

Charles B. Maxey

SR 4001, Oral History, by Jim Strassmaier

1994 February 25 - November 18



MAXEY: Charles Britton Maxey

JOHNNIE: Johnnie Obina Maxey

JS: Jim Strassmaier

Transcribed by: Lynda Bell, ca. 1995

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Tape 1, Side 1

1994 February 25

JS: History with Charles Maxey in his home on North Williams Avenue, Portland, Oregon. And the date today is February the 25th, 1994. And the interviewer is Jim Strassmaier, for the Oregon Historical Society.

Let's start by my asking you to give your full name and the date and place of your birth.

MAXEY: My name is Charles Maxey and I was born on February 13th, 1917. My place of birth is St. Augustine, Texas.

JS: I think it would be good to have some idea of the background of your family. That's going back beyond your parents. Do you know some of the history, the earlier history, of your family? Your mother's side of the family? And your father's side?

MAXEY: I know very little about either one. I think I know less about my mom's family background. My father's background, as I was told was of – they were from Virginia. I remember that after Reconstruction days, some person came to the part of Virginia that the foreparents lived and encouraged them to come to Texas because the, the person had quite a bit of property and they wanted them to work part of the property

in order to convey to them part of the property for their pay. And this would give them ownership of land and they figured this would be a good way to do it. And I understand there were quite a few families that were transferred from Virginia to Texas after Reconstruction for that particular reason.

JS: Do you think it was a white former slave owner? A plantation owner?

MAXEY: He was white. I don't know about a former slave owner or not. I don't know the history behind that.

JS: And what was your mother's family name?

MAXEY: My mother's family name was Watts. And as far as I know, she was born in New Orleans. And she was brought to Texas at a very young age, after her father, or mother probably, had died; one of the two. And the rest of the family — she was the baby of I think of about eight or nine children. And she was raised by the older kids of the family, which is pretty popular known in those days, that the older ones would raise the younger ones, should something happen to the family. And I don't remember too much about her, her family.

My father's family, I understand there were four boys and four girls of my father's family. And as far as I know, all — I know nothing about any grandparents. I don't know how long they lived. In fact I never was around too much of my father's family, because my mom and dad separated at an early age. At my early age.

JS: Oh, your parents?

MAXEY: Yes, my parents, separated. And my mom, being the mother of seven took four of us, and my father took three and we were divided, probably for about five or six years. And later we were brought back together and we all were together for — until each

one of us got old enough and we left my father again to go to my mother. And we all ended up at my mother's.

JS: I see. Your father took – how were the children divided? Do you know?

MAXEY: I've never known as to how they came to a conclusion as to which kids to carry. But my baby sister was, the youngest, was the baby at that time. I think less than a year old. And the second youngest brother, she took. And I was the third boy, and the fourth child in age. She took me, and she took the oldest son, which was the oldest, so that there was four of us. And my father kept the oldest daughter, the second oldest son and the youngest boy. Now how they came to that conclusion, I've never known.

JS: And so, if you'll help me with that again, in your family, can you – it would help to have the names and the order of the children.

MAXEY: Oh, the names and order of my sisters and brothers, the oldest boy was Randolph Maxey, which, I understand, was born around 1909. And I have a second brother, oldest brother, who was John Oliver Maxey, which is born, I think the third of May. And I have a sister that was born in 1916.

JS: Her name?

MAXEY: Her name is Hannah May Maxey, which is Grant now. And myself was born February 13th, 1917. And my brother, next to the youngest, was Jack Maxey, which was born 1918. I don't remember exactly, but I think it was about April. And the youngest born 1919. And my youngest sister was born 1922.

JS: Okay. And the brother, youngest – younger than you, his name?

MAXEY: Is Jack Maxey.

JS: Oh, oh, okay. And then after Jack came this sister?

MAXEY: No, the youngest brother and then the sister.

JS: I see. Okay. And his name, the youngest brother?

MAXEY: Harry.

JS: Okay. And the youngest sister, the youngest of the family.

MAXEY: Is Willa Marie Maxey.

JS: So her first name is Willa?

MAXEY: Willa Marie.

JS: Okay. Okay. Oh good. That's going to help because they're apt to come into the picture from time to time. Oh, tell me again the oldest – the name of the oldest one.

MAXEY: The oldest one was Randolph Maxey.

JS: Randolph. Oh right. Okay. Good. Well it would be nice to hear about your parents and your memories of your parents, to get some idea of what they were like.

MAXEY: To mention about my parents I think would have to put first with the time that I spent with my mother. And I don't remember too much with my father, because when my mom and father separated, my first year in school – I don't know whether that

was five or six years old. I think it was the beginning part of school. And I think in order to go to school at that time you had to be seven. That is full-time. I think you could go before then, but I think full-time, I think you had to be seven years old. And I was with my mother. I had gone to school, I think, a part of a year when she and my father separated. And I stayed with her until which time I was third grade, third or fourth grade, when we came back to live with my father. And I stayed with him three years. And my mother was still separated from my father and she was living in a different city. And as far as I remember as the kids got older, around 12 to 15 years old, all usually would leave my father and go to my mother. And that's the way we ended up, all of us ended up.

Life with my father is not very clear to me because he was not a person seemed like that was bent too much on the family-type of thing with the kids. Because I don't know whether he was married to the woman, or that she was the woman what moved in, the housekeeper or what, with us. But I do know that for about three years we lived there with my father and her. And as I got older, let's see, I think I was about 12 or 13, I left my father with my two younger brothers and went to my mother, to stay. And that's where I stayed there until I went to school. I left to go off to school.

JS: What was your father's name?

MAXEY: My father's name is Robert Maxey. My mother's name Virga Maxey. And I don't have too much recollection of my father. I don't know.

I know that we were – when we went back to him, my father and my mom had bought a farm that they got before World War I. They lived on a farm and as far as I know I've never known my father to work anyplace other than just his farm. And I don't remember too well as to what was raised on the farm. I know we had some animals and I don't remember the crops too well. But I do know that he was a farmer. And as far as I understand from other people, was very successful at being a small farmer. And I think most – from what I hear most of the things that he raised was things that he could sell all

the time right off the farm. He didn't sell, didn't raise too much like cattle feed, or cotton or stuff like that. Practically everything he raised was more like food stuffs for people.

And my early education, I remember going to a very small segregated school. To me seemed like it was miles away. And I don't remember how many months a year – I forgot to ask my sister and brother how many months a year the school was. I don't know whether it was a very short time. But to me it seemed like a school year was a lifetime at that time. I don't know how long it was but as far as I remember now, it was only elementary school, though. And before going to my mother and going further in my education well, I did go to this elementary school that was in the community where I was. And I went to my mother – I finished high school after I went with her. And after finishing high school I went to college. Finished college.

JS: When you were going to school are there some experiences that stand out in your memory of going to school that give an impression of, you know, what the experience was like for you?

MAXEY: Yes. As a youngster going to the first small school that I went to for the first three to four years, seemed to me it was a lot of large kids. And I – to me being small, I don't know how large they were at that time. They could have been kids only about 11 or 12 years old. But to me they were real large kids. And the experience was there seemed like many of the larger kids were more or less helpers to the teacher, because there were so many kids. Seemed like the larger kids were, would help with the smaller kids with their work.

And, as I say, my memory about many activities, I remember some activities, extra-curricular activities going on, such as, you had games like foot races. They had throwing of the ball and swinging contests and things like that, who could swing the highest and stuff of that sort. And at this time most of your swings were made from chains that were hung in trees, you know; and probably with an automobile tire for the part you sit on. And I remember having a lot of fun on those because you played games of bumping

somebody with them all the time; I remember that. And I remember also kids being knocked out by them a lot of time, because the smaller kids would want to play too, and they'd run into these swings and get knocked out with them.

I don't too much – I can't remember too much dramatic about my first years in school. I don't know too much of an interest too much on it. Just a long ways, seemed like, which I had to walk. And also the weather being real cold.

JS: It sometimes was cold.

MAXEY: Yes. And rainy.

JS: Let's see, where is it in Texas? What part of Texas is that?

MAXEY: That is in East Texas. That's not too far from the Louisiana line. That's about, I'd figure about 25 to 50 miles off the Louisiana line going straight down between the line of Texas and Louisiana going south.

JS: So it's fairly far south, or is it, in the state, or in the middle or?

MAXEY: I would say it's in the upper part because it isn't too far from – I would say it's about, about 200 miles from Texarkana.

JS: Oh, okay.

MAXEY: Yeah. I would say it's between Texarkana and Beaumont, Texas.

JS: Okay. So sometimes the Arctic cold dipped down into there. Could do that.

MAXEY: Well, maybe as a youngster, to me it was awfully cold. When you understand that that still isn't too far from the Gulf. It's only a short distance from the Gulf. I figure from the Gulf itself it's only about 225 or 230 miles. And all that in there's known as the Mississippi Valley which means you get the influence of the warmth coming off of the Gulf and also lots of rain, lots of wind coming off of the Gulf. At the same time you're accommodated with the bad weather coming out the north. Which is coming out of Oklahoma, down through Canada. And out of Alaska and all. So you do get some pretty cold weather down there, you know.

But it's a pretty, I'd say it's a pretty, well grown up place with timber and all. And, and most of it since I've gotten grown, I realize the fact that timber has gotten much larger since I was a small kid. It was a place where, evidently, it was a lot of timber and they must have had lots of lumber and things that people made a living about the lumber.

JS: Okay. So you've been back to see the place?

MAXEY: I was there last year.

JS: Oh, really?

MAXEY: Yes. I was there last year. And it kind of made me feel bad in that I didn't go back enough to connect my memories of the place. In fact I lost a lot of beautiful memories that I thought I had, that I didn't have when I went back there last year. Because I pictured the place as being almost a paradise. And I found it all different. In that, as a kid when I lived in a place where seemed like it was a nice road, which was fine. But now you have highways through there that seem to take away something, because a place that you thought was four or five miles was only less than a mile. And so it crumbled up all of the things that I'd made up my mind that the place was like. So it was a...

JS: [Laughs] Spoiled things.

MAXEY: Yeah. I think a lot of times, I think people will find the improvement in a place, like highways and things like that, enhance it for them. But it seemed to destroy some of the things that I had in my mind that the place was like.

