know I recall I began to cry a little bit, but I don't know what I said. Some kind of spirit overtook me, I guess, and the man said, "What are you talking about? You must be crazy." I said, "No sir, I know it's best for people to try and get along with each other." What amazed me was his friends. Instead of becoming assertive against me, they told him that he should listen to me and that did something to me and actually it helped me when I came to water and power. I found that I never discussed the race question until it came up, but when it came up, I did not back away. If they were saying "Nigger" in the other part of the room, wherever it was, I ignored it. That's not me. They're not talking to me. They're talking about something else. But when they said it to me or close to me, then I would ask them what they meant and I would suggest a better way to identify people.

Relative to the man at the shipyard, I said, "My name is on my hard hat, but if you don't want to call me by my name, call me

shipwright, that was my working title." But anyway that helped me during the whole time I was at water and power in every position I had. So I took what some other Blacks might consider abuse because of the manner in which I reacted, but I just felt that it was better to have this kind of an attitude and to try and to make my relationships with people more positive.

I finally got to be a Senior Meter Reader, but that didn't last long because I'd been taking all these tests and during this period I had a series of promotions. I became a Utility Service Inspector and also on the list for investigator which I turned down because I felt that since I'd become an inspector, I'd best learn more about that job.

I was questioned by Civil Service as to why I did refuse the investigator position. It was during this time that I found that in civil service the record indicated that I had turned down several positions and I said, "Oh no, that's not true. I only turned down one position." They said, "You only turned down one before you turned down this one for investigator?" I said, "Yes. That was in the power system, I remember. But I didn't turn down any others." Then I began to realize that there were people in water and power who were doing things that were wrong then when you were certified, they might turn in a report that you refused the job. Three refusals in those days meant take you off the list. Many Blacks and Hispanics said to me that I should have not refused and that I should have done thus and so on. I said, "No, I'm going to learn this job and do the best that I can." So I

became a Utility Service Inspector under Chuck Nichols. He was a very fine person and a very excellent supervisor.

**NELSON:** What did that job entail?

**HERBS:** Utility Service Inspector. You review the complaints of customers relative to their bills and you go to the premises and check the meters, review the meter reading whether it be electric or water and explain to them the possible reasons for the high consumption.

For example, I recall one situation where a lady had some lights burning. We run a lot of tests and I know they cost money, but at that time this lady had certain lights burning and I tried to explain that a 100 watt bulb burning for ten hours is one kilowatt hour and if you've got several of them burning for this period of time, that increased the usage. I'll admit that during that particular period, the rates for the Department were such that as you increased your use of electricity and possibly even water, that the cost per unit decreased. You paid for every unit, but the cost decreased. Of course that policy's definitely changed since we've gone into what they call conservation.

This is the reason when the rates began to reverse and there was a period of electric conservation, the people who had all electric homes felt that they had been betrayed by the Department because the Department had previously emphasized the low cost of electricity. We were encouraging the fuller use of electricity, I would say, in fact, that's when Faylece bought an electric range

and we installed electric heaters next door which I regret now. Tenants have to pay for the electric heaters and things that are in there and they are somewhat expensive. But anyway, I'm just telling you about the things that happened during that particular time and relative to what the inspector tries to explain to the customer what caused the high bill. But you can't always tell.

I recall an inspection I made where there was a tremendously high bill in what seemed to be a vacant building. I went to the building after contacting the owner and after he had made his complaints and I saw the meter was rotating very rapidly. The owner was there because he had agreed to meet me and let me in. He said, "Well there's nothing on. I see nothing on." I said, "Well sir, let's walk through the building. There must be something on because that meter is rotating, unless there is some kind of an underground short in the line." That's the one thing that may create a high bill on old meters. It does not now on these new meters. But anyway we went through the building point by point. It had little sections. Then there was another section and he didn't take me there. I said, "What's in there?" He said, "Oh one of these security agencies who respond to a call for a break in or a burglary in a house or a business place. He said, "There's a fellow in there, but he doesn't use anything." We went in and that person was using several electric heaters. The building was cold, a big factory or warehouse (now converted into a church incidentally). The small room for the ADT representative was kept warm by these heaters. But it was a warehouse then and the fellow was sitting in there and he was listening to the radio

or to the instruments that he had to check, signals that were coming in there. He was burning three 1500 watt electric heaters - that's like 15 100-watt light bulbs running at the same time on each of these heaters. I said, "That's the reason."

I felt so good then. I just felt that I had done my job. I tried to explain to the customer what was happening in the situation. So that's an example of what you try to do. You try to inform the customer that there's reason for the bill. Not all customers are easily satisfied, but every effort is made to resolve all complaints in a logical manner.

**TAPE NUMBER: 3, SIDE TWO**

**LLOYD A. HERBS**

**NELSON:** Lloyd, one thing I wanted to go back to one question. When you became Senior Meter Reader, was there any antagonism from the other meter readers that somebody who had been a meter reader and then gone out of the section, came back as a senior?

**HERBS:** This is one time that I must say I had full support. They were happy for me because they knew, everyone knew what I'd been through. Not everybody in the Department knew, but people in the Division knew and I'm sure management knew because I told Mr. James Mulloy about things one time and he said, "I never knew those things happened." But I know Mr. Mulloy was just covering. The time Mr. Mulloy became the general manager, he spoke at the speaker's club and I said, "I know the employees are very happy for you because you are a general manager who came through the ranks and I know they're happy for you." I said, "I am happy for you too." The Department has made tremendous changes, made tremendous strides of improvement. It is different than when I first started." And he said, "Well how was it when you first started?" I told him certain things and he said, "Why I didn't know they did that." I said, well maybe not, but I knew he knew. You asked me once about somebody who made a great impression on

me. Mr. Samuel Nelson, former general manager, was one of those who made a great impression.

Because of my personality, I guess and maybe because of my race, I got to meet a lot of people over a period of time. Mr. Nelson, Mr. Winnard and Mr. Lane made the greatest impression on my consciousness during their tenure as Genral Manager.

**NELSON:** Let's go back to utility service. How long did you stay in that position?

**HERBS:** I can't even recall specifically because I was a utilities service inspector, I guess, a year or so. I'm not sure, but I continued taking these exams and I took the exam for Principal clerk. I was number one on the list, incidentally, but they didn't give me the appointment. They told me that they were saving a place for me. Actually, maybe they were, I don't know because they used to save places for people, but they said, "We have a better spot for you." And they put me in charge of the mail room.

So when we moved into the building in 1965, so that meant I was a utility service inspector until just three months before we moved into the building. We were still in the Washington building. We were completing the general office, G.O.B., so I went in and learned about all this...I didn't know anything about mailing, or operations and so forth, but what I did was talk to people I knew. I had a lot of friends in the post office. I talked to them about rates and about things like that and I took

some courses on communication, more on mailing because people were going to private mailing and so forth and I became involved with much of this and I was the supervisor of that unit.

**NELSON:** How many people did you supervise there?

**HERBS:** Oh about 15 or so. But I was trained in that job by a young fellow named Peterson but he was a senior clerk. I had become a principal clerk and I don't know whether he was on the list. But I became friendly with him because I decided that any job... you have to learn from the book, but you also have to learn from the people who are doing jobs, just like I told them when I went in as a senior meter reader, that I wanted to learn all the jobs in there even though I'd been there. I didn't know how they broke down the books or anything like that and then as far as the mail room, I tried to learn every aspect of it.

