

Bertram T. Leslie

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Interviewer Donna Coombs-Montrose

Camera Don Bouzek

Q: Not Paul?

BL: How that comes, that name Paul was from back home. Everybody in the cabin had a nickname. Due to the fact that I was good in scripture, my older sister gave me that name, and that named stayed. But for business purposes like this, I use Bertram Leslie.

Q: When did you come to Canada?

BL: My name is Bertram Leslie. I arrived in Edmonton, Alberta on January 24th, 1967.

Q: Where did you come from?

BL: I came from the island of Barbados.

Q: Were you a teenager at this point?

BL: According to what is given to us in the Caribbean, when you start to wear your long pants, you're an adult. So I would say I was an adult. I was over the teen years, a young adult.

Q: Did you come with family?

BL: No, I arrived here by myself. In other words, alone, sorry.

Q: Did you come directly to Edmonton from Barbados?

BL: Yeah, that's according to how it was presented to me regarding tradesmen, that Alberta needs tradesmen. I came straight from the Caribbean here in Edmonton.

Q: Who presented that to you? Was it friends?

BL: Yes. Due to the workplace in Barbados, I had a friend that migrated to Toronto. We kept in very close contact of communication, and the last time I heard from him he explained that he could send me an application form to apply to come to Canada. So I waited, the forms came, I filled them out and mailed them on, and within six months I got a letter in the mail stating that there will be a recruiter coming down to Barbados on-I can't remember the date-but you will be interviewed. The interview is not to say that you will be going to Canada next week. All she presented to me was that she's only here to identify that I am Bertram T. Leslie and she would cover me on a few areas of Canada: what to expect and what to prepare for, especially winter, that you might not dream of. Once all of that was said, she just returned back with my information and she said, well, just wait. One or the other. You could get a letter stating that you're not accepted, or you could get a letter that you're accepted. So, in the meantime, I continued to work in my field as a heavy duty mechanic. From there, after eight months I got this mail and I opened it and read the content top to bottom. It was my visa, the admission that Canada accepted my application. All I had to do was book my flight. You knew where you'd be going, and to prepare for that setting. So, within three weeks, I was able to collect the money for the fare on behalf of my dad. I booked a passage and I took off.

Q: Were you excited?

BL: Well you know the thing about it, in some way yes. The feelings of travelling at a young age was something that I had in mind that, okay now you won't be under your father and mother's care for the balance of life now. This is your starting point, that you have to move on from. So I got prepared. My dad paid for my trip. I got \$100 for money. Whether that was enough or not, it was \$100 Canadian. I wasn't advised that you have to have whatever.

Q: You arrived as a heavy duty mechanic?

BL: Yeah.

Q: Because that was your profession back home?

BL: That's right.

Q: So you didn't come empty-handed.

BL: No, I came in a setting that, look, you have to be able to move on. There's some days that might be a difficult situation. I'm here. I can't even call on a neighbour or call on a friend. It was just myself and whoever was taking me along the route. So, in the meantime, yes, I got tickets.

Q: Did you come with friends, or alone?

BL: I was along with three other guys and myself; we shared the same flight.

Q: Are they still here?

BL: How it went was we all landed in Montreal. From that standpoint was when we all separated. Three of them were autobody men and they went to London, Ontario. The other guy that was a mechanic like myself went to Calgary. We split there. In my head, because we travelled together, we were going to the same area. We did not know about Calgary and Edmonton. We thought that Alberta was whatever, not realizing that it's a province and a city. So he went to Calgary and I came here. I came in, got off the flight; I walked through the airport. The first thing that came to mind is that you cannot stay in this airport; you gotta move on. I had my little--up to today I still call it a barber kit. It had enough clothes for you to move on with and so on. So anyhow, I came out and looked around, and I had enough influence that these cabs were there and you have to catch a cab. So I opened the door and this cabbie came up and said, well, can I help you? I said, well could you please take me to a place where it's central, and I'll take it from there? He said, okay I'll take you to the men's lodging. So said, so done. So anyhow, he took my luggage and we headed on. I was looking from left to right and all I could see was all of this space.

Q: What year was that?

BL: That was in 1967 as well. He took me down to this men's facility; I think he told me it was \$20 at the time I was paying. He said, well, be good. I said, well, thank you very much. So I went on in and set myself up for a week; it was \$28. Okay so \$28 now came out of the \$100 that I had. That was a Saturday when I arrived here, about 2 by the time I got downtown. In the meantime, Monday morning I had to present myself to Immigration to let them know that I'm here and show all my papers and so on. So anyhow I got up early enough. I got dressed, went across the street and had a coffee and whatever; then I headed on. I got my papers in one hand and I was looking at the address and I kept moving. I kept asking questions: excuse me, can you explain to me where's this address? Oh just go down a couple of blocks. With me, blocks never were in my head. So anyhow I kept pursuing to find the address. Then I said, something is not really making sense. I went on, and in the meantime looked at my watch and time was getting away.

Q: Do you think somebody was trying to lead you astray?

BL: Well not directly, because I don't think they really knew. You could be in a crowd and you could ask a question and somebody will come and say, oh yes I know about it. Anyhow, I kept moving around, asking anyone about this address. Finally then after so much time wasted, a Good Samaritan came around and said, you know, just go down half a block, make a right, and you'll see the building there, Immigration. So I got in there and presented myself. I said, well, good afternoon, because by this time it was 12. She said, can I help you? I said, well, I'm newly arrived and I was told that I have to present these papers to you all and take it from there. I said, in the meantime sorry that I'm late, but I was asking questions to find the address. She said, we understand; it happens to the best of them. You're only a day or two old into Edmonton, and you are still good.

Q: Where was the Immigration office?

BL: It was on 104th at the time, as far as I can remember.

Q: And Jasper? Downtown?

BL: That's right. So anyhow, I was able to find it. Went in there, presented my papers. I went to finish; then he said, well, you're not finished yet. You just go and make a right turn, there's another building and you go there. So I went in there and said, good afternoon. He said, alright, just give me the papers and I will tell you what we need and what we don't. In the meantime, that was an employment centre. So I presented what I had and he said, okay, I'm going to send you over there and the counsellor will provide your job and what certificates you have and so on. So I went and met a nice gentleman; his name was Bill Chakwit. We sat down and had a talk, and he took it from there. He said, alright, my job is to find work for you in your field, and if for some reason you get dismissed from there or whatever and you're out of work, you come back and see me and I'll give you another slip to move on to another location. So that went on until I really then started to gain ground and know where I'm going, what bus to take and so on. During that time then. . .

Q: What was your first job? What job did they send you to?