And, of course, another thing, seemed like to me the houses were real, real nice houses and everything around there. And this being way over 50 years later, you got to remember that they, they built some other houses and torn down some of the older houses. And the older houses looked like, to, with in my mind were more beautiful than the ones they built there now, which are much better houses now. But as a kid when, I saw them, looked like to me they were some of the most beautiful houses I'd ever seen.

I mentioned I have a memory of the houses around there in the community – I don't know if you've seen where they have brass lightning rods on top of houses. They said, I think they said that was to deter lightening from striking the property. Practically all the houses had that on it. And to me I thought that was the dressed-up-est look I'd ever seen in houses. In fact when the sun would shine on something like that, it was a picture to see. And practically all the houses had that on it. But when I went back I don't see that. And it seemed like to me the beautiful part of the place had been taken away.

JS: Was your house – was your father's farm house or your mother's house, were they still there? Did you see them?

MAXEY: No. No signs of it at all. In fact that was another thing. It took away from me all the vivid pictures that I had of the place of where I was born. Because it had grown up so much in trees, and streams that I figured was there, was not there. And streams that I didn't realize was there, are there. And so the contour of the landscape had changed so tremendously, that my dream is worth keeping rather than try to go back and see it and recapture it again.

JS: How well off was your family? What were their economic circumstances? Thinking of both your dad and your mom, was it about the same?

MAXEY: You mean after they separated?

JS: Yeah. Was your mother worse off than he was, or do you have any impression of that?

MAXEY: No, not too much of that. I do know that there was some things weren't real good when I went with my mother as far as having as much food as I wanted to eat. Seemed to realize that, I realized early that you just couldn't waste food. And when I came back with my father, I didn't see that we had much better. Because this was back almost beginning of the Depression at that time. And I could see that we had plenty of the kind of food that you raised on a farm, but for a kid when you didn't have a lot of sweets, or a lot of fruit – well fruit the year around, because as far as fruit, we had lots of fruit, because we grew it. But to have it year around, like probably if you were able to live in a city where you could buy it, and things like that, you probably – yeah.

But I would say that, seemed like my father had, as far as, I don't know economically the money's worth at that time, because I didn't have the knowledge to value too much. But I will say that having food and animals around the place, we had lots of that. Now how well off he was, I don't know. But I do know that it must have not been too bad because they never did get rid of the property. The property still belongs to us.

JS: Oh, it does?

MAXEY: Yes. That's what I was down there to see about. In fact, I'll have to go back again this summer because I wasn't able to get too much done. I was able to get it surveyed, and all. Yes, it still belongs to the sisters and brothers of us now.

JS: So, oh, in other words your father wasn't a lease holder.

MAXEY: No.

JS: He was a – he owned the property.

MAXEY: He owned his property. He owned his property. Right. And this was not a big plantation type of property. It was a small family type of property, I think somewhere between 50 and 100 acres, something like that.

And then we – his parents – his grandfather and three brothers had bought some property together even before, about the time he was born, around 1885 I believe it was, they bought some property. Supposed to have bought 1,000 acres of property, three brothers of them. And we still have a part of that property which has gotten down to now, with my sisters and brothers is only about 35 acres, out of that that came from my grandfather's three hundred and some acres. But they bought that after Reconstruction, also. And I don't know exactly what year my father and mother bought the property but I saw on record that my grandfather bought this property in 1885, 1886, something or that sort.

JS: How well off were you compared with other people? When you were a kid, did you have sort of an idea of where you stood in terms of other people and how well off they were?

MAXEY: Not very much, because it is only about two years before I left my father that we had owned a car. My father bought a brand new car, in, sometime in the 1920s, which would have put me about eight or nine years old. He bought a brand new car. And before that we didn't have a car. And so I don't know – that was because he had come into some money or whether or not he had money all the time and just didn't care about the transportation or not. But I do know he bought one new car when I was about that

age. And as I said that puts me around 1926, 1927, something like that. And other things, he did not have machinery to work the farm. That is, gasoline machinery like; most of the things that he had to work with was animals, which was horses and mules.

JS: Okay. Now in this time, what were your experiences of whites? What was the racial situation in that area?

MAXEY: You know, this is funny because before I left there the last time to go to my mother, it wasn't much contact I had with whites, because of the fact that all of the land in that community was owned, majority, by Blacks. And it was in a community called Maxeytown. There were so many Maxeys there they called the community Maxeytown. And I don't remember one white family living in that community.

And, to me, with the exception of when they had company of whites, and we had company of Blacks, I don't think it made any difference. Because when we were kids playing with them, we played with them and it never did make that much difference. So I really began to realize after I'd gone back to my mother at about nine years old, nine, ten years old that there was a tremendous social difference with Blacks and whites as far as socializing together. I had – it was real strange to me to realize that white kids lived close to you, and most of their, most of their company would be whites out of the community. And same with Blacks. So my experience started much later about there's a definite social difference by the law in the state of Texas at that time. And that was a big shock.

JS: How did that come about?

MAXEY: Most of the time because I had gone back to my mother. My mother started all of us to work real early. And at that time the work that you could get to do in the city – my mother had moved to the city then and was buying a place.

JS: What town was it in?

MAXEY: This was Longview, Texas. We moved to Longview, Texas and my mom was buying a place. In fact, I still own that home that she bought at that time. Because my other sisters and brothers, when she passed, didn't particularly care to keep it and I wanted it, more or less for nostalgic reason. And I still own it.

And we – and she was doing domestic work. She worked at a hotel and she worked in home of many professional people like – most of the people she worked for were attorneys, I remember. And we kids would get a job probably raking the yard in the fall of the year, when there were a couple leaves, and then in the spring and summer probably get a job working the flowers, or stuff like that.

And that, that was when I began to realize that there was definitely a social difference and that I experienced that, because kids my age who were white you didn't see them doing that kind of work. It was only Black kids that did that kind of work and that alone gave me – and also I'd gotten far enough up in grades, I began to read and stuff like that. And I realized that there was a social difference in where I lived at that time of black and whites.

The whites went to one school and the Blacks went to another. And usually white schools had buses and the Black schools didn't. The Black kids had much further to walk to school than whites. The equipment in the schools were very different, in that Black kids had, if they got any equipment at all, had to get the equipment after it had been taken from the white schools, and they got new equipment – whether it was recreation equipment or whatever. Even your schoolbooks were books that were given to you after they had run the course with the white kids.

And at that time your educational books indoctrinated Black kids to the effect that, yes, you're Black; and yes there's a difference; and it gave you to understand that there is a superiority and an inferiority thing that goes on between you and whites, because you're Black and they're white.

JS: And how did they do that?

MAXEY: This is in the stories in the books.

JS: There were Blacks and whites in the stories?

MAXEY: On the stories too much about Blacks was something that Blacks had done bad. [Laughs]

JS: Oh, really?

MAXEY: Yes. And your stories that you had about white kids, I mean, everything was blown up to be they were God's children.

[End of Tape 1, Side 1]

Tape 1, Side 2
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MAXEY: And so, try to do anything to get around them, and if you can't get around them, tell them to see your father. That you'd rather not them hit you. And after I grew up, then you understand, well this is what you're going to have to learn to do. If you don't learn to fight for yourself they're going to push you around. They'll push you around as far as they think you should go, and then push you farther. So I would say, don't invite a fight; but if you see you can't get out of it, and then just – you just have to fight to keep from getting, letting them know they can't just kill you and you do nothing about it. Don't be the person who – try to get around it if you can. If it means going on the other side of the street.

[To JOHNNIE] What is that? Is that for me? Oh, I appreciate that.

JOHNNIE: The box was stolen and it got wet!

MAXEY: That's your daughter, right?

Yeah. I have never figured that I was a person who now feel that I'm quick to fight. I'm not and I wasn't then. But I've been a person that – I hate to get physically angry. I really do.

JOHNNIE: [In background] Charles'll want to speak to you.

JS: Okay, you'd better unhook that.

MAXEY: Just a second, fellas.

[Tape stops]

As, as long as I was in the South, and I stayed there two years after I got out of college, I never did go out of my way to try to fight with anybody, white or Black. And I always tried to go out of my way to keep from getting in a fight with anybody.

JS: Was it after the one fight that you had where, you know, they took you into the police station and the two kids had jumped on you?

MAXEY: Jumped on me? Yes.

JS: Was that the last fight? Or was that sort of the climax and then afterward...

MAXEY: To me having a fight with whites?

JS: [Yes].

MAXEY: No, that was not; because even again, at times when you'd go out on delivery probably white kids'd be playing in a vacant lot and lot of them would just get a big kick out of let's chase the Black boy and beat him up.

JS: Oh, it just kept going.

MAXEY: Yeah. Yeah. This is something that you had quite a bit of during your whole growing up. It was a jealousy on one part because the fact was known all the time that if a Black kid tore up a bicycle — and for some reason they used Black kids mostly to be delivery boys at drugstores. They claimed Black kids were faster bicycle riders and could ride longer. I don't know if there was any truth to that; I don't think so. I think we didn't have jobs and we were glad, you know, to have a job of that sort riding a bicycle.

But, no; there were several fights that I had. And as I said again, I never did go unprotected from the person I worked with. The first chance I had of any involvement

with a white person being white, I mean, old or young, I always went back and reported that to them. And consequently I never did have any serious trouble once I'd had a run-in with somebody.

JS: Oh, you learned that?

MAXEY: Yes.

JS: When your boss went – when your boss stood up for you that one time.

MAXEY: Yes. Well most of the time, as I said again, what would make you do this a lot of time, you'd – if for instance, you're riding a bicycle and somebody'd feel that you caused them to dodge a certain way or they figured you were riding too much in the way for their car; and they'd probably holler at you and call you a little Black son-of-a-bitch or something like that. If ever that happened to me, I always went back and told the person I was working for. I said, you know I wasn't doing anything that I felt was wrong. And I always tried to get the kind of car it was and how the person looked. And many times the person would know the person, you know, who worked there in the city or something like that; if you told him what kind of car they were driving. And they'd get in touch with their boss; said, "Look, I have a colored boy working for me, and this person told me you're going to run over and kill him one of these times. Don't let my boy come up hurt." You know, it was just things like that.