My hours were from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. or something like that, but I would go there at 7. There was one man who picked up mail at the post office and he had to pick up mail at six o'clock. So I didn't know what he did and I wondered how he'd get, pick up the mail, cut it -- when I say cut it, you had to cut the envelopes, the envelopes had to be opened and then separate it then put it on desks of the clerks. Each clerk ran a tape of the checks and stubs and they had to agree at the end of the day so it meant that every bill or statement was going to be posted correctly. If they were off balance, then they had to go through

each tape and they had to bring them to me as the supervisor to determine why they were off and then we'd go through it and find out why we were off.

As far as the mailing issue, now these are the people who were taking the incoming mail. They have divided that operation since then. Those are the ones taking the incoming mail, which are really payments. This person in the morning, he had to separate mail that was not payment. There were pieces of correspondence that had to be sent throughout the building and you know at that time they had a conveyor belt that ran to the 15th floor and they'd have to put it in boxes for the respective floor and then either the messenger for that floor or some messenger had to take it up and deliver it to the respective area.

The place that we had to be the most careful of was purchasing because the purchasing division had a rule that bids that were accepted had to be in by a certain time and I recall once that someone answered the phone and I was told, "Mr. So and So wants to talk to the supervisor." The gentleman said, "A representative of our company was in the building today at ten o'clock and our bid was not read." He said, "You in charge of the mail? Did you send all the mail up? I said, "Yes, sir. We sent it all up." He said, "There's something wrong because we know we sent that within the stipulated time frame." I said, "Where are you calling from?" He said somewhere in Frisco, up north somewhere. I said, "We can't guarantee what the post office does." He said, "We had it special...it was supposed to be taken care of."

I then called the post office to find out why mail from that area had been late. I learned that the plane for Los Angeles was fog bound and held over and the mail on that plane didn't get to Los Angeles at six o'clock this morning as it was supposed to. So I called the man back and I told him. I couldn't do anything about the post office. But I had checked on his behalf. I attended "mail council meetings." The major users of mail carry considerable economic and political clout, they make complaints about not just single residents but about the whole operation of the mail. As a major user, DWP representatives attended these meetings.

That also worked out fine too for me because, I've got to throw this in too, the first place that gave blacks an opportunity was the post office. I know blacks who went to the post office who were school teachers, but they weren't teaching school when they had completed the educational requirements, pharmacists and various others, post office it ended up so they became mail carriers or mail clerks in the United States Post Office. So when we'd go over there, they'd say, "Oh you know him?" I'd say, "Oh yes, we all grew up here together, and I know several of those people."

So all of that was very helpful to me and I met the other people as well. Another incident about mail...a lady whom I'm not sure who she was at that time called and said she was secretary to the general manager. "We have mailed a letter and there is a mistake in the letter and we don't want it out." I said, "Oh I'm sorry all the mail is out." She said, "Is there any way you can

recover the letter?" I said, "Once the letter gets to the post office, it's irretrievable. It's against the law to do anything about it."

She said, "You do what you can." I went out on the loading dock and none of the last mail had been picked up by the postal messenger. I went through all correspondence mail and I found the letter. I was proud of myself and I had also made friends "upstairs."

**NELSON:** In those days, as you described, the mail room was quite different than it is now. The mail room handled the incoming bills, you received those, posted them and also did the mailing machine?

**HERBS:** Yes, we had a machine.

**NELSON:** Well it was more than just mail?

**HERBS:** Oh it was more than just mail. The process is divided now and, of course, they have different...they've got things that can read the checks and can read everything that comes in now. It was an important part of the commercial division, mail handling.

**NELSON:** Wherever checks are it's important.

**HERBS:** The checks, incoming mail, those are the payments and it was very important that they be posted and posted that night, the

checks were sent to the cashier, because people were advised not to send money, but occasionally they did, so whenever the money was included, the clerk who opened the envelope with money had to get a witness and sign that they got so much money in that particular check.

So all the checks went to the cashier and the bills went to bookkeeping. That's what we called it, bookkeeping.

**NELSON:** How long were you in the mail room? That was in the basement of the building?

**HERBS:** Yes, still there. That part is still there. Down in the basement. The other part, they moved to the second or third floor. The place where they process the checks now. When they open now or when they are separated now all of those envelopes are sent to the second or third floor under the current system where they have new computer equipment that can process the checks and the stubs and so forth.

While I was in that job, I was supervised by a man named Mr. William Moje. He was what they called the chief clerk. He was very thorough and he was a gentleman. He carried himself like a gentleman. He carried himself like a college professor or something like that. He didn't get involved with a lot of the things that some other supervisors or chief clerks and executives or whatever you want to call them, whatever they may have done, he was strictly a gentleman. He carried himself different, but then I also heard that he had had a heart attack and that may have made

him mellow, I don't know, I don't know how he was. But to me he was always a gentleman and if I wanted to say anything, he's kind of a person that I would use as a ...

**NELSON:** Sounding board?

**HERBS:** No, but as a person, I would...as a guide, as a father image, maybe I'm just about right. I'd use him as a father image, you might say.

**NELSON:** Or a mentor or something?

**HERBS:** Mentor is a good term. He was a wonderful person. He didn't talk to me a whole lot, but when he talked, what he had to say was very important and I remember that ....

**NELSON:** Respected his good sense?

**HERBS:** I respected him. I recall once something happened and, you know that conveyor belt, a check dropped in the conveyor belt, check and stub, and I had to get the building operation maintenance man to go down there and get it for me. I think another one got in the elevator shaft, but I don't remember all the circumstances. Generally that means if it goes there, then nobody's going down unless they are going down to the pit to get it whatever it might be.

So I got this and I got it done and Mr. Moje happened to overhear somebody in the elevator say that, "You know Herbs got this so and so out of the pit." Mr. Moje came to me very kindly and he said, "I heard you had a problem today?" I said, "Oh no, we took care of all the problems." He said, "I overheard that something happened and I didn't know about it before. I'd like to be informed about things like that that happen." I said, "Oh, I'm very sorry. I didn't want to bring something negative to you." He said, "I understand. You just keep that in mind." I kept it in mind so maybe for awhile I might have been telling him too much, you know, because he wanted to know. He said, "I'd prefer to know before the director or one of those executives know." Because he wasn't an executive. In fact, I always wondered why he never became an executive, he was a chief clerk, but that's another story too.

So I can understand and I remember that very well. I kept that job for about six months I guess. Then I got the job as a supervisor of special collections, still under Mr. Moje as the chief clerk. There I learned a lot about better collection procedures, of delinquent bills, of closing bills, bills that were later sent to the field, and the kind of work they did as far as skip tracing and so forth, whereas I didn't know about it. I knew a little bit about skip tracing as a field collector, but in special collections, I learned a lot about the special techniques.

Some of it came back to me because when I had worked in the grocery store while I was still in college, I had taken courses in credit and collection and had received a real estate license. It

was also my goal to know more about business to obtain my degree in business administration.

But anyway in this category, I learned more about the collection and delinquent accounts even though I'd been a bill collector. It's really connected with the field operation.

**NELSON:** Special collections deals with the more difficult collections?

**HERBS:** I would say they deal with the over-all aspect of collections and their personnel are able to explain to customers who feel that there's some problem and they can handle it unlike what was called customer accounts where they would tell you how much you owe and so forth. Where if you had a problem and you wanted an extension, you really had to deal with special collections and when the field collector, for example, made a hold or an extension on a bill, it had to be reviewed by special collections as to whether that was necessary and whether it was to be listed on record. They might have it on the record that indicated that the customer deserved no more.