BL: Well I didn't have too much choice at the time of not putting myself in a situation of saying, well over there is where I want to go. I went where that slip – there's a proper name for that, not piece of paper – but he gives you the name of the place that you are to go, and the address and phone number. My first start was working at service stations; but I didn't mind that. It's a start. You cannot expect to start at the top of the ladder in any aspect of ? you have to [18:20] and step up. So I did all of that until I really got myself established where I'm going, what I have to do, and so on. It was a situation of thinking positive on the way up the ladder, not listening to someone tell you, oh well, leave that until next week. My aim was to start building a profile, to take the task as to how I was going to be someone like what I had in my mind. And I did just that. I sat down night after night and accumulated and said, well, just follow your dream; just do what you figure is going to take you from point A to point B. And I done just that, and I was successful with the places I worked with. I always tried to do the job or my task to the best of my ability. I went in that setting and I did that. In the meantime, that was in place. The next step

was that I find a place downtown, small room and board. Then I moved away from the Y because that one room or whatever is a lot cheaper than paying \$28 a week to the YMCA or whatever the case may be. So I did that and I stayed there for 11 months. During that time, I started to file papers to sponsor my spouse that I left at home here. Within three months everything was finalized. She was able to get her visa, her passport, and all the documents. According to immigration status, we had to be married within a month, and if that could not be done she would have to return home. So, along with a bus driver friend that I met on the bus -- his name was Harry Habalik, a German guy; he was my mentor. I got onto the bus and he was very cooperative. Somewhere along the road it looked like he and I just clicked in understanding and so on. So between him and the wife, they helped me along the road. I had to get things prepared. So then the wife arrived here. What day did she come in? Anyhow, the day she came in, it wasn't too far, but we got married on May 18th, 1968. From the time she came in it would be enough time to arrange the marriage and whatever goes with it. So we got married; everything went well. In the meantime then I relocated to the south side and got an apartment, a one-bedroom apartment, furnished. Then we took it from there. In the meantime we sat down and started to think two heads is more than one, and we started putting stuff together as to where we want to venture on. Within three months then she started to seek employment. She got her first job at the university. She was, what kind of clerk do they call those? Anyhow, she was in the area called Filing Records. She stayed there about a year and then she really got acquainted with the place and developed an understanding. We started to check the papers and we saw a better opportunity at Sears, which was close to what she was doing at home. She applied there and within a time there she started to go to school to get acquainted with what Canada or Edmonton requirements are to move into different areas. So she did that and then she was able then to get a job at the University Hospital. They were able to train her and then she became, what was her title at the time? She wasn't a dietitian but she used to look after the diets. When the doctor prescribed whatever for a patient, she had to make sure that when she went down and checked whatever she was supposed to check to make sure that the diets for diabetics were there. So from there then she stayed in that capacity and then she got qualified in what she was doing, and then she moved on.

Q: What about you? Are you a heavy duty mechanic?

BL: What I did. . .

Q: At some point I know you were in Local 995.

BL: Okay, that's the last identity.

Q: At some point I know you worked at Fort McMurray.

BL: Yeah, alright.

Q: Talk about your work history.

BL: Okay. Initially to start, I started on a small scale as to how things were presented to me. I worked in small duty of the trade.

Q: In Edmonton?

BL: That's right, Edmonton for quite some time for different car dealerships or whatever. Then after a while what I was doing, I said, you know these little vehicles now are getting to me. I need something that I am comfortable working on and that would help the structure of my body. Look at me at the time, 5-11 or what the case may be, and I was working on some little vehicles. I started to feel some uneasiness after each day and so on, little aches and pains. So it told me that I have to move on. So then I went and I sat another exam, just wanting to know the knowledge of whatever, that would allow me then to work on heavy equipment like tractors and trailers.

Q: Did you need a ticket to do that?

BL: Well, it was added on to what I had. This guy found out that Bertram T. Leslie is upscale in a sense. So that was in place. I worked a lot of different places that still had work in my field. It

was the trucks and cars. So I was on the truck side, which maintained me as a heavy equipment repair technician. As time went on, the vision of my service was to move on in that area and to see how well I could do with what I had set up doing. I was very successful at switching from light to heavy. In the year then of 2001 I was dismissed from a dealership in Fort Saskatchewan, Welcome Ford, through a shortage of work. So I know how those things go in life, and I didn't get discouraged. I came home and then started making a few phone calls. The wife had a friend whose sister's husband was working in Fort Mac. Some phone call was made and he explained to us the different unions and what they stand for in lines of recruiting workers on a jobsite. So anyhow, the first one that came to me was Operating Engineering Local 955. I'll make sure that I got it right. I had a membership card here.

Q: Was that your first job in Fort McMurray?

BL: Okay, it was International Union of Operating Engineers, Local 955. [camera shot of card] I called them up and explained to them what is in my portfolio. He said, come on down; we sure could use your help. So I went down and right off the bat I had an interview. I talked with this guy they had in dispatch. He had to be accountable as to whom he was hiring and make sure that he put them in the position that the company wanted them for. So anyhow he says, well alright, it seems like you are a member now of our team. So he said, how soon can you be ready? Just give me a time. This was the Monday of the week.

Q: What year was this?

BL: This was 2001. So he said, well you won't have to have a full set of tools; we have a building for tools that you don't have. You just come and tell the guy that works in there what you need. So anyhow he said, well you're good to go. We expect that you will be in – this project was in a place called Muskeg River. The project was conduct by Albian Sands. It's about 50 kilometers from Fort McMurray. So they said, well, there'll be transportation available in and out. At Northgate there'll be a bus leaving there Sunday evening at 4 p.m. So you just do whatever to get there and come. So the bus came and I sat down. I saw other workers come onboard that had been up there before me but the same bus takes everybody.

Q: Did you know any of them personally?

BL: No. I'd met a guy in the mall; his name was Trevor--what was his last name? Trevor Jordan. I met Trevor Jordan; he was a welder in a different union but he gave me some little leads on what to expect. He said, well I might be on the same project or I might not. So anyhow, he told me what to expect and what not to expect. So I got the bus and got in 9:30 or 10 Sunday afternoon.

Q: Were you taken to a camp?

BL: Well they have trailer huts there, not trailers. What's the proper name for them?

Q: Campsite?

BL: Yeah, on a campsite, yeah. There were trailer homes that accommodate a certain amount. The units were large enough to accommodate about 12 to 14 workers. They were self-contained to a point that included a washer and dryer, and they have the rest that goes with it. They have sleeping quarters and they'd have maids that come in to make up your rooms when you're gone to work. I was settled into my quarters, the number of the room, the time to get to work. So anyhow, they said Monday morning would be orientation, which means that you go and assemble into this large area. You have a speaker laying in the rules and regulation of the whole project widely.

Q: This was the oilsands project at Muskeg River?

BL: Yeah, the project coordinator explained the rules of the complex areas that you cannot be seen walking around during construction work, or the areas that you cannot hang around and so on. So all of that was said. It took about two hours. Then he said, well you go back to your room and then...