And I learned to do that, as I said, because many times if Blacks work for whites, and some other white felt like he didn't like him, or wanted to hurt him or something, it would – no most, but as I said. I worked for people most of the time that seemed to have thought that I pleased them in my work and when somebody said something to me like that, they were going to do something to me, I'd always report it.

JS: Did other people your age learn how to do this, too?

MAXEY: I would believe so. It never was a thing where I met with other Blacks and told them about incidents of mine of that sort. I believe so, because there were Blacks that I know that didn't seem to have too much problem with whites. And I think many Blacks learned to do that. That if you were doing your job for the person you were working for and they were paying you well enough for you to do it, and you weren't a person who causes them problems all the time by stealing, tearing up, or messing up whatever they had, when you were hired to see after what they had, and they trusted you with it, well, you had to be a person of importance with them. So, many of them didn't shirk at all to tell a person, you don't bother a person who works for me and — as long as that person doesn't bodily harm you. You let me know when he does something to you.

JS: In a way it sounds like they were dealing with the prejudice of the South, too. The bad aspects of it that they were having to deal with too.

MAXEY: Yeah.

JS: Or, how much credit are you going to give them for that? Is it — what's that from?

MAXEY: I think I'd give them a lot of credit to people who had something. I think most of your problem to start with would be the poor whites compared with the Black. I think he figures that if the job is a pretty good job, a white should have it. If the Black is making pretty good money, then a white should have it. And the white person who has something — many times I know I've gotten raises they told me, don't tell the white boys who are working in the place that I got it. And I think they realized that; that they were dealing with that. And that they had to deal with the poor white along with the Black.

JS: And you mother was really supportive. You could talk to your mother.

MAXEY: Yes, I could talk with my mother and I think my mother understood probably more with what was going on with a Black kid, because I remember her telling me time and time again there were certain Blacks who had worked for some of the families that, you know, if not the family she was working with in that home, probably in the city or something, and something had happened to them, and how the people had acted that Black kid working for them. I know quite often she, if they'd recommend me to somebody she said, "Now please recommend my son. My son is not a bad kid to get along with, with white people. I think he can get along with white people; but will you please let them know that if they can't get along with him, to not want to kick him, or hit him, or curse him." You know.

People like to have somebody they can vent their bad feelings to and in many cases, I always figured in the South, it's poor white people wanted to vent their anger and frustrations to take it out on Blacks.

JOHNNIE: All my white friends were good people. [Laughs]

MAXEY: So I didn't then, and I don't today to feel that I have to figure that white people fit into a mold, that they are bad, or indifferent.

JS: So you – there was a – there was that complexity and diversity in your experience.

MAXEY: Yes, right. And you know I feel real bad when I talk with many Blacks who tell me of just the reverse experience that they had. Because I do know that I was probably in a situation to get the same treatment or worse. But somehow fate gave me some kind of difference about having the mother that I had. And she always told me that they expected you to say, "yes, sir", and "no, ma'am" to them. And that is, "And don't you say, 'yassa', 'no'm'." You know that was the common thing they expected a Black to say. "Where you'd learn to say 'yes, sir' to me? Where'd you learn?" Well last people I worked for told me to say "yes, sir" and "no, ma'am" to them, you know. And it seemed like they

wanted to keep you in that stupid rut of speech. “No. No, sir. No. No.” But it was “yes, sir” and “no, sir” or “yes, ma’am” and “no, ma’am”. And, but...

JS: Pervasive system.

MAXEY: Yeah. I think to – if you, if you approach them in a certain way, then they were, they would treat you a certain way. If they asked you, “Well, why did you say no, sir to me?” Well, the last people I worked for said that. “Who’d you work for?” I worked for George Lacy. I worked with Attorney Jones, or somebody. And those were people that everybody knew. So...

JS: Now, you’re reading at this time. I’d like to know more about it. Were you a real reader as a kid? Well let’s say you’re in high school, too.

MAXEY: Yes.

JS: What sorts of things you were reading?

MAXEY: In high school, the height of my reading was material from Black authors. My principal – I went to school with a fellow who was raised up, born and raised in the town that I went to high school to. And his mother worked with some of the richest people there. They ran a department store. And they helped him to go to college and he was working on his Master’s degree when he was my high school principal, which was very unusual at that time. And he had gone to school at Fisk University and also...

JS: National?

MAXEY: Yes. And also he’d gone to graduate school at University of Chicago. And in growing up he had worked as a porter like I had around stores with the people his

mother worked for. And when he came back, he was on the school board and he got him a job teaching school there, which is a very good job for blacks at that time. And also the principal of the high school died and they appointed him high school principal.

And he always accepted the fact that if we had anything we'd like to read, that we could put in the library, that the school do it. And if not, then we had what we call a library fee that we paid. I think it was 15 cent a week, or 15 cent something, that he bought books from Black writers and put in that library. And your teachers, your history teachers and your English teachers gave you assignments out of those books, so much for you to read. And you had to read and report that. And quite, quite good.

You'd be surprised to know the different authors. I remember some in particular. I don't know if you've heard of Carter G. Woodson, who was your best-known historian who wrote – one of his best books was *The Economic Status of the Negro*, which was written back in the 1920s. And he also dealt with a lot of the economic things of – that affected Blacks, both South, North, foreign. See at this time, I mean it was almost, you didn't think of anything any blacks being in any part of Europe, at that time.

[To JOHNNIE] Look in my jacket. Oh, you going over to Willie's?

And then reading a lot of these publications you found that out. And we had another author that was a satire writer, more or less, Langston Hughes. I don't know if you heard of him.

JS: Yeah.

MAXEY: Quite a writer in his time. And Paul S. Dunbar. A lot of the stuff now that you hear these kids doing rapping? Okay. He did that in a dialect satire type of a thing.

JS: Oh, he did?

MAXEY: “Step back, Miss Lucy, step back. Where are you gwine today? Oh, I'm dressed up and I'm gwine to the dance.” You know. He just used that and humor, you

know, and, and showing some of the things that the different classes of their time, Blacks, had set themselves up as being different to the economic status and showing that they, too, dressed up like the whites. They, too, had parties to go to. But it was usually in a Black dialect – Southern Black dialect at that time. And many, many teachers didn't allow the Black kids to read that because they said it was degrading. And to find out why they had you to read the things they did, he took what the whites were doing and made a thing that Blacks in the same status would do the same thing, or were doing the same thing. Whether they had nice cars to ride in, whether they had nice homes, or whether they had nice clothes, or whether they had nice food, and wrote about that. Wrote about their parties and their big dinners, and the ups and downs — stuff like that.

So, yes, there's a lot to read; and, and we had quite a few Black writers at that time. And one of the prerequisites, in your senior class you had to buy or read a complete book by some Black author. And this was...

JS: You had to buy it?

MAXEY: Buy it. Or you had to get – prove to the school that you weren't able to buy it. This was not furnished now, by the white school district. Any book that you read that was by a Black author, you had to buy it. And my principal was one of the few Black principals who didn't mind going on record as having his junior and senior classes to read Black periodicals and books. And that was one of the prerequisites to graduating. You had to read and report a Black book as a junior or senior.

JS: Do you have any idea of whether this was exceptional? Did you know at the time that this might be exceptional, the program that they had there?

MAXEY: Yes, because you'd come in contact with kids from other places, other Black kids. And many of them didn't have any idea that you had Black writers.

JS: So it was an exceptional program.

MAXEY: Yes, it was.

JS: What was the principal's name?

MAXEY: Leslie White. Leslie J. White was his name.

JS: Yes, he sounds exceptional. The University of Chicago is in a pretty impressive background.

MAXEY: Yes. And later on during the war he was such a progressive Black. And as I said, it was because of the respect that the people his mother had worked for – because she had retired and she was working at the school under him, working in the cafeteria. She retired working for the white people she'd worked for. She first started out as being the laundry maid and stuff, and then she got to be their cook. And the raising – help raising of the kids and all that stuff. So she retired from that.

And during the war he was such an outspoken person against the treatment the Blacks were getting, going into World War II, that he resigned from there. He wasn't forced but he was harassed by the writings in the paper and all about his attitude, that he resigned from there and went and was a principal in Gary, Indiana, and later became superintendent of one portion of the school in Gary, Indiana. And he returned back to Texas after the war to become head of the fight to desegregate the schools in the state of Texas.

JS: Oh, really?

MAXEY: Yes. He was the main person over the Black teachers in the state of Texas. The Black teachers' association. You had two associations which was the Black teachers'

association and the teachers' association of Texas. And he worked to get those two groups together to equalize pay, plus integrate schools.

And most Black principals at that time were not in favor of that because they knew once you had integrated schools, that most of them would not be principals. And he fought for that because he thought he was qualified to be a principal in any school they had. And he fought for other Blacks to further their education. That that's one thing that he advocated, that you get more than just a B.S [Bachelor of Science] or a B.A. [Bachelor of Arts] degree. That once you get equal pay, you're going to have to do equal work. In other words you're going to be qualified. So, he pushed for that and fought for that.

JS: What was he protesting about practices regarding the military in the Second World War?

MAXEY: Okay. Blacks were not permitted to go into the Air Force, if you remember, in the first part World War II. Now, okay, then once they went into the Air Force there's a separate. And the planes that the black cadets were flying, training, at Tuskegee at that time were airplanes that the white boys had used before them. In other words, if they got a new plane in, they carried the older ones to Tuskegee so the Black cadets would have a chance.

In fact, I volunteered for the Air Corps at that time. That's what it was, wasn't the Air Force. Air Corps. I volunteered for that the first year that she and I were married. And we had a daughter – but it was the only thing kept me out of it was the fact that at that time they weren't carrying any married men with any kids. And when I filled out – I even took the written exam on that. And we were going upstairs to have our physical exam and they called me out of ranks because of the fact that they saw where I filled out my beneficiaries was a wife and baby. And they told me that I could volunteer later, they thought.

Later? That's when this big fight came up and they made it apparent that Blacks were flying second-hand planes. And some had even flown some in combat in Northern Africa.

JS: So, what did you get out of this reading that you did? What did it do for you?

MAXEY: Protest. Reason to search yourself as to what you could do to think of yourself more as a real human being, rather than a Black human being. Looking for the better things of life. I think it prepared me becoming a senior citizen and a super senior citizen in age, rather than a Black senior citizen. And I think it has made me feel, up until this point, that I'm an important part of this country that I live in, this city that I live in, and the world that I live in; that I have a contribution to make.