So it was sort of an umbrella over the mail operation and over the field collection operation as well because they had the same executive who was in charge. They've changed the division, the department, well I should say the division has changed so much that I sometimes get mixed up as to where they've changed and what has changed. I have to look in the book now to be sure that I

know whereas at that time I knew everything just like I know the fingers on my hand.

**NELSON:** Over special collections you were still a ....?

**HERBS:** Over special collections I was a supervisor at a higher pay rate.

**NELSON:** A Principal clerk?

**HERBS:** Yes. At a higher grade Principal clerk than I was in the mail operation.

**NELSON:** How many people, roughly, did you supervise then?

**HERBS:** Oh about 30 I guess. I've forgotten. It was quite a few because we had in the special collection unit we also had application files, at that time, people signed applications. Applications were made for them and those records were maintained in the special collection unit. We had a certain number of people who did nothing but file applications or pull them out of the file when there was need to review their particular application.

**NELSON:** Who was the commercial director at that time?

**HERBS:** During that time, Mr. Beltramo and later Mr. William Plumley.

**NELSON:** Blaze?

**HERBS:** Blaze Beltramo. Yes, I remember him because his daughter-in-law worked in our unit. Later I'll say something about that. The mail people in the mail room have to determine where the mail goes and sometimes a newer employee in the mail room might misdirect something and there would be something directed to Beltramo, but it was really intended for a lady named Beltramo, a special collectons representative who was his daughter-in-law.

So he would bring it over and he said, "Tell those people down stairs." I don't know if you knew Mr. Beltramo personally. He was a very friendly type of person, but he was a quick to make certain kinds of statements that contained more bark than bite, but most everybody liked him. He started as a field man too, I believe, I'm not sure. Many of the commercial people started in the field or as clerks because that was the route in the commercial division. I would say at this point that Jim Derry has achieved the greatest prominence as Customer Services Director because they divided the division some five or six years ago.

I hold Jim in very high esteem. When I was in field collection he was a trainee. But he was the kind of person who wanted to learn every job and he was a little forward, a little assertive and he said, "I'm going to learn this, I'm going to do this." But he did it. He didn't only say it, he just went on and did it. So my wife and I hold him in high esteem and he's about the age of John Fashing. Have you heard of John Fashing? John Fashing went to school with my son so I got to know those young

fellows and I held them all in high esteem. I knew John Fashing's mother and father before I knew John Fashing because we were in the parents group at Mt. Carmel High School.

**NELSON:** How are those people picked?

**HERBS:** Which people?

**NELSON:** It seems like there are some people in the Department who, from the beginnings of their career are somewhat "blessed" and they then come up through the ranks.

**HERBS:** Some are blessed and I must admit that John and Jim were blessed. However, I give them credit for the kind of potential that they already possessed. They happened to come to the Department on a special training program. They were called "trainees."

That trainee program is not used currently. I think the present programs are used for college students or graduates (interns). It was used then for high school students then who had graduated from high school in the top ten per cent or five per cent of their class and who took tests and who did very well on those tests. I have always contended that those programs were instituted to block the development of minorities. Now maybe I shouldn't say that, but that was my personal feeling. I told John that. I don't know whether I mentioned it to Jim, but I did mention it to John because I then knew John better than Jim. Mr.

Fashing was an engineer. He was a member of the Father's Club (parent's club). He said, "Lloyd just keep trying," because I was studying some accounting while I was going there, meanwhile my son was there, but I'd bring my books whenever we had a meeting. So they knew what I was doing. They knew I'd been a meter reader a long time, but they were very encouraging just like many other people in the community were. They said keep studying and do a good job and get along with everybody. I'll never forget that. Mr. Fashing and several others talked to me like that.

But to answer your questions specifically, they came under this special program and they were assured that if they'd learn, and study, they would be exposed to all aspects of the division. A clerk hired as a clerk in the mail room or senior clerk in customer service, that's where you worked until you took another test. Whereas these trainees were taught every aspect of the division so they learned about the whole division during their training process and then after a period of time they had to pass a regular exam.

**NELSON:** So they were groomed to be executives ultimately if they were successful?

**HERBS:** If they were successful, not all did, but I can almost say that right now, with maybe one or two exceptions, the people in leadership areas in either the commercial division or customer services division came up through the trainee system. They are now the managers of two divisions.

**NELSON:** There were several trainees?

**HERBS:** Yes, but the two that achieved greatest prominence are Jim Derry and John Fashing. John Fashing actually became assistant to the general manager.

**NELSON:** Special collections?

**HERBS:** While I was in special collections, the supervisor went to another position and there was a need for a principle meter reader. Mr. Ben Aimar was the exec over the meter reading and Harvey Uribe was Chief Clerk. I had worked with Harvey as a meter reader and he went to field service and I stayed as a meter reader at that time, but he suggested to Mr. Aimar to appoint me as a principal meter reader. This was an emergency appointment.

Now they tell you on an emergency appointment, if you get to be one of the three that you'll probably get the job. So I got to be number one and I was very happy. I was a Utility Service Inspector when Kennedy was killed and I was in special collections when Martin Luther King was killed and I remember an incident in special collections. My executive called me into the office and said, "You know a lot of the colored, Blacks or whatever they called us, want to be off for the funeral." I said, "Oh. I want to be off too. I am involved in the community group and they want me to go to Reverend King's funeral." He said, "Oh that's nice, you've got a lot of time." I said, "Well that's not the point. This community group was indicating that I should go as a

representative of the Department of Water and Power. He said, "We don't have any money, we handle all the money, but we transmit it to the cashier." I said, "I know where the money is. And you know where it is. The money is in public affairs and its in advertising." I said, "They have all the money. They do everything they want. I see things they do. You know things they do. People in the community tell me they do things. They see advertisements in the paper. And why do they have advertising in the paper for a monopoly utility? They don't need all of that. They have plenty of money and they can send me." And I think in the interest of good will he asked, "Are you serious?" I said, "Yes, I'm very serious." He said, "I'll have to check, I can't do that." So he called a couple of places and I don't know what they said, but he said to me, "Lloyd, this is going to be more than you think." I said, "No it's not going to be more than I think. It's going to be up to you or else I'll have to go up there." Then after he became somewhat flustered I said, "Well, don't worry about it. I'll stay here because I understand that I get transportation, but have no place to stay. I don't want to sleep in the park."

You see Blacks from all over the nation wanted to go when Reverend King was killed. We wanted good representation. So then he said to me, "Well do you think that we should let people off for his funeral? You know we let them off for the presidents." I said, "Yes, but Kennedy was the President and they declared a holiday for that day. Did they declared a holiday for Martin

Luther King?" He said, "No. No holiday." I said, "Well follow the rule."