Q: Did he deal with safety?

BL: Yeah, everything was covered. He covered every aspect, what you have to wear and so on. But he said, your supervisor will put everything in place as time goes on. For each shift you have a different supervisor; expect that one might be more strict than the other. All you have to do is obey rules and regulations, and you'll be okay. We're not here to say that you have to wash your hands every minute. We just put into you that safety is our main operation here. Each month we have a tally of safety hours, and it's paid. The minimum hours of safety could be up to 300 hours. Once we reach that goal, we know that things are in place. Meals in the morning are 6; supertime is starting from 4 onward. We have a nightshift and a day. They call it a mess hall, a kitchen, whatever. It has a capacity that they could serve 200 workers each morning and so on. In the meantime I said, okay, they already know who I am. They said, okay Leslie, this is feeding time. The building that you're going to work out of you have to be there no later than 5:30 to get set up and so on. So from my slip from union hall I knew that I will be on the day shift. So by the time I met up with the project superintendent and the shop foreman and learned of other places that you have to be in and out of and wear your coveralls and things, then they said, Leslie, you have to be on the night shift. So I then hesitated at getting out of hand. My slip said day and this is what happened. I said, no man, I said, look. I got the job with the expectations that there'll be changes; so the changes started at the beginning. So you'll be on night, starting at 6 and finishing at 4:30 in the morning, and you'll be on a ten-hour rotation, everything based on days in and days out.

Q: So it's 6 to 6.

BL: Six until 4:30 in the morning. I think it's 10 hours. They said, you'll be transported out and in. The bus company is Diversified Transportation. I started with 11 days on and three days off, a weekend. Friday morning you'll catch a bus and you'll be in the city at Northgate about 1:30. Then you catch the bus back there Monday morning at 10. So by the time you reach back to camp it is 4 o'clock and you go and put down your bag. With me I used to like to wash all of my clothes at home. I would have enough from socks to whatever for 11 days and over; so I was okay. Then they supply you with coveralls to work in. So I was able to then get settled in, know

what my work status is like. Some nights you'll get a truck or some nights you'll get one of those heavy duty machines to work on and this kind of stuff. So I told myself, look, you're here...

Q: With this heavy duty machine that you're working on, what did you have to do?

BL: Well most of it was maintenance; everything is maintenance. Maintenance is like you have a worksheet that gives you a guide of what the maintenance is all about. Most of it is at a certain amount of hours a machine has to be serviced. You change the oil and filter and ...

Q: This is not a shutdown?

BL: No.

Q: This was just regular maintenance?

BL: That's right. You do certain repairs. Most of the repairs that were beyond heavy stuff were these units that are for supervisors that go out to different areas of work. Those vehicles were between a one-ton vehicle truck, one-ton truck to a three-ton. They carry certain things around to certain jobsites, material and this kind of stuff. But then some other machines that do whatever they do, which cannot fit in the shop, then they have to go into the field and service them due to the hours of operations. They never want to go over hours that shouldn't be there. If something says that at 20,000 km it has to be serviced, when that is up that means it has to be serviced. So fortunately enough I was able to fit in and do my job to the best of my ability. You have to abide by the safety rules. You have to wear your hard hat and steel-toed boots and safety glasses at all times, and gloves on your hands.

Q: How did this Muskeg project relate to what else was happening in Fort McMurray?

BL: What the project was built on is that it processed the oil deposits and they are pumped. Okay, the oil deposit is brought in by big trucks, I forget what they called them; there's a name for them. Anyhow, they go out to the areas and these trucks were loaded by, what would I say, a

loader or whatever behind that. It was then trucked into an area where it is dumped into this big carriage. Then it is transformed up a revolving--what I call an elevator. It was transformed up to a certain level or height, whereby then as it gets to that point water comes in and it's the sand from the oil deposits. I thought at one time that the oil used to be in the ground and you pump it up, but that was not the case. It's in the sand; so when it gets to the height, then water comes in. That's how they explained it to me. Whatever it is is a separation.

Q: What is the separation unit?

BL: Whatever is built into the top of that area, it separates A from B. The sand goes one way and then the oil deposits travel on. From there on, I cannot detail what other procedure happens. But from my understanding, it goes down to certain pumps, a certain distance. By that time then it becomes a raw substance and it is pumped down to the refinery there in Scotford in Fort Saskatchewan. It gets then to its last stage and it's raw material or raw oil. But anyhow, up there the only project, when it was complete, whatever, was to transport the raw substance. Then Scotford will refine it and make whatever they want out of the oil. In the meantime, it was explained to me that they have returning pumps that bring back the raw sewage and then it is dumped away off of the project, the processing plant. As all was said and done, I was fortunate then to be working until things come to a finish. I then closed there. I don't know what month, but I left there somewhere in September 2023.

Q: So you were on rotation in Fort McMurray?

BL: That's right. I don't know if it's called Fort Mac but I know it was Albian Sands and the area then we called Muskeg River.

Q: How long did you continue working in Fort McMurray?

BL: Well for that duration of time from April 2021 until September 2023.

Q: September 2023 – we're not there yet.

BL: Oh no sorry, what I'm saying, no I came out, I started 2001 so until 2003, pardon me.

Q: You spent that time at the Muskeg project?

BL: Yes.

Q: Did you work on any other projects in Fort Mac?

BL: No, that was the only project that I got through the union.

Q: Did you have any other private contracts?

BL: Well there were a few that came up with the union, but these were situations where they weren't long enough and then they had to drive back and forth. For some reason I didn't; the highway driving at certain hours didn't well serve me. So I said, well look, you see what you can find in the city and then once you get going, then if the union calls, then you can still leave the firm that you're with and then you go and take a union job and move on.

Q: Did you feel it was beneficial to be in a union job?

BL: Well that's right, for a lot of reasons of the wages. The wages were fantastic, the wages and to learn more about a safety environment. Working in the city at the time, well I work as safely as I can but up there they instill it on a very serious scale, that this is what this project stands for. You look after yourself. Don't expect the supervisor to come and walk around and say, okay Leslie, your glass is not fitting properly, your hat is not on there, and you don't have the required boots. So I put myself in a situation of listening and not saying, well, I don't know, my boots are fine. Just think positive that this is what the project stands for. Safety is their concern, because of what you're dealing with. You're not dealing with a [53:20]. Sometimes when you see the tires on some of the equipment that is operating, when you stand up, this tire is taller than you. So safety and being oriented is what I put first, and I came out today I would say

accident-free. I never had that something I was using that wasn't properly set up as I worked, and if in doubt I would call him and say, well look, can you please recheck what I am doing here? For example, a press. Just see that what I put together is safe for you to operate the press to either press off or press on.

Q: That work was very important to the province.