JS: You're looking at the whole line of effect all through your life from this. So it was that important a part of your experience was this experience with this principal and his program and readings and...

MAXEY: Good experience and bad experience. I got some bad experience out of it. Yes.

JS: Really?

MAXEY: Yes. And the bad experience was that when I got out of school, I taught two years in my home town, which to me was really a treat. I mean it's something I couldn't — I'd've done it for nothing with the belief that I was, I had reached the point that I'm able to go back in my home town, and I knew what I had been dealing with, and felt like what I'd like to do with some of the minds that I'd come in contact with. Prepare them for doing as good, and better than me.

And also once I had realized that I was not going to be able to make a worthwhile living teaching with the salary that I was getting, that I'd have to go into other types of work, and when I went into other types of work, then I'd have to take that work according to a Black, not according to my qualifications. And this was out of the South at this time, because I had left the South. I left the South and went to Denver to go into construction work for instance, during World War II. And even construction work paid me so much more than what I was making teaching. And I found out in Colorado Springs, working on Camp Carson, there they didn't want me to go into a training program. I asked to go in as a carpenter helper or cement finisher helper, as a plumber helper, any kind of helper to be able to eventually graduate from that to the top job. And they didn't want me to get into that. They wanted me to be a carpenter or cement helper or whatever. And I figured that once I'd left the South that I wouldn't encounter that. I refused to accept that job.

I left that same day and went to Denver and tried to get a job doing the same thing. And guy told me, he said, "I see according to you, your best bet is going to be to sign up and go down and work at the depot where they're building igloos and where they're building ammunition dumps, and stuff like that. Now they will train you down there. And so now what you do you sign up here in the union, and we will have so much drawn out of your – taken out of your salary every week for your union dues." And I found that was the thing.

Do you feel like it's getting cooler in here?

JS: Yeah. Watch out, you're still hooked in.

MAXEY: I wish you'd said. Excuse me.

JS: Well, I didn't feel that cold. But I think maybe there is a door open.

MAXEY: No, I don't think it's the door.

JS: Oh.

MAXEY: The heat is on about 69.

JS: Oh, oh, okay.

MAXEY: I don't think this door has to do with it.

So, once I went to work at the ammunition dump in Tooele, Utah right out of Salt Lake, right straight down south on the lake. Went to work for Morrison-Knutson and they gave me such chance as to work as a cement finisher helper, as a carpenter helper, as a plumber helper or whatever. But a chance to at the same time be able to take the exam at a certain time to upgrade myself. And I found that I started off there at 75 cent an hour which was a heck of a – was more than twice what I was making teaching. Because I made so much money working eight hours a day, plus overtime. I worked 14 hours practically every day because my wife wasn't there and all I was there — working — I worked most of the time seven hours, seven days a week. And many times 14 hours a day. And I'd had so much money I thought somebody was giving me money.

JS: [Laughs] Oh. About what year is this now?

MAXEY: This is 1942. Yes. The summer of 1942 our school was out; I got that job. And I worked there for almost a year. We were building those, those warehouses where they are going to load and ship ammunition out of there. We're building those great big warehouses where they got enough explosives and poison over there to kill the [Inaudible], I believe. And buildings those igloos where they were going to bury it, in the igloos. Those are types of things we doing.

I worked for Morrison-Knutson, one of the biggest construction companies, I guess yet, in the world. They were at that time. And they wanted me to go to Alaska. They wanted to train me to handle heavy dirt moving equipment, and from there to

engineering and stuff like that. But I'd caught pneumonia down there; it was so cold down there and we were sleeping in barracks and stuff. And I figured I didn't want to take no chances going to Alaska, still in more cold.

And I'd read quite a few papers. I read two and three papers every day, and I found Northwest fitted me better, because, I think, they showed the temperature here was about 67 degrees; an average of 67 degrees.

JS: So that's what helped you make your decision.

MAXEY: Yes. I had in mind other, more familiar sounding places to go to: San Francisco, I could go to Los Angeles, I could go to Seattle. But the climatic conditions...

[End of Tape 1, Side 2]

Tape 2, Side 1
1994 February 25

MAXEY: Little bit because I think I – you’ve questioned me as to what...

JS: Oh, I’m sorry. I had, I was in the middle of saying that. I was – I had said how – I was noticing how when I said, what did this preparation do for you in the school experience and the readings and so forth and it interested me that you took it all the way through your life to the present. And then you also said, and just to throw this in, said it also had had some negative things and I didn’t fully understand that.

MAXEY: Okay. Okay. I made application after I worked in the shipyard and I came here for two years and eight months. Also went into a training program at the shipyard. And when it got time to promote me, to getting one onto the apprentice part of the things, to do some of the things that I think I could learn to do, by the education I’d had, I was given quite a few excuses.

For instance I was working in the marine electric shop as an apprentice and when it was time to promote me, that I would be qualified to be the next lead man up, to go to another school which is higher than that one, to be trained, I was told that I had a bad attitude. I was told I was too young for people to work under me at that time. I was in my mid-20s. I think about 24 or 25; and they said I was too young for people to work under me.

But mind you, most of the people in the shop were white and most that were working in the type of work that I was doing, I had trained them. Once they came in after I had been there, if a new one would come in, usually put him with me. And you show him what tools he needs to do his job. You look at his blueprint. We would give them blueprints. We were working off blueprints. And when he would bring his, his print to me, I would show him how to lay out his work and what tools he needs to do it with. And when it came time for me to get my first promotion as a lead man, that was the excuse they gave. It was my time up, “You’ve been here long enough to get it, but your attitude

is not right. And you're too young that people wouldn't take, you know, take orders from you." And, okay, that one's an instance.

I found right then and there that the war was coming to a close, end, and I'd better try to prepare. So I came to my wife and I told her that I figured I'd better get something else. I put in for – this time they still have the General Motors building out here in Beaverton. They were just building it and they were putting ads in the paper every day. They wanted – they were getting their personnel together because they knew they were going to start building cars. And they were asking for preferably younger people who had at least a high school or a college degree. They wanted them to write. And I did; I wrote to them and they sent me back an application blank. I made out an application for that. And they accepted the fact and they started to sending me \$75 a month, for me alone. Told me, this is not pay; this was made to prepare myself — probably if I need certain types of clothes and stuff like that, you know. And I spent that check, about four or five months, I guess it was.

And when it came time, they'd write me and ask me for certain information. And I gave them all the information on education, background, and, and every – my experience and whatever I had done. And that was all fine. And when it came to the final thing they wanted me to send in, they wanted a picture of me. And when I sent the picture in, they had told me, "We do not want you to be mechanical-minded. We'd rather you not be mechanical-minded. We'd rather teach you our way of mechanics, because we're going into new tooling and we want you to teach mechanics and we'll teach you the way we want you to teach the mechanics. But we want you to be able to do that." And the letter I got back was, we are sorry you're not mechanical-minded enough for us to train you. And I had letters that I had gotten from them telling me that...

JS: I don't understand why that happened.

MAXEY: Yeah. But I sent – I do, I do. They were not ready for a young Black at my age at that time to be an instructor. They wanted me to be an instructor and they knew that they going probably come in contact with mechanics as old as I am now, maybe.

JS: Well, did they miscalculate? Did they not know you were Black? Or what happened?

MAXEY: They didn't. They didn't know I was Black until that time...

JOHNNIE: 'Til he sent the picture.

MAXEY: Because I sent the picture.

JS: Oh, I see. Oh right. Okay.

MAXEY: They asked me for a picture; wanted a picture of me. They said they were making up my working brochure and everything and they wanted a picture of me. But it wasn't 'til then that they turned me down, saying that that I wasn't mechanical-minded.

JOHNNIE: He was the wrong color.

MAXEY: But anyway, when I came to that, I told [my wife], I said, "You know a thing. I think I'm going to have to reverse myself of thinking that I'm qualified, that I have enough education to qualify myself for a better position. What I'd better do is think about what I have done before I came here, because it seems like my payday is going to have to come quick." That I'd spent a lot of time that if I had have known this, I'd been working on this before.

And I figured out that I had done valet work, I figured I had done all kinds of work, and best of all I had learned to barber. I'd learned to cut hair, in high school; I learned to

cut hair in college. And I saw ads in the paper; they were asking for people to register as, as apprentices in the barbering field. And when I made application for it, then I went down and they accepted me in the college when I filled out my qualifications and all.

And after I started to work they found out that they weren't going to be able to teach me too much, because most of the people that I figured that I'd probably have to be working on, since I'm going into a prejudiced world, whether I liked it or not, I was going to learn to cut mostly Black hair. And I carried mostly Blacks now with me, even though they gave me white's hair to cut. And I learned a lot by them teaching me much on doing white hair. And after I was there for a while they said, you know, "We feel that we have you trapped here. And what you do, why don't you make out an application to take the state board, because we have another state board coming up. But in school here, you're going to have to be here at least a year and then go into an apprentice deal. If you meet the board showing that you can do the practical work, they will give you your certificate."

So I did; I met the board and passed it. And they gave me a barber's license. Because they were not able to teach me how to do any improvement on cutting Black hair. It is a difference. People say cutting hair is cutting hair. It's not.

JS: No, I don't think so.

MAXEY: No. Because you'd have more kinky hair in Black hair than you'd have in white. Every once in a while you get a white person with curly, kinky hair. And that'd be curly-kinky. You wouldn't have kinky hair all together. And Black, you'd have all grades of hair; you'd have some very fine textured, and some curly, some coarse, fine, whatever. So, in that I found out that I had better leave it there. And while I was going in for barbering, I'd made application to the school board. I don't know if I told you that or not.

JS: Now, let's see. Oh, that was here.

MAXEY: Yes.

JS: I wonder if we can stop because we've gotten ahead of some things that need to work in earlier. And, back at the school situation; let's see, you and Johnnie meet in Texas.

MAXEY: In college.

JS: Yes. And so maybe we'd better go back, first of all, to the college experience. Where you went to school. Well, how you got to the college and where the idea came from.

MAXEY: Okay. I was a pretty good high school athlete. I could – pretty good trackman, fair baseball player, and better-than-average football player. So, I didn't have money enough to go to college.