That's one thing that whenever there was a question in my mind with management or with my fellow employees, I always said let's follow the rules. Then if we follow the rules, we don't normally get into too much trouble. There may be someone who will say well we could have used better judgement, but that's a judgement call. I said, "But if we follow the rules, we have to use good judgement as supervisors and so forth. What's the rule for being off?" He said, "You can be off if you are sick or if your supervisor has granted vacation time after you have requested it, or you can be off no pay." I said, "Well that's simple then, that's the rule. You can't let these people off sick to be off for Martin Luther King's funeral and if they didn't request vacation, you normally want a request in advance, but let's face it. This funeral is going to be a big thing and I would venture to say, the phones will be rather quiet that day. But the clerks who are in these offices, if they say that they've got a vacation day coming, then I am willing to wager that there won't be too much telephone activity, it will mean that people will be sitting around the telephones, there won't be much for them to do. You won't lose if they have legitimate vacations, let them have the vacation day and for those people who want to really make the sacrifice, take no pay, I say make it no pay, but with no penalties."

Normally no pay means a little penalty. If it's not stated, in effect it's there. Why is this no pay? But then I would say

no pay, Martin Luther King, but no penalty attached to the fact that they made a request. I said, "I don't think you'll have any problem." He said, "Are you going to be here? Are you going to take off?" I said, "Well you said I can't go to Alabama." He just laughed about that because I started laughing then. Then he said, "Lloyd, I don't want to get too involved in this part." He began to ask me what we could do to better relationships between white and Black. I said, "Really, you don't have to do anything. What people have to do, particularly those people who have a Judeo-Christian background is to remember the philosophy of their particular religion and practice the religion. And both religions basically say to treat others as you'd have them treat you. And basically that's all I see you have to do. But what that means, though, you cannot allow a situation to develop where because so and so is Black the other person is white, that you abuse that person," and I cited several specifics that I knew existed, and I said, "I know that white men in America are concerned about Black men after white women, that's kind of a thing from the south, from slavery," and I said, "I want to tell you, I don't want any. I've got a Black woman at home, I've got a black son. The average person's working here, that's all they want and they don't really want too much of the social thing. They're not asking for all of that, but they want an equitable opportunity to advance." I said, "That's what I want. If I'm number one on the list, I think I should be given a fair shake at it. Better opportunity. Don't go to number ten like they've done in

this place for all these years." Because that's what they used to do.

When I found out about the time I mentioned they said I had turned down jobs. What they had done in those days was say, "Well he refused." John Doe was picked for the assignment. I said, "All of that is unfair. Those are the kinds of things, just basic fairness. If you want to be friendly to me, that's fine. If you don't want to, that's fine too, but don't make your decisions based on the fact that somebody's going to say you're a 'Nigger lover'." And I used that word too when talking.

The one thing I must say, that man's excellent. I still hold him in high esteem. He and I would be very serious talking about this race thing because I felt that somebody in the power structure should know more about what was happening in the Department. They already knew. Everybody knew. Because all the people I talked to from the time I was a meter reader knew.

**NELSON:** Does that man's name somebody you'd give or you'd prefer not to give that name?

**HERBS:** I hold Mr. Zakaryan, I've given you the name, in the highest esteem.

**NELSON:** Ted?

**HERBS:** Ted. I hold him in the highest esteem. My mother met him at the Ice Follies, or whatever we were, we were altogether on

Mother's Day at the Ice Capades or Ice Follies, I don't know which one it was at the sports arena so my mother met him, met his wife, and I met him and his wife and I hold his children in high esteem. I had, I would say, the best discussion about this problem with him and I feel saddened at times and probably I was a little bit too strong in my statements to him because I was somewhat emotional. But it was through Ted that I became a member of the Speaker's Club because he and Mr. Becker recommended me.

**NELSON:** Manny Becker?

**HERBS:** Manny Becker was the City Attorney attached to the Commercial Division and I became very friendly through Special Collections with Becker and Mr. Zakaryan and they both recommended me for the Speaker's Club.

**TAPE NUMBER: 4, SIDE ONE**

**LLOYD A. HERBS**

**NELSON:** Okay Lloyd, we're talking about you'd become a Principal Meter Reader now. Going back, was that going back? This is the third time. You're a reader then a Senior Meter Reader and a ...

**HERBS:** That job was very good too. I felt that as a Principle Meter Reader, I would have been happy to stay there until I retired. I was reevaluating my goals and aspirations. I had failed to reach the pinnacle that I had set for myself or the goals that I had set for myself which were not part of Water and Power. These goals, my goals were to become an effective real estate broker. Make money and to have a lot of property and so forth and to be held in high esteem in the community.

Now being held in high esteem in the community, I remember when I was a meter reader one of the things McDonough said to me, "Lloyd you should leave Water and Power and you should work with the community." I said, "I'm working with the community now. I have a job and that's what everybody in every community wants. They want to have a job that they enjoy with an opportunity to advance within the system wherever they may be." He said, "Well I understand, but this place is.." He was telling me more or

less, that I shouldn't look for too much from Water and Power, but I still had made it my sights on - you've made a comment on it earlier you know, about if you get in one of these niches and you feel that whether you'll advance wherever you can as long as you are half way enjoy the assignment and you look for a better assignment as you move along. And that's basically what I'd probably do. Mr. McDonough was ill when I became the Principle Meter Reader.

One day, the telephone rang and Kenny Fuller, who was a clerk in there said, "Mrs. McDonough wants to talk to you." Mrs. McDonough said to me while on the phone, she had seen my picture in one of the magazines and I don't know whether it was the Intake or Owl. She evidently, as a retiree's wife, received some of that material and she said, " Mr. McDonough would have been proud of you." And she began crying on the phone. I got a little sad too because she said, "Mr. McDonough would come home and tell me what he wanted to do for you, but he couldn't do it." I said, "Mrs. McDonough, I understand. Nice of you to call me and tell me. I appreciate it. I said things have changed considerably I realize. Further than that, I'm glad you told me about Mr. McDonough because I always wanted him to see me when I received this assignment."

However, most of the other supervisors and executives and whatever they were, chiefs, all came to me and apologized for any negative actions which had developed. They said that they would have done certain things, but they felt it would go against the grain of management and might cause a problem as far as my fellow

workers. One man told me that he didn't know whether I could get along, he said when he found out I could get along with people, he said, "I would have appointed you to a certain assignment." I said, "Well, then it's water under the bridge now."

The reason I said all this is that when I got that job, it gave me a certain amount of prestige within the Department and I had already begun to meet people and know people and so I was somewhat satisfied. I gave serious consideration, went back to school again in working towards a degree. But I didn't follow that. Then someone said to me, "Well there's going to be some other openings as Chief Clerk, but they had changed the name I think. But anyway I took that exam and then I was appointed Chief Clerk. (Commercial Manager). I was placed in charge of Metropolitan Branch Offices and that was the most ironic appointment that they could have made. When I was a meter reader and been on senior clerk list, other meter readers had taken senior clerk and got to go to branch offices. They told me they couldn't hire a Black for branch offices.

Once I was told an opening was at the Hollywood office and they couldn't employ me because I was colored and this was a white area. I said, "Well I worked that area. I've worked all over and I don't have any problems." They said, "Well we can't appoint you because you're colored. I said, "Oh, okay." I didn't become antagonistic, but I asked a question. I said, "You have an office on Central Avenue." That was the hub of the Black culture at that time. I said, "You have an office in Watts. You have an office in Green Meadows."