BL: Yes, well they expect [55:10] of you. They give you a job assignment and they expect that you do the job and that job is properly done. My focus used to be on that. To help you along the road, you get a job sheet, a description. You read it, bottom to top and so on. So from then you go to the area and try again and look and see how you are going to dismantle this, how you are going to dismantle what is not working. You don't want to take off stuff that is unnecessary. Sometimes my focus on [56:17] a good relationship and work ethics is that you look, read, look and focus. In the meantime, don't depend on even sometimes things being instamatic or on instructions. You look at something and for some reason you let a pinpoint up here. So even if you check the book and their story is not what you want, you say, well look, the book says, well look you know, this is the way you should dismantle. When you do that you find out, well look you know, it isn't working. So then you have to really use what is here to be able to perform a proper diagnosis for one, and to how you are going to repair this area so that it could function the way it should. One thing I encounter is to everything I repair, we check it and test it. That's a key thing. You hear a sound of when it comes in and you know, well, something is wrong. Maybe it's a bearing sound that is rough and needs replacing. So by listening, you replace the bearing. You listen again. If that's not satisfactory, you take it for a little test. You would hear something is not quite right. You take it around the block or the area. By so doing, I was able to get good reports on whatever I did. Everything is on record of your job efficiency, how well you did your job, how well it was done, and when it leaves the shop that you don't see it back in a couple of days. I try to maintain that standard of workmanship and I found out that I was able to get a good relationship with those who employ me. So, in the records that went back to the union the claim would be that you sent a good man to us. That's something that was my aim, to get a good report on my work ethics, how I approach the job, how it was done, and the cleanliness. Sometimes, oh I didn't get time to clean off, they said. But then when you look at something

you say, well what repairs were done to this area? You have to clean the areas. I always made sure that when they come to look at it they said, well alright, this was a repair that was well done. Look, it came in dirty and it went back clean. That's something that you try to accomplish, not just putting the wheel on, tightening the nuts. Even if it is dirty, in a few minutes it'll be dirty again, but it's to let somebody see that something was satisfactorily done.

Q: Have you worked in any other parts of Alberta?

BL: No, everything was just in Alberta; 95 percent was in Edmonton.

Q: Have you worked at any plants that were not in Fort McMurray?

BL: No, I stayed with that job. In fact I stayed with that union that put me into that job from start to finish.

Q: Where else did they send you?

BL: Well no, the Fort McMurray Muskeg was the only project that I worked with that union at that given time. I did get a few calls after that, but then it's the driving back and forth when you finish. Then, after, it got to a point where they had jobs but only for a couple of months here and there. It's okay, but in the meantime I was still paying my dues and if something came up that they figured I could handle, then I would take it. But with my own knowledge of the union and what they stand for and what I presented to them, I kept a clean record with them up to today. By so doing, they said, you know you were a good member and we're going to make sure that from here on in, you're still looked after. So I got a little income from them each month – income means it's not small and it's not big. But it still came in to fit in with the other stuff that I get, and I still pay monthly dues out of retirement whatever. For that they say, well for your record and what you have given to the company, we're going to give you free insurance of \$10,000; it won't cost you anything.

Q: After 2003 what did you do?

BL: Okay. After that then I stayed at home for a couple of weeks, maybe a month or two, hoping that something of a good nature would come through from the union, work-related. It didn't happen, but knock on wood, I moved on. So then I started looking for employment. Within that time then I was able to land a job with a place called National Courier Services. They had trucks, tractors, and trailers. I can't remember what year I started, but I was there for about 12 years. I was there from 2003 until 2010. That was maintenance on their units, which is a lot better than to go into places that repaired stuff. The work was more secure, the time factor when you don't have to be pushing the body. With them, if a tractor you're working on is not quite ready, there's always a spare in the yard this driver could go and take out. Working for any other places, they assign a job to you and you've got to get out within a certain time and all that kind of stuff. Everything worked for the benefit of myself. But unfortunately, at National Courier, the dad turned it over to the son. He probably figured he'd had enough and whatever. It went down or went across and the operation with the son only lasted two years. They went bankrupt. Okay, we got paid out for the time we were there. So I came home and said, you know, this is where things are at now. Just move away and leave room for the youngsters. But if they had continued I may probably be still there up to today. But that unfortunate situation came about, and during that time I was home I said, well look, just pack it. Just tell yourself, look, you have done a career and you've achieved what you're supposed to achieve, raising a family, educating your kids; you've got a roof over your head. With what comes in, you could live with all due respect. So, during the time I was home there I started to do a lot of stuff around the house that was untended and so on. Then I got a call from home. Mother was admitted to the hospital. So I said, you know, at her age now anything could happen. I think she was 94 or 95. So I waited around. She was admitted to hospital; she was there for about three weeks, and sad news came that she passed on. So I went home to pay my last respects, hung around for three weeks, came back. I said, you know, close the chapter, close the chapter. As much as you have good ethics behind you, you're not an asset; you're more a liability now to a firm than an asset. So I said, well you look at the picture and you know how it stands in the frame. I said, look, you and your wife have made a lot of good positions. Time for preparation for whatever will be the aftermath, what you have got to expect from here on. Don't dwell on what you lost; look at what is still with you.

Q: During the periods of time you were away from home working in Fort McMurray, how did that impact your family?

BL: Well not any great way, because from that time all the kids were...

Q: How many do you have?

BL: There's a boy, Andre. He was the firstborn in '70. Then twin girls. So they already were through their career and working. So it's only that my presence there enables certain things. But it was accepted that this is what came on. Never mind the distance, due to the fact that you will call in every other evening or every hour or on weekends. You know, it tells them that the presence is there. When you look around, oh yeah, can you do this or whatever? So it didn't really impact them anymore. How it was structured, every Wednesday you will get a paycheque, every Wednesday, and it [1:10:29] through the system. So it's just a matter of the wife going to the bank, taking out whatever to run the home and pay the bills and whatever. Half of the time when I got in on Friday afternoon, being at work at nights and everybody gone to sleep, I was watching from one show to the other. By the time they got up and were ready to go to work, I'd be trying to see if I can get a little sleep in the day. But overall it was accepted on the terms that I explained to them about how things operate. The only hard point was coming down to the last stages, because they had a deadline to get these projects finished. Then it went from 11 days on to be moved to 18.

Q: So your shift became 18 on and how much off?

BL: No 18 days on, you were 18 days straight before you could get off.

Q: Yes.

BL: For the first start I worked 11 days on and I think that went for six months, then it shifted to 18.

Q: So when you had 11 on, how many days were off?

BL: Three days of the weekend.

Q: When you went to 18, how many days were off?

BL: The same, three. Most of the time they had to ask who wanted to work the weekend. When it come to some of the guys they would take the time off. They'd always give you a long time to notify. He'd come up and say, okay Leslie, you want to work some overtime this weekend? You won't believe man, I never refused any weekends that they called on me. Sure enough, Monday morning when you start you get that cheque for those weekends. Then I think that 18 days lasted nine months.