And my principal asked me if I was going to college and I told him I had sent out an application but I hadn't gotten thing from them. And he told me, he says, "Well, it's getting late now, but if I get you a scholarship, some assistance, since you said you weren't able to go, would you go?" I told him, sure, I'd be happy to go. So he got me a scholarship with a denominational school, which is a college that was sponsored by the Black church. And I accepted.

JS: And the name of the school?

MAXEY: Texas College. And that is C.M.E. [Christian Methodist Episcopal] School that's sponsored by the Black church. And I got this on a football scholarship.

JS: Well, at some point let's talk about church and religion too. But now, go ahead with the, go ahead with the college thing. What...

MAXEY: Okay. I was given a four-year scholarship and I was told that if I got hurt playing or practicing football that my scholarship would be good for the four years. And that if I didn't make the team and was good enough to make the practice team, my scholarship is still good. So I figured I was pretty good, because I was able to stay on the team well enough to be on the practice team, whether I was playing on first team or second team. So I was always good enough to get my scholarship, so I did.

And I met Johnnie, my third year in school. I'm two years ahead of her. And we went together – well, actually, what had happened, my girlfriend didn't come to school at the time that she's supposed to come to school. She's supposed to be coming to school latter part of August. I always had to go the middle of August, so we'd go into training.

JS: Now, this was another girl?

MAXEY: Yes. And she came – she didn't come to school until way up in September, when juniors had to register. I was a junior at that year. And Johnnie had to come to school the first Monday, I believe, in September, and she registered as a freshman. So I started – they started having – usually the first couple of weeks they'd have quite a few social affairs, so you'd meet the new girls and all. For some reason or other I had a chance to meet a freshman. And I, could have fun with her, and no strings attached because when my regular girlfriend comes, then hey, I'd had fun with a freshman. [Laughs]

But it was just different because when my girlfriend came, many other students made so much of it that me and her began to, you know, have reason to not go with each other anymore. Cause they made it such that, "Girl, you crazy. You – this fellow, he's gone crazy over this freshman." You know, freshman thing, and so, anyway, we found out we had something in common. More in common than actually you probably would have had in most freshmen, because I found out that her home wasn't too far from mine. And I

found out that she liked music; I liked music; I liked to dance; she liked to dance; and so consequently we hit it off pretty good. So...

JS: Well, what was she like at that time? Can you remember things that struck you about her? You know, you had these things in common? Personality?

MAXEY: Yeah. I thought she was much more mature than every freshman. Most freshmen were giddy, kind of childish acting and more bashful, especially going to college. And I found her just a little bit different in that I thought she was – in fact when I first met her I thought she was probably transferring, had probably done her year or so at some other college. Then I found out she'd just finished high school. And, and I found that I had more in common with her than I did the average freshman. So for that reason I think it was much easier for us to start going together.

And usually when you start discussing your plans with a person that you meet, and we'd — I'd start talking plans with her, some things I'd like to do when I got out of school. And she had plans and all. So it seemed to have been somewhat alike. All exception of, my plans were to continue to going — I wanted to go to law school when I got out. And I didn't do that.

JS: Oh, law school? So, that was the direction you were going. How did you end up starting to go in that direction?

MAXEY: I wanted to go to law school because I knew of — there's always been, in my home, in Longview, Texas back in the early 1930s and there were quite a few Black attorneys came there, but they couldn't practice law. They had to do what they did under a white attorney.

In fact, the white attorneys found that very lucrative, in that a Black attorney could win a much better reputation with Blacks who had land that they were leasing or with their lease or their other businesses. They'd, they have more confidence in a Black

attorney, but they couldn't practice their law in the courthouse in cases like the white lawyers could. And I felt that there was going to be a change.

I felt things were going to be changed to where a Black could walk into the courthouse like anybody else and practice his law. And I had written to several places. At this time it would have been a perfect thing to do. I don't know why I wasn't able to stick with that because I had a scholarship to a law school in Missouri.

And the state of Texas at that time had gone so far as, if you were going to a law school, of which they didn't have a Black one in the state of Texas, or you're going to medical school, state of Texas would have to have paid for your tuition. And I was getting things filled out, and I figured another year I was getting a little assistance from one white attorney who was a pretty liberal-minded fellow. And I was filling out some papers where I could get my room, board and tuition, and probably some chance for a job opportunity, you know, while I was in school.

And while that was coming then I had a chance to get married. [Laughs] The old love bug, hitting. I said, well, hey, I might as well get married; I'd still go to school once I get out. And that didn't materialize.

So, I found out that I had enough education; I didn't have a whole lot of education to do anything that I wanted to do, but I did have that I could learn to do a lot of things better than, I could take with the amount of education I had and just start there. And that's what I – that's the premise which I had planned on.

JS: How many years of college did you have?

MAXEY: Four.

JS: Four. You graduated.

MAXEY: Bachelor of Arts, yes.

JS: You got your B.A.

MAXEY: I graduated Bachelor of Arts degree. And I found that I would — I had a pretty fair mind, and I figured that I could learn to do most anything that I wanted to. And I was sorry that the war came along, because I think I would have gone a different direction.

JS: Well, it's kind of good you had a chance to finish...

MAXEY: It was Lincoln University Law School that I had to go, in Missouri.

JS: And what, what major did you have?

MAXEY: I had two majors. I majored in economics and English.

JS: Oh. And how about the — it sounds like your teaching in high school was kind of — well it had some really good people. And how about college? How did that compare? Were there some special people?

MAXEY: Yeah. You went to another plateau because you found people who were national-minded, what was going on in the national scene, and people who were also interested in what was going on in the international scene. Instead of teaching you English literature, you were studying American literature and English literature; and you were studying any kind of literature, you know, that they figured that would enhance you in that, in that sphere of thinking and study.

And also the political situation was changing in the world. The world situation is changing. Everything is changing right in the cahoots of me finishing school because, you know, it was Hitler in 1939, beginning to invade the Baltic countries. It was Hitler during that time that was establishing himself in Northern Africa, through the power of Mussolini,

of Italy. And the world scene was changing so fast at that time, that had I not have been able to diversify I think I'd have been in a pretty bad situation. Because I took barbering, my experience out of college, and felt why should I – I've started a family and I needed something right now. And I can't get a job to where I can be trained on the job and still draw pay. I'd tried that.

JS: So this is – now you've moved from...

MAXEY: From the shipyard to barbering.

JS: You've been to Denver, and you've been to Tooele and you – Tooele Air Base, or whatever it is.

MAXEY: Yes.

JS: And then you've been – now you've gotten to Portland.

MAXEY: Right. And I'm working in the shipyard here in Vancouver. Because for working in Vancouver I lived in Tualatin, but why I worked in Vancouver was the fact that I wanted to go into the electrical union, because I wanted to go up and get into the electrical union because I understand they had training programs where you could be an electrical engineer, you get to be a master electrician, things of that sort. So there'd be some advancements. And there was no electrical union would let me get in it in the state of Oregon. And I had to go over to Vancouver and get in the electrical union, if I'm going to be working in the Vancouver shipyard.

JS: Did anybody tell you – you came with high hopes and, you know, of advancement and so forth. Did other Blacks who were there tell you? Did they pour a little cold water

on your hopes? Did – what did you hear about what the situation was going to be like as you started into it?

MAXEY: Yes. I was told by many Blacks that you're going to lose a lot of time because you're going to have to start at...

[End of Tape 2, Side 1]

Tape 2, Side 2
1994 February 25

JS: You were about to, before the phone call, tell about what some other Blacks were telling you about what the situation was going to be like that you were going to be getting into.

MAXEY: Oh. Well, sure. Well this is not only Blacks. This was everybody who I came in contact with at that time, because I would make mention to people of whom I would come in contact with, be them white or Black, and the political situation in the country at that time was kind of in upheaval too, in that people constantly would make mention of the fact about we into this great fight against Nazism and communism and all this stuff. And Blacks would have to be more than careful because they feel that Blacks are easy prey for these isms, [Laughs] you know. And more so, on any Black who was able to read or write. This is a funny time in life, for me, that everybody is skeptical of a Black that was able to want to have an opinion about something. That you wouldn't be stuck with being a Communist, or being stuck with aiding the Nazis or whatever. And I've never been able to figure that out.

JS: It sounds kind of crazy.

MAXEY: It still sounds crazy to me. It never felt – because I've always felt that from what I've read of a democracy, if a democracy's made to work halfway good it'd be better than anything that I was taught about, as far as I was concerned. But as I said, this was the thing that made me feel that I had to fight this, and this was the reason that I was not getting what I was supposed to get. Somebody thought I was going to be a Communist, or somebody thought I was going to be a Nazi. I don't know. Might have been an excuse.

JS: Well, and you ran into that word?

MAXEY: Yeah. Sure.

JS: And can you tell us some of the cases or instances where you ran into this concern?

MAXEY: Well, yes. I think I've always been a person who wanted to be involved in knowing what the political process is like. And I joined – I registered to vote. And I began to go to meetings of the Party, in fact the Republican Party, which everybody at that time thought all Blacks were going to be registered Democrat because of the New Deal of the great president, President Roosevelt. It had no reason of mine to want to be a Republican or Democrat for that matter. But I was told once I wanted to register that I'd have to register for the Democratic Party in the South at that time because there was nothing but the Democratic primary in the South.

JS: This is back in Texas?

MAXEY: Yes. And I'd have to register Democrat. And I felt I didn't want to be Democrat and I registered Independent. And they said, well your vote probably be thrown out. Well I never thought too much about that. With the exception of I still maintained that when I got where I could register, I was going to register. And I said I'll just register protest. I'll register Republican wherever I register. So that's what I did the moment I got to where I could register where they had a Republican Party. And that's what I did.

And I affiliated with the Young Republicans at that time. And I used to get fed back to me in lot of ways from whites, even in the Republican Party at that time, "Well you so liberal, you sound like you could be a communist. You sound like that you trying to push forth some communistic ideas."

I said, “What is communistic ideas? You living it and then I want it and why does that make me a Communist?” You know, why does that make me sound like a Communist?

JS: You were saying this in Texas or is that out here?

MAXEY: No, saying that here. Here. “Well, well Maxey, what you’re saying you’d like to have that sounds like the same thing the Communists wanted.”