Green Meadows was 111th and Main and was kind of the dividing line of whites and Blacks in the south area where Caucasians lived west of Main. So I said I'll eliminate Green Meadows. But in those two offices, preponderance of Blacks and Hispanics, and I see you don't have any Blacks - I think we used the word colored then or Negro, I don't recall, and they told me that the Blacks didn't want Black. I said, "Well that's a slave psychology that those people had put into them that Blacks couldn't serve them in certain capacities. You best change it." I remember I spoke very strongly, but still politely to the person who made that comment and he later became a good friend of mine. I said, "You'd better give that a second thought because the day is going to come. I hate to see it, but some changes take place with force, and I certainly am not a forceful man. I'm not militant. We have to recognize that this is what happens." He said, "Well I don't know anything about that, but I know they say they don't want them." I said, "Well I'm sorry that you feel that way."

The reason I mentioned that is because now I'm in charge of a branch office and have never worked in a branch office. When I went to the branch office, they were all very cooperative because they had begun to hire negroes now in these various positions and the white people were friendly to me. I think my relationship with those supervisors of each office was excellent during that period. But I only had that job for a short time. I was given a permanent assignment as Commercial Manager in the Valley. They said to get the permanent appointment, I'd have to go to the Valley and I would be in charge of credit and collection. I had

a good background in collections, not too much in credit, but a great deal in collections. I said, "I don't want to go to the Valley. I live seven or eight miles from my house to the General Office Building and to the Valley office from my house it's 28 miles. I think it's unfair that you assign me to the Valley." They came to me and said, "It's going to be different and you are going to appreciate the fact you got this opportunity." And they were right.

I went to the Valley, Dick. I met many people I just knew casually and many people who were very helpful to me and I learned about the credit and collection position procedures and also I should mention that at that same time John Fashing and Jim Derry, had moved up considerably. Jim was an executive and John was an executive in charge of the Valley District. John Fashing was there when Mr. Winard came to the Department. So I met a lot of old friends and new friends and learned more about the system and learned more about the politics of the organization structure and the personnel in the structure. At this time things were happening in the Valley and I think that is why I was placed there...Herman Davis was there at the same time. You heard of Herman Davis? Herman Davis later became director.

But then another thing happened during that time, no before that. Oh before that, before I was transferred out there or assigned there, I became a member of the speaker's club about 1968 when I was in charge of meter reading and that's when I met people

in public affairs and more people in management, met all kinds of people and I recall they asked me, "What is it that Blacks are looking for or what do they want?" I said, "They don't want anything special, they want an equitable opportunity to advance, to move ahead."

**NELSON:** Were you the first Black in the Speaker's Club that you know of?

**HERBS:** Well, I understand there was one other. He was a guard, (Arnold Martin), and he was assigned to drive Mr. Nelson. He played golf, he was a good golfer, he was very sociable. He had a nice personality.

**NELSON:** Okay so anyway ...

**HERBS:** But I was the first Black under the normal procedure. In fact, since you asked that question, I think the interview I had for the Speaker's Club was as intensive as any exam that I had at civil service with the exception of the one for senior meter reader where the man asked about the... The membership committee didn't raise any racial questions.

But I had developed what they called a personality where some people looked at me as a minister because in answering their questions, I would just talk about what is right or wrong and the religious philosophical implications of whatever they may be doing. That was the approach I was using so they had begun to call me "Reverend." So when I went to this interview for the Speaker's Club, they asked me if I drank. I said, "I take a drink." And they asked me something about my relationship with women. I said, "Well I'm married and I have a good family life and I'm not out chasing." See, the Speaker's Club didn't have any women in there at the time. I joined the Speaker's Club in 1968 I believe. Sometimes there were social gatherings where they would have women there, you know.

I remember the first party that we went to, I think it was in Santa Monica, some ballroom out there or hotel. I'm not a dancer. I met my wife at the YMCA 28th Street branch, the only YMCA where Blacks could attend in 1941 and in the 30's, but that's where I met her in 1940 and we got married in 1941. So when we go to a dance I just dance once or twice with my wife and that's all. I don't dance with my sister-in-law, or with my sister that much. At this Speaker's Club Christmas party after Faylece and I had danced once or twice, a fellow came to our table. We were the only Black couple there and the fellow said, "Lloyd, would you mind if I danced with your wife?" I said, "You have heard she likes to dance, but I don't like to dance." So they danced maybe a couple of times, I don't recall specifically, but his wife came

and asked me to dance and I told her that I was not a dancer. We danced and she commented that she thought I was a good dancer.

That's the first time that I went to something social for the Speaker's Club. But during their interview of me, they asked about this drinking question and I said, "I'll take a drink, but I don't like some of the language." I thought I'd throw this in. "I see people in positions of power and authority who use language that I was never trained to use, but it doesn't mean I'm a minister and it doesn't mean I never use some of those words, but there are certain times I don't think you say things like that." They said, "Oh." They questioned me a little further on that. I'm talking about the interview, you know, for the Speaker's Club. But anyway it worked out alright. I was admitted to the Speaker's Club.

In my three minute speech I just spoke in general about man's relationship to man or something like that. I don't remember exactly what it was, but I remember my first official eight minute speech. My subject was, "Who Am I." I remember in my introduction I told them something to the effect that I'm Lloyd Herbs and some of you may not know who that fella is. You may say, "I've seen that colored fellow," and I went into the race issue very strongly and I mentioned the history of Blacks in America, slave trade as perpetrated by the English Colonists and their adventures in Africa and I also blamed the African chiefs. I told them I was the grandson of an African chief and I hold him responsible too, for the episode of slavery that existed in the United States. I said, "Slavery is not new. It has existed all

over various parts of the world." That's the kind of speech I gave. So some of them came to me and said, "That was an excellent speech. You castigated everybody but you also castigated yourself." Many things that happen to an individual are their own fault. Not all of it. So it was along those lines that I made my speech at that time and I use that as my approach in relationships ever since that episode at the shipyard during the war time. At Army Air Force I didn't have any problem.

**NELSON:** You were very successful as a speaker, too.

**HERBS:** I did fairly well, yes. I take no credit for any ....

**NELSON:** I had heard that on many occasions, that when you were a speaker other speakers would call in sick and not give their speeches because you were always..there were four or five in the Speaker's Club who were kind of "shoe-ins," they had a gift, Jerry Jones, Charles Robinson, yourself.

**HERBS:** Well I heard about all that. There were several others that are like that. Jim Derry developed that kind of aptitude. Robby ... oh Jerry Jones was the greatest. You know Robby's been sick. I don't know if you knew about that.

**NELSON:** I heard that from John Gerster.

**HERBS:** Oh you did. You know about it. I talked to him a couple of weeks ago. I went to the hospital to see him and he had just gone home so I called him right away. But he has been hired as a senior advisor also and he is with that group.

**NELSON:** Okay, you're a Principle Meter Reader and then where?

**HERBS:** Oh, I mentioned I went to the Valley, you know, on this assignment. I went first to the branch offices then went to the Valley and while I was in the Valley, I was in the Speaker's Club and it was during this period that Mr. Robert Phillips became somewhat discouraged about the strike that we'd had at the Department and he retired rather quickly as I recall because I had to be in the building that day and I heard the announcement in the GOB and I called right away and told the folks in the Valley, that Mr. Phillips had retired. It was so quick. It wasn't a regular retirement thing. The commissioners announced that Mr. Carl Tamaki had been selected as the interim general manager with the understanding that he was not to seek the permanent assignment or something to that effect. But while he was the interim general manager, Pat Nagle became a member of the Board of Water and Power Commissioners.