Q: Did it take any toll on you?

BL: Oh no, it's only that, like I said, when the last Thursday of the month came up, it was just like a burden lifted off your shoulders. But I moved with it, because you have to go into things where there are conditions that might not suit you. But as it goes on, the conditions wear off. This is what it is, this is what it's all about, and this is what I tell a lot of people. In life, some days [1:13:58] that this is when it can be this way. Life cannot be so difficult, but it is what you start with. If you start with something good, good intentions, you are going to come out good. But if you start grumbling, it's not going to help. Before the final decisions, you already tell yourself, well, I was made to understand that this is what is going to happen. So then it runs down and comes to the crunch, 24 days. But that was the last straw. But I handled it.

Q: Was it 24 on and still only three off?

BL: The same three. Well it was up to me that I could've gone home, but every time they came and asked, Leslie, you want to work these weekends, I took it.

Q: Was that because of a shutdown?

BL: No it wasn't a shutdown; it's that the project had a set time of completion. They weren't behind time. I think the whole project was done on scheduled time. So that's why they ask so many workers to work these weekends to fill in for the guys that want to go home. We had guys from as far as Newfoundland; they would stay on until the project finished. We had guys that used to be in B.C. for whom it was the same thing. They just stay put, stay on until the project is finished. With all the time I spent, I had about four weekends off. But one thing, I said, you know, an extra dollar is an extra dollar. By so doing, I was able to do a lot of stuff that was needed. I was able to build a garage with that extra money I got on Mondays for the weekend that you work. That helped me build the garage and do a lot of things that would speed things up. So overall I have no regrets. I accepted the job offer, the conditions behind it, and did the best in everything I had to do. Today I'm satisfied with my record in all the places I worked. I was in good standing for always doing a job well done.

Q: What do you think of the recent news where oilsands camp workers refused to accept wage rollbacks? Do you feel that the workers aren't valued?

BL: Yes. Conditions that they have to undergo, I mean it wasn't digging down in a hole and this kind of thing, but it's how the employee had to put himself in situations like the weather is 30 degrees or whatever and you have to work in it; if it's 40 you have to work in it. Whatever is said and not said, they deserve the wages for the work that they perform and the conditions. I would say that the union is out of balance when it comes to that, because they know pretty well that what those workers describe are not easy tasks.

Q: Did you have any experiences like that when you were working?

BL: No. Everything with me went plain and simple to the point with regard to what they indicate to you, what they expect from you. As long as you could put that into your mind or into your brain, wherever it goes, you don't have a problem. A lot of people, they hear things and they figure that sounds like a joke. But you've got to listen when someone speaks to you. For

example, in the classroom the teacher puts things on the board, you've got an idea of what's on the board. That makes your life easy and it makes the other person's life easy. But do not get there and tell yourself, no. You've got to get involved. It's to your best interest.

Q: Did you ever meet any other Caribbean workers?

BL: I ran into the same guy, Trevor Jordan. There's another guy; well, he was from Jamaica. Yeah, I met a few of them that were in different areas. Some were welders; some were working in the scaffolding. Scaffolding means that they've set up whatever it is for the technicians to reach a certain height, and that alone has to be well stabilized. You just can't put up four sticks at each corner and figure that's okay. The shop foreman comes around and looks at it and he says, well no this thing needs some more support. We don't want any workers to go up on there because they gonna be there for a length of time. But there was a fellow, Gomez, he was a long-time union guy. There were another few that were working there that, to be honest now, I haven't seen them in a while. But they were from the Caribbean. In total I think I ran into about a dozen from different islands. Most of them were from Jamaica, because it looks like Jamaica in this trade sector provides more welders than other Caribbean islands.

Q: Did you form any bonds or organizational links with any of them?

BL: No. Like I said, it was just like whenever they say, well, how are you, as a first guy on a union job or a union structure, how you feel, how it's different from what you used to be in. So you respond and say, well you know, it's a job, you do it to the best of your ability. Don't say, oh well you know I'm just here for the dollars. I'm here, and the reason that I'm here is to be in a job and know that the guarantor is going to maintain your needs. I used to get good feedbacks of some of the older guys that were in unions, that know how they represent and what it stands for. So that helped build my positive thinking that, look it's okay. Just don't go in and after a couple of weeks say, oh I don't want anything to do with unions. In every segment of life you've got to find what's good and valuable, you've got to find the mediocre, and you end up finding the bad human being. But you don't let it. You set your goals the way you know that you should live your life. After today I still have a lot of people, look, I'm a chip off the old block. I used to

live the dreams of mother and father, people on the streets that guide you through it. You walk the streets, everybody's looking out for you. They're not related to you but if you are lying around, hey don't you have to get to school at a certain time? You never say, well who are you; you're not related to me. You just look around and move on. That's what builds you to be the person or the man that you're going to become as you get older. We refer to it as street smart. You've got to learn stuff on the street. Your mother raised you, your father raised you, but in those days there were challenges for those poor parents. So you listen to the guy on the street – he, she or whoever – and it helps you along. Young mom on [1:26:07] she looks after the kids. Dad will be breadwinner; he's providing whatever. So yes, on weekends around Sunday afternoon we would hear what they will say and this kind of stuff. But I would say a hundred percent [1:26:33] bring you into this world and raise you up to a certain point, you collect 85 on the streets and the rest aunt, uncles, godparents and everybody fills in to make you the man or the woman you are today. I'm grateful for people that were in my life, because that helped me when I was a young teenager. They show you what could be wrong, what could be right. If you listen to them, you come out very clean. I today am pleased with it all. I listened; I was able to grasp things that are beneficial to me. I never try to let the middle person get into my life. That's all you want. Remember the alphabet. You just need A and B. As you start moving down, that's the time that everything is not going to work for you. Life is simple but human beings complicate our lives. For some reason, you're doing good and all of a sudden somebody comes: how long were you doing that? Oh for the half way. You do what he says to you and you go further than you were doing it on your own. So thank God that I live a simple life. I've still got good friends in place. Tomorrow if I go there and I come down to have to be in a wheelchair, I know, apart from the family, the stranger will come and push me around. That's what you have to build up. So I'm good.

Q: Is there anything else you'd like to add?

BL: Well all right. I would say that for the young generation they have to really start looking at life very seriously. A good pair of shoes and nice jeans and the most expensive cell phone are not going to cut it.

Q: If you had to do it all over, would you make the same journey to Canada?

BL: Oh yes, yes. I can't be more grateful for Canada opening up their doors.

Q: Did you ever experience any discrimination?