I said, “It sounds like to me everybody wants something good. You have it; now I want it. Now why does that make me sound like Communist?”

And these were people, and this — not necessarily the people of whom said this to me, but this is time that I was meeting with people like past Governor McCall, present Senator Hatfield, which both of them are very fine people, they never said this to me, but some of the people whom I met with said this to me. And I don’t know in many Blacks that here who felt that, well, any Black that registered anything but a Democrat is crazy, or he must be hiding something that he doesn’t want anybody to know about, or something. And I never was able — and this always put a funny question in my mind. What do they think I’m looking for? What do they think I’m like?

I have never changed my registration; don’t intend to. I haven’t. And I disagree with 90% of most Republicans of whom I talk with. Because most Republicans I talk with tell me you are supposed to be conservative. And I’ve never wondered why I should put — be conservative because of the fact if I were a Republican. Or why should I be a liberal because I’m a Democrat? I think a person is supposed to think and give my opinion after that.

And I figured that most people who are conservative are not conservative because of their party affiliation. I found out most of us are conservative because we have something to be concerned about. Most people who are concerned, genuinely concerned about the welfare of the country, are people who want something or people who are trying to get something. And people who boast the fact they want to be liberal

regardless, are people who don't have too much responsibility. Just give me something. Don't tell me how I can work and get something or how the money should be spent. I think people who are concerned about money being spent, I think people who are concerned about the condition, the world affairs, I think they are people who have something to lose. And once you have that something to lose, I think it — that is your thinking of what a democratic country can be, that's your biggest thing to lose. And the next thing would be your physical thing that you might own, which would be property or money or whatever. But I don't think it has anything to do with what party you belong to, because I think if I were a Communist, I don't think I'd want the United States overthrown.

JS: So, well, I — when you are a Republican and you're here in Oregon, I can see why you're not going to be a Democrat back in the South, because we know that the Democratic — they're very conservative or a reactionary Democratic Party was in the South then. I mean I can see you not being a Democrat then. Then therefore being a Republican. But when you get into Oregon where the Democrats aren't that, why remain a Republican?

MAXEY: Okay. I'll answer that. I remember the first person here to sponsor supposed to have been civil rights bill for the state of Oregon, was a Democratic attorney. I can't think of his name right now. Anyway...

JS: It'll come later.

MAXEY: They gave him a bad time in the Senate down there as to why he was sponsoring the bill. And he did a satire type of joke about it and it was publicized. And he admitted doing it. And they asked him why he did it. He said, well that's just the way some of them act. And you know, I felt that as poking fun, a little bit, you know.

JS: What kind of a joke was it?

MAXEY: Well, it was a joke about – he put on a blackface type of a skit. [Sings in exaggerated dialect] “Now boy some ‘bove Mason-Dixon line, why I have my right like everybody else?” You know, one of those old type of things. And he did. I don’t know he’s expecting somebody to write about it? But there came out an article in the paper that he had done that. And that’s how he covered it up with the fact that he said it got under the skin of the Republicans for him to do it. And so he’s showing them that he was, I don’t know.

JS: It sounds like a bizarre opening. This was his attempt to make a contribution to the civil rights?

MAXEY: Yeah. That he was after the civil rights – the Blacks’ vote. And this was how he justified himself of fighting for civil rights was the fact that he thought Blacks were qualified for it, and they should have it, but at the same time when he do this blackface deal, it sounded like he figured they weren’t qualified to be. Made a joke out of it.

JS: So in other words his purposes were limited. Were they more his political ambitions?

MAXEY: He had never done any of passing legislation. He had been in the Legislature with people like Senator Wayne Morse and he’d always fought opposite to him of things. And you had, I would say, at that time, a pretty fair group of people here. Nobody thought too much about civil rights before World War II. It might come up every once in a while but you didn’t have enough blacks here for it to make any difference. And this is whom, when you start talking about civil rights, I think it’s gotten lost in the shuffle that there are other people minorities who, Hispanic, Indians, and other folk fit into civil rights deal, but it never meant anything until it came to the Blacks. And they told me you only had 900 in the whole state of Oregon.

JS: Yeah. When you came into Portland, now, those few Blacks that were here, what was the situation? Well, maybe we should go to, you're actually moving here, you and Johnnie come in and you have some children?

MAXEY: Well, I came here first and I was here about eight months before she came.

JS: And what were your initial experiences?

MAXEY: Well, I remember going to some of the churches. And usually when you went to a church you'd sign a visitor's list. And the moment you'd give for your hometown would be Texas, you'd get a comment from somebody, you know, "This place going to be overrun with you Southern Black folks." This is coming from other Black folks, you know. So it was sounding like you were coming in here and you might be intruding on what we have is better than where you came from. So, yeah.

JS: And other expressions of that that? What else happened that was their response to your coming into the town?

MAXEY: Oh, I think you get response from whites as such, "Are you planning on staying?" Or, "What are you planning on doing when the war is over?"

I said, "Well, I have no plans. I plan on staying."

"Well, there's no work here for Blacks."

"Well, what kind of jobs are for Blacks?"

"Well, they are porters, waiters, and bootblacks. How do you expect to find work?"

I said, "Put in for it and be trained to do it. I have some training in things I think I can do." Yeah.

JS: Did you – and part of the Blacks who were already here, can – do you have a kind of an impression of what they were like? I mean, here you're coming from Texas and you've been into some different cultures. Halfway house is Colorado and Utah and it's – coming from the outside, it's a chance to get your impression of the people that you're encountering. So what was distinctive about the Blacks who were the older Blacks of this area?

MAXEY: I think that most of the older Blacks of this area had got the idea that I came from the South, and the impression of the Blacks that were left in the South of the white man were inferior. And since I'm not – I came to South years ago and I've raised a family here, this should make me not like him, or not like her. I believe now that –.

And many of them knew better, because they knew that more Blacks came out of the South were much or more educated than the ones here and other places above the Mason-Dixon line. Because it was only after World War II that Blacks with any type of education fought, even above the Mason-Dixon line, to get qualified jobs and get quality pay for it and get quality work conditions along with it. And it was that that helped the labor movement tremendously, with the poor white and the Black coming from the South during the war to fight for better working conditions; to fight for the jobs to be able to work for better pay.

JS: Any why was that? Because of their – what? Their expectations?

MAXEY: Yeah, the expectation was once I get above the Mason-Dixon line I expect to get paid better; I expect to get better jobs; I expect to get a better education. I have an education but I expect to get better when I can be – get a better job. I'll have a better place to live. Sure. And the – and as I said, I think what had happened, even the Blacks who had come from the South earlier, probably with the equal amount of education that I had, said well, what the heck difference does it make as long as I do something, make some money. I'll make a lot of money being a table waiter. Fine. Which is, far as I'm

concerned is fine as long as you're satisfied with it. I just was not satisfied with that type of work and that wasn't what I wanted to do.

And I feel that they actually didn't mean that the Black was inferior that came from the South. I think they really felt that the Black is going to show me up; the Black that came from the South that had more education than me, or had more tenacity to try to put it to use than me. That he'd eventually come out with a better job and probably live as good or better than me. And the white, the same. So I don't think it's a matter of anybody thinking anybody going to take anybody's job. It's a matter they felt that they were only qualified to do certain things themselves and somebody come here better qualified.

JS: So there really was some difficulty, in the relationship of the two groups.

MAXEY: Yes. And this, it seems to come over, to some extent, even today. Blacks who have been here for years and somebody says, "Oh, where you from?"

"Oh, I'm from Mobile, Alabama."

"How long you been here?"

"Oh, I've been here three or four years."

"Well, you're going to find it's not here like it was back there." Let the man find out. Yeah. He might be better equipped to deal with the situation here than you.

So I think this is what we are finding. Because today, I find that the Blacks who were educated in the South and who tend to use that education to get ahead, who came to this part of the country or other parts of the country, did so. And not those who came and said, "Well, as long as I'm above the Mason-Dixon line, I'll socialize with anybody I want to."

That's not it. It's not about socializing. It's about living and being a part of the community that you live in. That you can contribute, and that you can accept the fruits of like anybody else. Because you came from a very low type of expectation from some people. Some people thought you were the lowest thing in the earth because you came out of the South. You didn't know how to act and you went into a toilet where everybody

used it; you only went in a toilet where Blacks used. You didn't know how to drink water out of a fountain, because you drink the water out of a fountain that said "Black only" or "white only." And I was knocked to my knees when I came here and got off a train, went up Sixth Avenue to eat and found signs on doors, "We Refuse to Serve Blacks" and "We Reserve the Right to Serve Who We Please," and all that kind of stuff.

JS: Had you seen that in Utah and Colorado?

MAXEY: In Colorado. I didn't see it in Utah. Because at that time I don't think they probably wouldn't have had a hundred people in Salt Lake City from what they told me. And of course they were people who came in there to work on the railroad. Just like people here and other places. But I don't know.

I think, too, whether or not those people accepted that and went along with it, I think depended on what kind of money they were making on the jobs they were making. If they were a porter and made good money they said, hey, it doesn't matter. Title? I'm not worried about it.

And probably that somewhat struck me because I said, hey, barbering to me is an honorable way to make a living. And that's what I did. And right now as I got involved in barbering, I found I made good living for my family. And I found I could branch off of that into other businesses. I went into other businesses after barbering. Made a good living.

JS: It sounds like you kind of had the best of the two worlds. I mean you did something that gave you a good living so that you could ignore the things that were wrong and so forth, but then...

MAXEY: The stupidity.

JS: But then you didn't ignore the things that were wrong. And that's something we can get into next time but it doesn't sound like you really did make a compromise. It

sounds like – well, it sounds like you did make an adjustment that left you free to do something anyway.

MAXEY: Well you might would have a chance to talk with some whites, permanent whites, that I have met and they might give you an opinion of me. [Laughs] I don't know.

JS: Well, it's going to be very interesting to get into.

[Tape stops]

The tape moved, so I'm...

[End of Tape 2, Side 2]

Tape 3, Side 1**1994 March 4**

JS: In his home at 4624 North Williams. And the date today is March the 4th, 1994, and this is Tape [3], Side 1.