**NELSON:** Patricia Nagel?

**HERBS:** Pat Nagel? Yes, I think that's who it was. Her concern was that the women were not members of the Speaker's Club and she

was told that there was a women's speaker's club. She said, "Yes, but the people in the power structure are in the Speaker's Club." So the Board asked Mr. Tamaki about the Speaker's Club, he was a member, and asked why they didn't have women in it. I became President of the Speaker's Club during this year. As President of the Speaker's Club, the Board called me before them at a regular meeting to explain the reason there were no women in. I said, "I don't know. However, the constitution specifically states that male employees of the Department or something to that effect, so that cut out the women. They have their own Speaker's Club."

Do you feel that the Speaker's Club should be prejudiced towards women? I said, "You can look at me and tell that I'd believe that all peoples should have fair opportunities and equitable treatment whether they be male or female, Black or white, blue or green and something to that effect." They said, "What we want you to do is to take the word back to the Speaker's Club that they should change the constitution." I went back to the Speaker's Club and they said they wouldn't change the constitution and I remember that, I'm not going to mention any names who were opposed to it, but I think management knew who they were. I said, "I think it's very important that the Speaker's Club give everyone an opportunity for admittance." Men were strongly against it. I also found out there were a lot of women opposed to it. They asked, "Why do women want to get in there anyway?"

Pat Nagel said that if they feel they don't want to change it, they're not running the DWP. She said some of the benefits

they receive, such as trips and other perks were going to be cut out because the Department is paying for those things. Everybody should get a chance.

Well during my administration they didn't change, but they changed the next year because they found out that things really did change as far as the Speaker's Club. Then several other changes took place over a period of time.

**NELSON:** I believe that next year was under Tom Trainer.

**HERBS:** Trainer was next. Trainer followed me.

**NELSON:** I think he saw the first female come in during that year who might have been Judy Davidson. I don't know, it might have been another.

**HERBS:** Yes. But anyway there was another lady, Judy Davis. Oh, and she was "black balled" I'll never forget that. Somebody black balled her. I said, "That was unfair." Then I remember something else. There was a man who had been black balled, a Black man, but then finally he was admitted. Things did change in Speaker's Club - they later admitted women and later a woman became president and a woman has held every office within the organization over a period of time. I have noticed that top management people come speak to the membership now, as they were before.

I personally had a good relationship with Mr. (Louis) Winnard, but I heard things from City Hall and from in the department about this and that, but I ignored all of them. That didn't mean anything to me because I didn't go out socially with him, but I heard a lot of things about him socially and so forth and I said, "Well I don't have anything to do with that."

Then I heard he had an unfortunate incident after his wife came here. His son was killed in a motorcycle accident, if I remember, just before he left the Department.

**NELSON:** When did you come back from the Valley?

**HERBS:** About January 1977, I was assigned to customer relations as the assistant to Jack Lemon. I enjoyed working with people and discussing their problems. I seemed to have a good relationship with everybody even in the most adverse circumstances.

There was one complaint that sometimes I talk too much, but I was appointed an exec. and put into a job that I didn't feel I deserved. Have you heard of Mr. Parsley? He was the one who was involved in the interface between Management Information Services (M.I.S.) and the Commercial Division. I didn't feel that I had done enough studying in the area of computers, so I had to depend on my personnel, they were very supportive. I had even given serious consideration to call Mr. Parsley before he died and when I saw him later, I told him. He said, "Oh you could have called me anytime, Lloyd, but I didn't want to call you and interfere with your operation." I depended upon the people who I was

associated with there and I also went to MIS and reviewed their operation in the basement and the second floor. I tried to learn as much as I could about computers. I tried to learn more about changes that were taking place in the Department and other utilities. I was reading all the materials and books they had in Water and Power. That was really all I was doing. I was reading on this material and as far as the work, I was just delegating it to the people in the unit that I knew who could do it. I didn't really know what they were doing. Setting up these programs. I went to meetings between Commercial and MIS. I felt a little bit lost. Both these groups were supportive to me. Then when the opening came, Jack Lemmon went to the Valley or some place and they appointed me to Customer Relations Executive.

**NELSON:** You went back as the ...

**HERBS:** I went back as the Commercial Executive - Customer Relations. I enjoyed the customer relations office better. Mr. Zakaryan was the first customer relations executive. John Fashing became the second customer relations executive eventually.

I know that the customers that went up to the general manager were then sent down to see Mr. Herbs. I had a good rapport there with all the people and it was there that I decided, after watching the interplay in the department, particularly in the two divisions. You see after Winnard made the decision about an assistant general manager, Shelton Bishop and Jim Derry sued the Department. Mr. Bishop said he had not been given an opportunity

to present an application. I was questioned as to why I didn't take the Commercial Director exam and I said, "I didn't want to be the director because I am getting older now. Ten years ago or so, it would have been fine, but at this stage of the game, I'm not interested."

**NELSON:** You mentioned the two divisions. This is the splitting of the old commercial division into commercial and customer services as it's organized now?

**HERBS:** Yes, that's splitting in that division. Other divisions had been split and changed too. It's been done several times, but this was the most drastic cut as far as commercial division was concerned. As far as Mr. Sheldon Bishop, I understand that his case was settled out of court and certain things happened that he's not supposed to discuss and nobody has ever discussed them with me, but through the grapevine you hear all these.

I understand that later Jim Derry got to be head of the other division which was customer service. He's done an excellent job. He's on TV all the time. Faylece is also proud of him. He's just about our son's age. John Fashing is younger I think. But it's amazing. John wouldn't have been at water and power if it hadn't of been for Jim. Jim told him about this program that they had and he said, "You graduated within the last year and you're a certain level, so you'd be eligible to be a trainee." So that's the reason John came to it. John was working for some merchandising firm. He came to water and power and did very well.

**NELSON:** So you continued on out of that and continued on as customer relations?

**HERBS:** Oh yes. I stayed there until I retired. Formerly, mandatory retirement was 65. They had a list as to the date employees would actually retire. So my retirement date would have been at the end of August, 1985 so psychologically that was in my mind.

When they gave this commercial director exam, I hadn't been doing any studying and later as people told me certain things would have happened, it could have been me instead of Herman Davis, but I said, "I'm not in on any of that. I did my job and I did it my way and that's the basis and so I'm going to retire." So I officially retired February 1, 1985 from the Department of Water and Power and under mandatory retirement it would have been the end of August, 1985.

**NELSON:** Of course, that mandatory retirement had been overturned.

**HERBS:** Yes, it had been overturned by then, but it was still in my mind.

**NELSON:** Sure. You had your mind set.

**HERBS:** Yes, I had my mind set. Sometimes I wish I had stayed longer then other times I say it was just as well that I did leave because I wasn't prepared to become involved in any kind of

dispute about politics of the division. On the outside of the department I'd defend the department in the community. That's the reason I enjoy this senior advisor job. I have defended the Department in it's entire history as far as the community is concerned, but I admit all of the faults that I am aware of. I admit that there were problems, but I say the problems that I am aware of, were actually a reflection of the community at large during the periods in question. I say I know they were prejudiced to me. I know that they didn't give me a fair chance earlier, but also I know that there were some people who were good to me in the Department and in the community.