BL: No. It was just like a miracle happened to my life that I didn't expect. You grow up at home, you go to college, and you do this, and then along the road you tell yourself, well what, from here on, is your future going to hold for you? In the meantime you do not forecast too much down the road. I always say, do not travel any distance more than what you figure you're comfortable with. If you know your distance is going to be 50 km and that's what you can handle, do so. Lots of times I could venture more, and that's fine. But make sure that that extra distance you're able to handle it and this kind of thing. My looking to the future down the road would say thanks to Canada opening up the doors, not for myself but for others abroad outside the Caribbean island. Your home yes, you work, you do things. But Caribbean islands-- everything, that I don't do, I do tomorrow; that's fine. But that is precise there. Sometimes you do not try to push things ahead so that tomorrow you're backing up too much; you're making two steps forward and four backwards. You have to have a goal that you are going to fulfill within a certain time in your life. You cannot wait until 50, 55 and say, oh I want to get a house and things. Forget it. You gotta start at things no sooner than your career is finished and you move on. By the time you get a mortgage and make the payments when you reach 65, well I probably only owe \$50,000. So it's a goal setting; it's a mindset. You got to put everything down on paper and start adding, subtracting, dividing, and all that kind of stuff. You're setting up yourself to what you know you want to be. I just want to be something. I don't want to be a person that's looking at wealth, millions of dollars, and you feel good about that. I just want to be there that if I see someone in need I can lend him a hand and not even think about it. That makes you a better person. I would say that my parents, grandparents, whoever, are who made it happen so that I could follow on. It works for me and I'm thankful for the Creator who makes it possible to give you help and strength and the guidance that is required. You have to be able to tell yourself, look, what are you going to do with your life? Are you going to let it go by the wayside or are you going to do something that people say, well look, Bertram Leslie didn't take

it as he was poor. He didn't take it that he had a meal today and doesn't know where tomorrow's meal is coming from. So, after you leave the nest, you've got to tell yourself, well look, I've done it. I succeeded in doing what I set out to do. Well look, you know, I've done it. I came here and made good friends, I help people in my culture, and I never look back. I never say, well look, I did something for you today; now I want something you aren't able to give. Maybe at the time I had more time, I had more ambition, I had whatever. With you now, you're doing the best you can. So I don't expect to do something to get recompense. You do it with the kindness of your heart and someday your day will come that you will get back your rewards. Right now my kids and I and my friends, we are reaping rewards. I scratch your back, you scratch mine.

Q: What is the T in your name?

BL: Theodore. Like you said, whether in your Trinidadian culture everybody has nicknames, but the nicknames that people encounter in Barbados today, my homeland, most of the time you don't really call people by that name. Everything is either mister or mistress. There's no way you could look and say, hi Donna. You gotta say, morning Mistress Donna, and that's it. A lot of people pass and I only know the initials of their names because it came across on the radio that that's who they are. Everybody has a nickname. With me, Paul was one of Jesus' disciples and I stick to my religious faith. It is not man alone that keeps you going; there has to be somebody above it all. That's all that matters in today's society. If you believe in that section, you can't go wrong. We didn't just drop down from the sky here on earth. If you really study your body, it was designed phenomenally. Now that I've got time, I've got a medical book there. The wife ordered it from wherever. It could tell you from the first hair that grows on your head to the last one that doesn't grow. Once in a while I go and look it over, run through it in certain areas, and I gotta say, man, thank God for creating the body of such to keep us.

Q: Thank you so much for all you've shared.

BL: I think I will start talking to people a little more. Let them know, well look, don't cry down who you are. Don't cry yourself down. Be proud of who you are. They look at life. Always be in a

situation to tell yourself, alright, he might have two more pairs of shoes than me but in the meantime I am still walking with my shoes on. A lot of people say, oh man Harry, man those shoes looks nice. You don't have the first penny to go and get what Harry accumulated, but you still want it. Forget about that; you have a shoe on. As long as you aren't getting no water coming into your foot, you're okay.

Q: I wanted to pick up on something you talked about. What's it like to be working in extreme heat or cold, as is often the case in Fort Mac? Keep talking to Donna.

BL: Well as the weather gets to that point, they do not ask you to be working outside on any conditions.

Q: Are you talking about really cold, or really hot?

BL: Really cold. When it gets to that point...

Q: What is the limit?

BL: 40, 41. I've seen it go to 48.

Q: So work stops at 40 below?

BL: That's right.

Q: Not before?

BL: Of course, yeah. There's a limitation to working in extremely cold conditions.

Q: Is that a union stipulation?

BL: Well, it's in the contract.

Q: A safety condition?

BL: That's right, yeah.

Q: So what's it like working at minus 30?

BL: Well that's okay. I would say that the facilities they had for working in, man I tell you, you tell yourself, can concrete be this warm? Oh yeah, man, the heat was where it should be. Every door is closed and most of the time a job is like this. What the night guy don't finish, when the day guy comes on he finishes it off. It's not that you have to stay and finish that vehicle. It's not just a two-way system or two repairs. Sometimes a unit comes in and it could be about three days and three nights. When my time is up, your supervisor will have a description and give it to the day guy.

Q: So once it's below 40, you don't work?

BL: Well inside, that's right. But beyond that, they will shut. Outside, after that they will shut that particular cold spell because it's too cold for human beings to work outside.

Q: At what temperature is it too hot to work outside?

BL: Well to be honest with you, due to the fact that I worked nights, I never experienced that. I just relate to what goes on in the night. But, during the day, because by that time I'm sleeping, the rooms always used to be very comfortable for you to sleep. But nights, there's a certain set when even if it's extremely cold they had a crew that would be out in the field because of service units that are too big to move. They're stationary there but you have to do the hourly service. A big crane that's operating for the welder with a big pipe or something--you can't move that. He's there from start to finish, but maintenance has to be on the jobsite. So there has to be a crew that would be on the nights. But when it's into that temperature, we will shut the whole project down until it subsides.

Q: The work you were doing was mainly in the building. Did you have much contact with the crews that were working the regular operations?

BL: I would say that I would always have guidance from guys that were long-time union members in more than one way, as to how the unions operate, what they expect of you as an individual. Like I said, all the guys always knew when you're new, maybe from your actions. They'll come in and you'll see them talking; we all travel on the same transportation coming in. They'll say, well Leslie man, two nights ago I saw you and you were there in body but something else wasn't there with you. I know that you're new. It's a whole new concept in work related in the safety aspects and time. He says, I know you had a job where you worked from 8 to 5, you went home and were sleeping all night. Here it is now night and you're here. But one thing man, at nights it is just like day to you. You had such a light. I couldn't believe it man. Of course you could see the smallest pin. You drop something; you could see it. So with that, you're okay and this is all you'll be hearing. Everybody knows when there's a newcomer. I accept. I never said, well alright man, I ain't got to listen to you; you figure you were in it for 10 or 15 years and you know it all. You listen to experience. With me, even from day one growing up I'm 10 years old, I'm not going to associate with a kid that's 10 years old. What he's going to teach you? You grow beyond that. Then you and he become buddies. I think you could take something from that. But you are 10, he is 10; you're looking for trouble.