Well, I wanted to, as I mentioned yesterday, go back to some of the earlier history again, to get further into some of those things that we talked about. I'd like to ask you about, say, the time, or the times of early awareness – those moments when you became aware as a child, as a young man, of, you know, of the situation that you were in as a Black. And then what you did with those thoughts and that recognition, and the response of your parents and of other adults to it, when you brought them these questions. You must have had some questions. Can we get back to that real early experience of the situation that your life set you up in?

MAXEY: Yes. I probably would have to start earlier than being a young man. My first experience, I was a very young person at that time. I figure not over seven or eight years old. And I was – my mom had separated from my father and she'd carried us to live with her, and she had found work by doing day's work on a farm. This is until farm work started, and then she would work in the field and work that way and make more money, because she would do, have to do with the housework on the weekend and get paid different for that and more.

And I remember one instance where they had started harvesting and they were baling hay. And they had a hay baler which a horse or mule or animal would pull it around and make the hay press work, and people would do certain things to make the hay, ever how they'd do it. And on this particular deal, it was a seat on there where a kid could on and make the horse go at a certain pace. And they had taught me how fast he should go to make this – everybody's work synchronized as they go around. Like fellows who put the hay in, they put in so much, at a time. And when they got ready to get to a bale, the same speed could be maintained and they could tie it with wire or whatever, and you'd come out and you'd take the hay away.

And I remember that the man's nephew was about my age and he came to visit with him. And this kid did not want me to have this job. He wanted me to have a job, because I had an umbrella over me, where the sun'd be shinning down, and I guess figured a small kid didn't need to be sitting in the sun at time. He gave me an umbrella. And I objected to the fact that he wanted my job. Because at this time, in years I remember I was being paid, I think 50 cents, or 50 or 75 cents a day. And I remember when we'd have a rest period, he and I like kids be, we'd be playing. And we were awfully rough. And it seemed like this would be a good time for me to say, well, "Hey, you're in on my territory and I wouldn't like for you to." And he and I got to wrestling and I kind of hurt him when I threw him down.

And that was the time that the man who owned the place told me, "You are a negro kid. You can't do this to a white kid. And if I were not here, some of the whites probably would give you a beating. So you don't do this. You understand me?"

"Yes, sir, I understand that."

"And I want you to understand that you're never again to hit a white kid." And this was told to me then.

JS: He was Black?

MAXEY: No, he was white.

JS: He was white.

MAXEY: The man who owned the place was white. And he told me this. And this was my first awareness that, there was certainly some difference between what I should do in the presence of white kids, or if I'm doing them with white kids, that I'm not to do anything to offend them. That if there's anything to do without, I'm to do without it, and let them have it. That was the lecture that I got. And that was the thing that bothered me, and has bothered me since, and it still does.

And I think it to create something in people that they'll never get rid of, and you'll never be rid of it. Once you do it, you've given it to me, to suppress me, but I think in doing that, I think you have created a monster that you're going to have to live with for the rest of your life. In one way or the other.

JS: Did you talk to anybody else about it at the time?

MAXEY: I went and talked with my mother about it. And she told me this: If you continue to do that, white people will beat a Black kid, if they feel that he plays with that kid – in fact they'd rather you not play with them. They'd rather for the white kid to do what he does by himself, without you. And if you do play with them, you're not to put your hands on them like you're trying to hurt them. Or if they try to hurt you, you'll have to get away from them. You can't afford to hit them. So you'll have to come home or do something and not be around white kids, because they know it – nothing will happen if they hurt you. Or they got their parents and neighbors and everybody else to say, yes, the Black kid had no business putting his hands on this kid.

JS: You know how you felt when she said that?

MAXEY: Yes, I did. I was wondering how could she tell me what to do and what not to do. I wondered, well what will happen if they feel she has done wrong? Would they, would they beat my mother? And I asked her that. And I asked her, I said, "Well," – and I never shall forget I asked her a very frank question. I said, "Mom, you're much lighter than I am. Would they beat you as a colored woman? Would they beat you?"

She said, "More than likely they would if they got angry enough."

"Then what would the police do?" I asked.

She said, "Usually the police wouldn't do anything where it was white and Blacks."

And you see, I'm left with a whole lot of something that has been told to me without an answer. And I had to live with this; I had to grow up with this; I had to filter this

out; I had to go through life meeting other people that probably had the same feeling. But I worked around them and I never did get that. They never did tell me that. They always told me there was certain work they expected me to do. I did that. I've heard of whites even kicking young Black kids they were working around. I never was kicked. I never was cursed at.

I mean, I was cursed at by people who didn't – who were around where I worked in public places. And I was – I never have been to the place that anybody on the outside of the job where I was working cursed at me, that somebody on the job did not correct them and told them, "Hey if this boy does something wrong let us know. Don't curse at him. And you said you'd hit him. Don't hit him." Yeah, I've hear that. And I've had them to tell me, "If you get into a situation where a white man would want to hit you, I wish you'd come to me as soon as possible. Don't, don't try to fight back because you wouldn't have a chance, because others would gang you, and really hurt you."

JS: So in dealing with that, the warnings that you had early on were in part not confirmed, or were – or if you will, they were moderated, is that right? By this experience of, of seeing how there was some restraint.

MAXEY: Yes and no. And the reason being no, because I had seen — I would come to see later where these same types of things happened to other kids, and they were working around whites or with whites that did not give them the same type of treatment that they gave me. I was working in a place where I was making the man money. [Laughs] And I was the image of his business and I'm sure he didn't want the image of his business to let a white man walk in there and kick one of his Black kids, or slap one.

JS: It's a drugstore.

MAXEY: Yes. And I've heard him stand up and say, "No you won't, and don't tell me in here, or don't tell him before me that you'll hit him. If he's doing something wrong let

me know. No, you don't hit him. And he's not the kind of a kid that I've known that you had to hit." Yes, I've been cursed outside the drugstore. So, I've had guys pass in their car and I'd be on the bicycle and they'd curse me, "You're not going to be around old man [Hamvassey?] all the time. Somebody'll kill you, nigger." You know, and that kind of stuff. Sure, I've been told that.

JS: What was his name again?

MAXEY: [Hamvassey?]

JS: Oh, that's right

MAXEY: Yeah. [Hamvassey?]. He was a German. Now I mention him more than others. I worked around other drugstores, but he, to me, was more of a father figure to me than anybody else. And he had another young fellow that worked there. I can't think of his name. He was prescription man, and they called him prescription doctor. And he always talked to me as I grew up and, and seemed like to you that I worked there both night and day of – ever since I was just a little boy on up until I was grown. That is not exactly true. I worked there in the summers and I'd work in the afternoons, probably in the place of somebody else who had taken the job to work, and probably didn't use as many colored delivery boys in the winter as they did in the summer. And in the summer they'd put on more so if the regular fellow wanted to be off in the evening after I got off from school I'd work in their place. So consequently I worked there practically year round.

JS: Did he – he was kind of a father figure to you?

MAXEY: Yes.

JS: Would it work the other way around? Were you kind of a son figure for him? Or did...

MAXEY: Sure. Sure. It was. For instance, I remember him making mention to me to leave the drugstore and go and do some yard work. And I did the child thing, his son – I did probably what his son would have done. I found a way to find something to do at the store rather than go and have to push a lawn mower. At that time, they didn't any riding lawn mowers. [JS laughs] You pushed the lawn mower. It was a hand lawn mower. And you can see the difference in me, digging in flower beds and pushing a lawn mower, and probably sitting in the shade.

And let's see, I think I had four treats a day: ice cream a pop. And if I went to work on a lawn, I didn't get that. So, yes, I think – and I think he figured sometimes that it was kind of nice to see me work on him like his son would to get out of things or do things willingly that he would offer me a bonus of some kind to do. Sure. I think I took on that with him. And so much so, that the young fellow that was a druggist there, he took on the task of talking to me quite a bit, you know, about what I had to do and what I could do to get along better.

JS: What did that amount to?

MAXEY: Okay. For an instance, if I'd be working in the drugstore after I had grown up to be around 12, 13 years old, and all the girls come by, I'd play with them, you know. And they'd kid with me and all that stuff. So he'd say, "Is that your girlfriend?" I'd tell him, no. It's not my girlfriend. He said, "Well, I know the twinkle in her eye. She probably would like you to be her girlfriend."

And I was taking part in sports then, and my coach had told me, and he had told me all the time, too, "If you do sports you ain't going to be too good a athlete if you fool with girls." And alcohol and smoking – now those things they had me believing those the worst things in the world. And I believe them, they're not too good.

And I remember times he'd tell me, he said, "What you should do is make sure that you don't fall in love with her to the place that you're going to have sex with her. Because if you do, you got to be protected; if not do you know you can get her with a baby at 13 years old?"

And this didn't only help me; it scared me. You know. And it put me to a place that it took a few more years for me to find out that the, regardless what they said, I'd figured out a way. [Both laugh] To figure out I could associate with girls. And now on a Sunday I'd tell him, I said, "Look, I'd like to get off at a certain time a day. It'll be some kids by and we're supposed to go picture taking this afternoon, or go hiking," and stuff like that.

JS: Now there's also the matter of, say, if you have an interest in white girls, and that kind of thing, the, the taboo aspect of that. What was your experience of that? Would people give you particular advice on that?

MAXEY: Yes, and believe it or not, and it was good that this happened this way because there were in my high school at least two dozen kids that were very mixed. And some you couldn't tell from white with the exception of the fact that you knew that they were Black, and because you saw them at a distance you'd think, yes, they are white.

And he'd tell me, he said, "Now it's going to be a difference now. You probably can go hiking and picture taking with these girls but some whites will be confused a lot time of whether these are white girls. And if I were you I'd be sure that I would be able to explain that they are Black and not white; and it's not too healthy for a Black – even a Black kid your age, 13 or 14 years old, to want to have a white girl for a girlfriend. You will be killed. They will kill you. They will mob you. They'll lynch you. They will hang you."

Yes. I was told that. Sure. And you would see that in the papers and the word would get around that certain things had happened to a Black kid where a white girl was involved. A Black man – something had happened to a Black man where a white woman's involved.

JS: How close did you come besides seeing it in the paper to seeing – to being close to this kind of, well, the ultimate injustice?