When you do certain things, you pay a price. And so for Black people who were too outspoken, you paid a price. They cut you off. The criticism that has mainly been directed to me by Blacks has been that I was too much of a conformist and that I was not sufficiently assertive to point out that Blacks needed rare opportunity in the Department. What they didn't know, what the Blacks didn't know is that I chose my time and place for presenting my message to the people. I felt that it would be of no value to me to be so outspoken to say that Water and Power's no good, Water and Power is this, without considering the positive aspects, and then be put out on a limb and then cut off. Because of what I found in most of these things is that when you are outspoken, you can become a hero which you can also become a martyr and it was not my intent in raising a family in this society, to become a martyr. I never was martyr conscious, I guess. I was kind of outspoken because I recall in grammar school

I failed the sixth grade, A 6th they use to call it then, they didn't let me go to the junior high school because they said I was a Bolshevik. I said, "A Bolshevik." I didn't even know what the word meant then. But then I realized that the reason was that I was too outspoken and asked too many questions. It doesn't pay to be too outspoken in certain things. Of course, as far as the failure was concern, I had skipped a couple of grades before so it put me back with another class that I'd been with before so it didn't make any trouble, in fact it worked out better in the long run. I graduated in the summer rather than the winter.

I have been accused in the community, and outside of Water and Power that I should have been more militant, more outspoken, but I found out that always it was better to go and talk to John Doe alone. And I said it was the same rule that you follow in supervision that when you reprimand, you reprimand in private. You commend in public. I said, "In my relationships with people, that's the best way." Now even in my church, I've been an Episcopalian all my life and I'm married to a Roman Catholic, but the Episcopalians became angry with me because I was going to marry a Roman Catholic. They said I should have married a local church girl. I felt that this is what I wanted to do and in talking to the priest in the church, I told him certain things direct. Well that created a little feeling and so I found that it's always better to use what some people call is some kind of psychology when you are working with people and that's basically what I've done. Now I've become a devil's advocate so I say things that I possibly shouldn't say. And that's in the church and in the community and in the fraternal organizations. I speak

up now because I have no fear now. There is nothing they can do to me and what they do to me and what they can do will make no difference.

In the church, I give to this church. My fraternity, I give to my fraternity. I give to the Rotary. I give to these groups. They don't give me money, but I give what I can, but I've got a right to say what I don't like. So one priest said, "You're not the devil's advocate, Lloyd. You're the devil."

**TAPE NUMBER: 4, SIDE TWO**

**LLOYD A. HERBS**

**NELSON:** Lloyd, in looking back over a career that was 38 years, your impressions of our general managers or management that you served with. Which ones impressed you and in what ways were you impressed?

**HERBS:** As I look back, I would say that the first one to impress me was Mr. Samuel Nelson because of his general spirit of comradery.

**NELSON:** Humanity.

**HERBS:** Humanity is a good term - that he had and seeming to me, towards all employees and he didn't pick on me because I was Black or whatever, but he just seemed to be that way towards anybody. During those days the reason I remember him because people held meter readers in low esteem. Particularly the engineers and top people upstairs. They didn't think much of meter reading. They didn't think much of commercial division either even though some of the commercial people thought that they were semi-Gods. But I found out that there were people in other divisions that didn't

think much of them at all. But the commercial division's claim to fame was they brought in all the money, they brought in the revenue.

**NELSON:** Not an unimportant thing.

**HERBS:** Not unimportant. That is correct. On that basis they built themselves up to be bigger than they were possibly. The man who was general manager when I started, I think, was a man named Morris. I think he was the one. I think he may have been respected. I also remember one general manager who had a doctorate.

**NELSON:** Kanouse?

**HERBS:** Dr. Kanouse. I also remember Samuel Morris.

**NELSON:** Samuel Morris.

**HERBS:** Yes. Because I get his name mixed up with Samuel B. Nelson sometimes, but Morris, I think, came from the outside. There wasn't too much talk about that, but I understood there were some questions about the fact that he was brought in from the outside and there were reasons why which I didn't know about. The only thing I knew about Water and Power when I first started was that it was supposed to be one of the most prejudiced departments in the City of Los Angeles. That I'd heard for a long period. I

heard that in the community. Then when I got there I found that it was basically the truth, but there were nice people, good people working for the Department.

And as far as the people who made the greatest impression as far as management, I would say Mr. McDonough, who was my supervisor in meter reading, made a good impression. I thought he was very effective and I thought that some of the others were very good. One thing I didn't like in Commercial Division, there were some people who had the tendency to use a lot of profanity for what seemed like no valid reason. They used it for emphasis and they would say, "You know this or that," and then there would be an expletive.

As far as my overall reflection of all these people is basically good, overall. What I really think about is myself and the community and the Department. As I've said many times, the Department was no different than the community but they emphasized certain negative aspects of the community and some of those conservative aspects might have seemed to have been prejudiced, which some of them were, but that was still the attitude in the total community in which we lived and so I think of it like that. The only thing that I think that I may have done was by trying to live, not a saintly life, by no means was I a saint, but I will say this, thinking about the Department, I tried to follow every rule that the Department had and I tried to make sure those who were under my direction did the same things. There would be those who would say that I was too much of a book man in that respect, but I felt that it was in the best interest of all concerned.

I had a good rapport with Mr. Louis Winnard. The man that impressed me at that stage of the game, before Mr. Winnard got the job, was Mr. Carl Tamaki. I had an opportunity to talk with Mr. Tamaki and I remember when we were talking about certain things -- there was a strike on and I'm not a strong union man, but I recognized the reason for the development of the union movement and I told some of the management people at the Department and there was somebody sitting there who was an union representative, I didn't wish to offend either one, but I thought it would be best to let these people know that I wasn't personally a union...because I'd seen the unions do things, again this a reflection of the kind of society in which they were a part, but I said, "Water and Power wouldn't need a union if everybody had conducted themselves in a positive, fair way." These union people would have had no valid reason to have employees paying something out of their check to be a member of the union. I said, "I felt satisfied, but a few others didn't for one reason or another." And this party said to me -- and he later became one of the assistants to the general manager or something, not in commercial and he indicated that there was no need for unions. I said, "Well, they play a part even though I am not a strong supporter of the union movement." The union movement, to my way of thinking, had been more prejudiced than many facets of our society. They've changed because of John L. Lewis, CIO, and Harry Bridges and the longshoremen. The AFL or Craft Unions and Captains of Industry played race against race. Whenever union people went on strike, they hired a lot of Black people to replace

them. It's not a good thing in the union world for a person to take the place of a union worker who is on strike. So Blacks got a bad name for that, but at the same time these unions didn't let blacks in them. It was only after the war, World War II during the war, when Mr. Roosevelt said that in order to get these jobs where it required union membership, they'd have to let blacks into the unions or before that. I happened to get into a carpenter, my father was a carpenter and I got into a carpenter's union.

But the boilermakers didn't allow Blacks so they set up a separate guild for Black water members. So all I'm saying is that since my background, my feelings about unions wasn't so good, I didn't have that strong feeling for supporting IBEW or anything like that, but I decided again, because it was important to maintain a relationship with them. And you have to be able to communicate with these people and so that's what I tried to suggest to everyone. As far as top management, I told them the same thing. Mr. Tamaki and I talked about it because he started with the Department approximately the same time as I did only he was an engineer when he started. I think he went to Cal, I don't recall, but he started at the Department at that time the only good "Jap" was a dead "Jap" and "Niggers" weren't allowed. That's the way they had it. Water and Power was emphatic, you might say, in its feeling about those two things.