Q: When you worked in Mac, did you live at the worksite, or did you live in town and take the bus out to work?

BL: What units do you call those? They're trailers, but they were well built. You have your showers, your washing facilities; you had maid service. You get up and they come in at whatever time. For me, due to the fact there was some problem with rooms, I wound up in an area that was mixed – some guys were on days and some were on nights. So when the cleaning people came in about 12 o'clock, then I'm not able to sleep, with the vacuum and whatever on. But I made the best out of it.

Q: Did a bus come to take you from the campsite to the jobsite?

BL: You walked to the jobsite. With me, I just came out of my quarters and I walked to the jobsite. That's the last initiative. But at 4 o'clock you could go up there and get your meals. You go up and get whatever; then you get whatever for lunch. You pack a brown bag, and most of the time I didn't really want that much. I would probably take fruit. At the mess hall where you're eating, there's so much there to choose from. You go up and draw your plate and slide it down and tell the service at the back what you need. You grab whatever sliding tray, then you grab your knife and fork and plate, and you go and say, alright I need a porkchop; give me some vegetables, two spoons full of rice, half of mashed potatoes, and the whole works. You will always be well fed. You could eat as much as you want, but don't extend the stomach just because you see it. Most of the time I would take what I know that I'm okay with. By the time that you get the snacks, you get an hour for break time. So then you use something to take it to.

Q: What part of Edmonton did you live in?

BL: From start to finish? First I think I lived downtown when I first arrived for 11 months, prior to bringing over my fiancé at the time. So then during the time that she was ready to come up, then I had to leave and get an apartment over on the south side. The little area I had at the time just had a bed in it and a little table, but I ate all my meals out. Then I was able to rent a one-bedroom on the south side in Lendrum. After everything was settled we stayed there for a year; then we thought we needed a little more room or space. A two-bedroom came up, just in case you have a friend that wanted to come over for the weekend. Then we took the two bedroom; so we stayed there for two years. Then we thought, well we got to start to venture out. With her job then it was more feasible to move then to the north side. So I moved to the north side and we stayed on the north side about eight months prior to then starting to look around for a home or a house or whatever. In the meantime, we made all the preparations from there and we were then central. We were on 111th Avenue and 107th Street. We stayed in that apartment; it was a nice complex. The only problem that I had was the parking stall was close to a telephone post or a light post. You could get in fine but on mornings backing out you had to be very cautious that your door didn't come off. So then listening to friends that were here ahead

of us how they made an effort to get into a home, they passed onto us the challenge, the ropes, what you have to do. So we got information and the wife and I started moving on. At the time, the boy born in 1970 was close to a year old. So we knew pretty well that kid is going to need space, that you have to move. So we got started and were successful in getting hold of the salesman, a very nice fellow with Quality Construction at the time. He gave us the lead as to what the requirements are, what you have to put up for a down payment. So we did just that and then by effort and moving on; luckily, how we got it done is a miracle. We were able to qualify for the mortgage at the time. So we bought this house and moved in there in the long weekend of May 1972.

Q: Where was the house?

BL: It used to be Dickensfield when we were there, but now they've changed it to Evansdale. That's up in the north corner of the city west of Londonderry. So we were in there since 1972. The kid most of his life was raised up there until he graduated from school. He's a full-grown adult now; so he needed space. So what can he do? I wish you well. You cannot stay with parents all the days of your life.

Q: So your son has his own house?

BL: Yeah. All three kids now have done as well as I can expect. I have nine grandkids. The boy put most of them down here; he has six. So what are you going to do? That's human nature. But when I look through the family tree, on my mom's side she had brothers that had up to 10 kids and only two were married. The one guy said, well look, life is like this. A good single is just as well as a double. He said, if I get into a relationship I support my kids. I am providing for the family; that's all that matters. Marriage is just, I don't know what word he used--he said marriage is okay, nothing wrong with that. But there's something within him that he cannot devote to it. But he said, I look after my kids. I make sure that if they have a pain they get medications for it, and this kind of stuff. I'm not saying that I'm going to abandon my kids. I am the one who brought them into the world; I am going to look after them. So, said and done. He said marriage is just changing somebody's name, and by the time you look around they have

gone on with more than what you have. That's the part that he's scared of. He says, today I put more shingles on the roof; then, when something's come down, she's gone with everything. So he kept far away from that. So, he lived a good life. All the kids grew up and they respected...

Q: How old is he now?

BL: Well I think when he passed he was about 75. He's gone now five years. But all the kids grew up. I think a few of them are in the Toronto area, and the rest, home. They're doing alright. But he left a good legacy. He didn't say, well tough luck for you lady, you look after your kids. No, he was there from start to finish.

Q: So your current residence is in Dickensfield?

BL: Yeah, they changed it now. It used to be Dickensfield when we started, but now they changed it to Evansdale.

Q: When you first came here, did you find there weren't many other Black people in the city?

BL: The first time I was here before I got married and so on, I didn't see a Black person in about four months. I lived on the north side and most of my work was on the south side. I used to catch the trolley bus, and I would catch the trolley bus by the building that used to be Woodwards. I would catch one of those trolley buses, the S1 or the 2, and head over to the south side. I used to work at a service station called [1:59:42] Shell. So one morning I was there waiting for the bus and all of a sudden I saw this guy came down. I said, you know, I think I know him from home, not on a regular basis but I think I met up with his sister through my wife. At the time, they used to work at the same place at home. So I said, well look, in order to verify that he's the person you know. I missed the bus. I waited for the light and it changed, and I went on over. I said hi; he said hi. I said, is your name Bob Bowen? He said, yeah. I said, well okay I'm Paul Leslie. He said, well how long have you been here? He said, I am here now; my dad sent for the three boys and we are here and I work for Land Titles. I said, well, I'm a newcomer; I have only been here six months. He said, okay, well welcome aboard. So we exchanged phone

numbers. One thing with me, I didn't care too much about how small the area is. I knew a phone was essential. I never got phone service withdrawn from that time to now. So we exchanged numbers and he visited me about twice. I was happy with that. So then I ran into another guy I saw. How did I run into him? Oh I went to a Friday evening...

Q: Did you go to Hazeldean?