But there's one thing that Tamaki and I talked about. He said people had to learn irrespective, to attempt to strive in spite of adversity. I said, "I certainly agreed and this is what my father told me when there was no opportunity to get a job as a

school teacher." I never had a black school teacher until maybe in the twelfth grade. People were surprised when I became a meter reader. They said, "Hey they hired you as a meter reader?" I remember Ebony, you may have heard of Ebony. An Ebony representative talked to me and took my picture in 1947. Now that would be no big deal now because they show pictures of blacks who have achieved preeminence in the business, political, and other worlds. But at that time just for a Black person to get to be a meter reader was something and I felt that I could not let anyone down including myself and family.

**NELSON:** What do you think was the basis for this change in policy that allowed you to become a meter reader in 1947? Was it World War II and more integration then?

**HERBS:** World War II I think. You see there was no affirmative action then and I think that the war itself created some change Black people, after each war from the time of the revolution, have come back and some have not come back. Some had given their lives and yet they are told, "You go back to that old spot." And there have been several riots where troops have resisted the prejudices that still existed when they returned home.

I think President Bush the other day, I think it was yesterday, I don't recall, but he made some comment on that, that will have to stop when these people come back from the service they've got to be given equitable opportunity. I think, I personally feel the Department, as well as the United States, has

made tremendous changes socially for the benefit of the economically deprived and for the benefit of Black people and all people. Now I know it can't be equitable and I also know that when all Caucasians were in charge of Water and Power, there was still splits there and Water and Power, from what I've learned with my association with people, there was one time when Masons were in power and they were somewhat against Catholics and then when Catholics got involved, they were kind of against Masons. This is not talked about, but it was done.

So naturally when the Black guy came, he's automatically on the outside, but after pressures exerted political, economic, the reason Water and Power hired a black man in the Central Avenue office back in the 30's because a man named Leon Washington had said, "Don't buy where you can't work." The business places on Central Avenue didn't hire Blacks even though Blacks were in their neighborhood Water and Power being one of them. But they hired Welcome Watson, who was an elevator operator, had him as a clerk in the office, but he never became a clerk actually, he was always an elevator operator, but he did clerical work.

**NELSON:** So do I understand, you believe that there's been a positive move by the City and by the Department during your career?

**HERBS:** I think there's been a positive move by the total society to change and I recognize that there are those in society who feel it was wrong to make any changes. But by the same token I know

that perfection on Earth has never yet been achieved by man and if they were all Black, all Moslems, all Christians, Jewish, there'd still be no perfection in any one of the groups.

There'd be turmoil and I think of one man who told me at Water and Power when I was a meter reader that Catholics in some parts of Ireland are treated worse than blacks in Mississippi." I said, "Oh no, don't give me that." He said, "That's the way it is. They can get certain jobs, but in that area, if you're Catholic, you cannot get the top jobs." That's the way he put it. And it may be just the reverse in the other sections because of Catholics and the Protestants.

And I mentioned to one fellow on St. Patrick's Day and I said I don't know who St. Patrick was. I heard he ran the snakes out of Ireland and all of that, but I don't give much credence to that, but I said, "I think that I'm going to wear the orange instead of the green." And they were two Irish Catholics and they said, "Oh no Lloyd, for Lord's sake, God's sake, don't do that." I said, "Well what's the difference? I believe in both of them. Good Protestants, good Catholics, good Moslems and good Protestant Christians." And I'd still go back to what I said to Mr. Zakaryan when we had our talks about the philosophy of man. If the Christians and the Moslems and the Jews right now, if they followed some of the positive threads that run through all of these religions, it would be a better world to live in. Each religion has followers who have developed certain attributes that are somewhat contrary to the fundamental teaching and that's where

we have a little problem or misinterpretation of the fundamental teaching. Misinterpretation is the problem.

And the Christian church is the best example of that. We have to have all these Christian churches and if I were coming here from Mars today and was asked to decide as to whether I should be a Jew, Christian, or Moslem, well let's assume I decide to be a Christian. But then which sect in Christianity would I choose? Because they talk about each other. I had people coming to my door, evangelists, and I understand the need for evangelism in the church, and they tell me, "Well you know we have the way, the truth, and the light. Now which way is right? This is the way," and he tries to explain, but that's his interpretation and he or she may be very sincere, but it's part of the problem.

There are Black people in America who feel that Blacks have been eternally condemned in the United States. There are white people who feel that Blacks have gotten too much opportunity and there are other white people who can see both sides to it. But I've talked to Blacks and a few are very bitter about certain things, but I say, "Well you haven't seen anything. Suppose it had been fifty years ago or twenty years ago? Whatever the time frame might have been." There is a need for man, particularly in the Christian church, to recognize the concepts that he's learned in the church, to love your neighbor as yourself. It comes down to that and the book says that your neighbor is all mankind not just the people who live next door to me over there. At first they say, "Love the Lord their God with all their hearts, soul and mind." This is the first of the great commandments the second is

like unto it. "Love your neighbor as yourself." And that's what Christ said when he gives you the key. But the key that he talked about it was how you live, how you act and how you live. He told the Jews when they wanted to condemn Him for doing certain good things on the Sabbath. He let them know that this good had to be done and that was their responsibility.

The law is important, but it's your relationship to man that is important and your relationship to God. But in the name of God people raise more hell than they need to. That's why there are crusades. Crusades were against the Moslems and some of the Moslems don't forget it. They haven't forgotten certain things. Jews and the Christians, some Christians have never forgotten that Jews allegedly crucified the Christ and then some Christians have negative feelings against Moslems and so forth and you can take it and see, if you take the negative, you can go to the most extreme situation.

That's like the church, Christian church particularly now. They were against this war, and I know not to get into all that, but I was mentioning it, because when you talk about war only God is supposed to have told the Jewish people in the Old Testament of when to wage war and I think man made that up. People made all that up. I've gotten very cynical about what God tells people and if God spoke to men then, he can speak to men now so he can speak to you and me and maybe sometimes you and I don't really listen to what God says if he says it. We listen to what we've got in our own mind and consciousness and like that so the church leaders in America all opposed the war, but Bush, because he felt that based

on American and what America stands for, it was his responsibility to make sure that this man, Hussein, whatever his name is, that he get out of Kuwait, but let's face it. Every time some evil is done, the United States can't get in there and change it or correct it.

I talked to a man who, when I first started reading meters who said, "Water and Power was Communist, Socialist. And it shouldn't be. The true capitalist in American should recognize Water and Power should be privately owned." Should not be owned by the government. But, of course what's happening now, the government for the distribution of water and the distribution of electricity, has realized that it's going to have to step in and take great steps or more action in order to effectively distribute these things because there are certain shortages that have developed and certain problems that have developed in the ecology of the world we live in.

So what it means is that more government is going to develop, only God can say, where there's going to be more private enterprise. I don't know the answers to all of that. You didn't ask me all those questions, but I just got to thinking about them and I think about Water and Power because I think about our relationship with Metropolitan Water District and with other water and electrical projects, all of these things and the fact that we get water a long distance away and bring it here and people feel we have an automatic right to it. Maybe those people are right up there in the hills and the eastern slopes of the Sierras when they say that's their water.

But water and oil now, they've always created war. Water has always created a problem throughout the history of man. I live here and I dam up the water that's flowing in so that man down there can't get it. He comes and blows down my dam and kills me, kills my wife and takes my crops or whatever. These problems we face are really eternal.

**NELSON:** Never ending story?

**HERBS:** Never ending story and no different today than it was then.

**NELSON:** Thank you very much Lloyd. It's been a pleasure.