BL: Yeah. I went to another place where I had a roommate in the same complex. He was Canadian and he told me about this Hazeldean where a lot of Black people congregated, and on one of these occasions he could take me there. So anyhow, we went there and I looked around and met a few people and we talked and so on, but nothing too spectacular. I was just feeling myself around. I'm not pushing into stuff and so on. So anyhow, next thing you know I saw this African guy sitting by himself. I said, well look, one who is lonely and one other who is lonely, makes two people who are lonely. So I went over and introduced myself. His name was Phil Bagaboo. So then we got acquainted and exchanged numbers. He was attending university at the time. For the short time that we had known each other he visited me more than my homeland guy that I met. But I did run into the same guy over the years as we formed an association for the people from Barbados. We formed the association in 1985. But Phil never gave me up. On weekends when there's something over at the university, he would come and collect me and we'd go on over there and I'd meet all nationalities. Then things were a lot better for me. It was I wouldn't say an overly rocky start but you have to know how to step on rocks. There's some that if you step too hard they'll puncture your feet, some that you gotta know. So I was very equipped because of learning on the streets at the US-based hedge fund Chatham Asset Management, LLC. Home what to expect and how to go through things. So everything come together and I was then sailing. I was glad for my own experience that I shared within myself to put me where I am today. When I look back, coming here in '67 and was able to accomplish a roof over my head in '72, that was only a distance of five to six years. When you could accomplish something like that you gotta say, look, you know, you really had something to look forward to. That's the key thing about life is to tell yourself, look, this is what I have to look forward to doing. Woman, you start a family, you gotta expect whatever is coming. The wife and I, we sat down and put heads together, and that's the key thing about a relationship. I

understand you; you understand me. You come along and see her as a fashionable person; you leave that alone. That's something with the mom, when we were starting to date. That's one thing with my daughter. She likes fashion. So I leave that alone. Sometimes, when I look around, there are two little feet in a six-pair shoe. You tell yourself, well I leave that alone and happiness comes out of it. You want to be in fashion. I'm not going to say, well you could've taken the money and bought something else instead of buying that pair of shoes. I don't go there. I leave that alone even up to now. That fashion is with Caribbean ladies and women, and I leave that alone. Someday as a joke the shoes might wear you. I like it. I like to see especially today the ones like Donna and some others, the fashion. They're not going to let the young generation out-fashion them. Whatever, and I like to see that. So life is great. I think I enjoy my life. Just the peace of mind at retirement; you'll make it to 800. You have to enjoy life. Life has its ups and downs but it is just like flying a kite. You have a certain amount of cord to let it fly with. If you give it more than that, boy he can get up there and next thing you know you miss the cord and the kite. But give him enough that you can bring him in to you when you want, and that's it. Life is easy to live. I tell a lot of people that. Human beings, we complicate our lives. That's because you listen to too many people and can't get answers. Everybody is different. Sometimes in my work I had guys coming up, oh Leslie man, you do things like how I do things. I say, oh no no, your way of doing things is quite different to how I'm doing things. When I look at you it seems like you are doing things the hard way. First you get a job description; you take off more things than you should. I look and I look; you look and you look and you look. The third one defines you as to how to tackle this job, how to repair it. You take out the amount of tools that you need to do the job. You're not going to be running two blocks for A, B and C. You look and envision and they could tell you look, that nut head or bald head looks like a 16 wrench should fit it. You put the 16 wrench in there and you don't want to say, oh no, well I don't know. You have to think and remember stuff. I can remember a lot of stuff. If you don't use it, you're going to lose it. That's what happened with people today. In reading now more than ever, it tells you a brain is like that. You have to feed it so that it could still keep grasping. If you don't, it stays in dorm. When you are telling yourself, well geez, how come I can't remember that this chair should have four legs? Because you did not apply it. Every day you've got to say, that chair should be built with four legs. You use what is given to you. I go by a lot of little stuff that is laughed at. Simply, If you don't use it, you lose it. Whatever you have. You have a good suit and

every time you don't use it, it can't fit you. You keep the material and stretch it. Up to today all of my suits I can still fit. My pants, no alternations. Because you put them on, you find places to go. You mingle. There's a function on wherever, no matter who puts it on, let me go down there. The Italians have something on, and you mingle. My dad always says, you know, accept the world and the people as human beings. Don't look and say, oh he has a gray skin, the other one has a pink. When it's all said and done, one word says it all. We all are human beings. He didn't put it that way. Okay, I make you to be this way and I put this and that. Obviously what I know is the fact that for some of us he put a little more in your brain. When people are sick, you know you have enough knowledge to give them a little help. If he did put everybody here to laugh at, you know what would happen? Everybody would be laughing without even having a joke to laugh at. You are different. You think different; you do things different. My friend there, he does things differently. He does things that suit his intelligent way of doing them. I'm not going to tell him, well you're doing it wrong. That's his way of doing it. He knows that when it's finished that he's right. I keep telling my kids and other people I know, don't invite the third man into anything and don't let anybody define you. You're your own self. Don't let anyone come and say, oh you can't do that; what are you doing that for? No. Never mind. You say your piece; that's fine, thank you. I set out to do it. I'm gonna do it and I'm gonna come out the winner. My life, I'm thankful to God for how I am and what I'm still doing. You call on me tonight and say, well Leslie, what are you doing tomorrow? I need a ride down to Westmount. I say, alright man, I'll come pick you up. I might have something to do but it's not that I have to do it today. It's not a priority. So I'll take you. I had a friend who passed about two years now. His name was Ranold Small. Poor guy, he come down with these three major things that there's no hope for. He had diabetes, he had poor vision, glaucoma, and he used to go for dialysis. I looked after him until he passed. What I could do, I was there for. I would take him to doctors' appointments, to anything he has to do. When he had to go for his treatment, DATS transportation would pick him up, and I filled in all the rest of the stuff. When they had to go for groceries, he said, okay Leslie, on Thursday we have to go for groceries. That's once every two weeks. I went and collected them. I went shopping with them, we came out, and I dropped them back home. They were not too far away. It's only ten minutes back and forth. So all of those things I'm proud of doing, and I am getting the rewards that today, like I said, if something shuts down on me I'm sure that somebody's going to pick me up. That's all that counts for life. But with the way the

world's going today man, sometimes you've got to look at it but don't try to digest it. I've got a tendency now that I turn the television off and let the first half hour go by. All you see now is are they hitting on you, she's hitting on you, and what for. For a little piece of the land, a little piece of dirt. What does mankind have to be fighting for? Ukraine and Russia. Russia had to go in there and poor innocent kids there are in the rubble, not knowing where to put their head. Why go so destructive? What you going to gain by it? Just because you have a little power that you can do something. But the guy that set it up has never come. When it's all said and done, he's going to go down into the dirt like anybody else. Why make other people's lives uncomfortable for no reason? What are they fighting for? Nobody knows. Mass destruction. Look at the billions that you see that those people had made over the years, nice buildings. Mankind makes such a destructive weapon that it destroys everything in seconds for no apparent reason. What are you going to gain? When everything's all said and done, as I said, we come from the dust and we go back to dust, whenever that time is ready. So live and let live. Don't be angry with a guy for how he lives or whatever. Make peaceable. Like they say, you're your worst enemy.

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