MAXEY: I knew two kids who were executed. One was about 13 and one was about 15. I was a classmate of their sister. And this white boy was up on the bridge — he went up on the bridge with his girlfriend. And he swears that these Black boys raped this girl and roughed him up. And they executed them. I think it was around the year around 1941, about, about the year that I left there. About 1941 or 1942.

JS: How did they do that?

MAXEY: They had a trial. Supposed to have had a trial where they had raped a kid. And it was the law in the state of Texas that if you...

JS: Oh, it went into court.

MAXEY: It went into court, yes. Those fellows were executed. And said – now those, you asked me, did I – anything – this is going – I was a young man, when this happened, this execution happened. But I had – and I knew them, yes. You asked me how close, this is how close: I knew them, and also their sister was a classmate of mine. That was my – let's see that about my first and second year in high school that I was in high school with their sister. But I knew them, about them being her brothers.

JS: Well I was interested in knowing, you know, in addition to your own direct experience, what kind of input you have, also, in seeing what happened to other people, because that has an effect on a person too.

MAXEY: Yes. At that time, there was accusations of all kinds that had got Black kids locked up. And also, you see majority of Blacks now go to jail as youths. In other words,

your population usually is larger as Blacks than any other people. This is not just happening; this happened when I was a youngster also. And you had quite a few reformatories, and they were staffed with Black kids. A Black kid getting into most anything would get him sent to the reformatory until which time he would be grown when he got out. And at that time that was the thing, if you had any fear at all, that'd be one thing you'd be afraid of, that if you got into too much they'd put you in a reformatory. And that's what usually your parents kept you aware of. Now you pretty soon do so-and-so you be going to the reformatory.

In other words, my mother wanted me to be accounted for from the moment I left her until I got back; because unless you worked for people who were able to say where you were and the things that they felt you would do, it's too easy to get you put in the penitentiary; it's too easy to get you executed or whatever; or beat half to death. Yes.

JS: You were thoroughly aware of that.

MAXEY: Sure. Sure.

JS: Did your dad give you any counsel or try to give you counsel on that kind of — how to manage yourself?

MAXEY: No. No. I don't have any recollection of my father, too much, simply because when he and my mother separated, my mother took me along with my oldest brother, and next to the youngest brother, and my youngest sister. And she kept us for about four or five years. And then when I got older and came back, well then my mother brought us back together. And I was with my father only about a year.

And it was the thing that — he and my mother had gotten along bad while they separated. And she had started indoctrinating me pretty heavily about him, and most of it being true, that he was not a very pleasant person to be around. And I never did get

anything. And after I got older I left him and went to my mother. In fact, I ran away from my father and my two younger brothers, and went to my mother – back to my mother.

JS: Was he abusive then?

MAXEY: From what I've said 'abusive' — of course, seemed like to me most grown people were abusive at that time, both white and Blacks, to kids. I think it's — the year that I came along was a bad time to come along as a kid, because I think both parents, white and Black were abusive in the South. Sure.

JS: Physical with the kids.

MAXEY: Yes.

JS: When you went to college you were interested in?

MAXEY: Sports.

JS: Sports and how about academic subjects? Academic subjects, what was your main interest?

MAXEY: My main interest in college when I went there was education and history. And I had quite an interest in education and history; and then I remember what got me off into a minor of mine, which was economics, was that I had all of my required subjects at one time and so they said, well you can pick another. And so it's economics. And so I had read something about economics about knowing about business and things. I kind of said this should be fun, you know. Never knowing this was going to be a heck of a lot of work. It was more work than it was fun.

JS: Well you'd been around a business quite a bit. Was that a part of it?

MAXEY: Yes, and I really believe that being true, because I never knew how much that they involved me with their money, and with their goods. And once I'd gone off to college, I carried the money to the bank; I went to the bank to get change; I collected money from people gave me a prescription; I never was accused of charging people more than the prescription was; it was pretty easy to figure out why can't I put a dime onto it, or 15 cents onto it. I never did that. I learned, you know, that; and I found out later, after I left the drugstore, I must have been pretty good because they kept me there, that way. I mean, they trusted me with everything that they had. And they had jewelry in the store, all over the store.

Because it used to be when I was a kid drugstores usually had all of your jewelry that you'd sell across the counter. Then you had a jewelry shop in the counter where the guy fixed jewelry and sold you the expensive type of jewelry, you know. You had watches which were cheaper, you know where they're just sold across the counter, and all. And I had to do dusting, and stuff like that. I never did steal in there. And you had very expensive cigarette lighters, and their very expensive cigarettes cases and stuff like that. And it certainly was things that kids would ordinarily like to have, or steal to say they had. And I never was accused of stealing, because I never did – never did steal.

And when I'd ask for a raise, it's funny because it seems like to me they'd say, well you're exposed to things. You don't get no more than you work for us? I'd say well, no, I'm not supposed to. You know. I've had those questions asked me. "You mean you never get any more than what you get in salary?" No sir. I'm not supposed to. And I think that's sometimes why I got a raise. [Both laugh]

JS: Is that right?

MAXEY: Yes.

JS: Do you know why he liked you? Your boss.

MAXEY: Yes. Yes. I didn't realize this for a long time. I could be trusted. He taught me more than I think my father would because I remember he – there were several women who liked him. And if he wanted something sent to them, whether it was a note, a treat, a present, I was told, you give this, you ring the doorbell and if Mrs. So-and-So comes to the door, you give it to her. Not – “I'm sorry I have the wrong address. I was thinking I had another prescription that went – oh, I'm sorry ma'am.” And I'd just turn it off that way. I was taught to do that. Yes. So I learned a lot of things that I probably shouldn't have learned at a very early age.

JS: I don't understand what that transaction was. You, you went out to deliver this, and...

MAXEY: Yes.

JS: And then what happened?

MAXEY: And I was told, you give it to her exactly. If she is not there, you're to say, “This is – I'm sorry. I had, I had a prescription going – this is a package. So – oh! This is not Mr. Jones'!”

JS: Oh, I see.

MAXEY: “Oh, no, no! They live such and such. – I'm sorry, sir. But I had this package and I mistook the address.”

JS: So he was having an affair with these women?

MAXEY: Yes. That was some of the personal things that I knew. And he said – would say to me, “Do you ever see Mrs. Jones any time when I’m not around?”

“I don’t remember.”

“You’ve never seen her with anybody?” You know. And this is sly way of finding out from a kid whether she’s playing around on him, or whatever, you know.

JS: Oh, for gosh sakes. Was he married too?

MAXEY: Yeah. Sure, sure he’s married. Sure, sure. And as I said, if it was a check I carried to her, I was to carry it to her. If it was a watch or some earrings or something, I was to carry it to her, only. And he’d make no bones about it. And as I said, I worked there for about a year and I began to get certain personal things to do that other kids didn’t do. And that brought a wonder to me. And I think he was a kind of master mind at picking brains. I think he picked my brains to find out how I would function.

For instance, I remember several times he would say, “Oh have you had your treat today?”

JS: Oh, thank you.

MAXEY: I’d say, “Yes, sir.” He’d say, “Well, I’ll tell you what,” he’d say. “It’s pretty hot,” he’d say. “Why don’t you get you a shake.” Because we were allowed to only have one shake a day. We could have a coke or a regular pop, a regular ice cream or something. But a milkshake, that’s pretty good treat, you know. So he give me a milkshake, you know. A malt, whatever.

So I think he trained me without me knowing that he trained me for certain things. For instance, he tried to use me to find out, could he – would I know if other people in the store were doing what they weren’t supposed to do when he was there. And I turned that off, as if I don’t ever see them do anything. And as I said it would come to me what he was trying to do to me. You – they would do things to you, around you, that they

probably wouldn't do if it was around me, so. "What, what happens when I'm not here? I mean, do — does anybody send prescriptions out and don't collect for them?" You know.

And I realized real early that this was going to try to be. And I've had people at the drugstore who want to send things out, and make sure that this is not to...

[End of Tape 3, Side 1]

Tape 3, Side 2

1994 March 4

MAXEY: So, I learned early, also that white people would use a Black kid working around them to be very trustful, and be very trustful to them. And I used to wonder sometime, what do they expect? Would they expect to train you to do this only for them? Then what would happen when somebody else did the same thing to you and got you to do this against them?

JS: Being – make it – to be caught in a spot where it works the other way.

MAXEY: Yes, right.

JS: Where you're being worked from the other side?

MAXEY: Yes.

JS: This sounds very disappointing, if this is a father figure for you. It sounds disappointing.

MAXEY: It's disappointing to me, but that's the father figure that I got.

JS: Can you tell me what it was like discovering — having this disappointment?

MAXEY: Yes, I realize that there are two worlds out here. One's white and one's Black. And what white folks did and didn't get caught, it wasn't done.

JS: Yeah. It sounds very disappointing.

MAXEY: And if you were told something, that wasn't supposed to be told, then you're not doing what the man in the South would like for a Black kid to do. And indoctrination is awfully heavy thing. It taught me, and my wife tells me a lot of times now, she says, you know, so-and-so happened. I say, "Oh, yes, I know about that."

She said, "But you never say anything about anything." I was always indoctrinated to, if it didn't concern me, then, hey, it didn't happen. You know. Just — it's something else going on. It doesn't matter.

So I don't think about too many things; it doesn't bother me. It doesn't concern me. It doesn't concern me that — like a lady called me the other night and she's telling me about the gang situation around here; telling me about some of the parents were said to have bought a home. Where'd they get their home? Did they sell dope? And I told her, "I don't know."

"Well don't you think we should try to find out?"

I said, "No. I don't think it would be my part. I don't think it'd be my business. I don't think I should get into that." And this type of thing, I think, came to me early, that this is the way you had to do it. That if it wasn't concerning you, leave it alone.

JS: What freedom does it leave you to use, in operating directly, you know, and to — working for, I don't know how far to carry it, for justice or to work for yourself and your interest? I mean, it seems like it limits you.

MAXEY: You mean now?

JS: Well, in general. I mean starting back then, you're kind of caught in that system, but what if you really need to act, and to, now or back then, it seems like you're kind of limited. How do you get — it seems like there are some problems built into that.

MAXEY: Like what?

JS: Being open and actively working — does it limit you in ways, do you think?

MAXEY: I don't think so. I really don't think so. I feel that, actually, that maybe I should be more active in fighting for things, because I happen to be lucky in a lot of instances that physical things didn't happen to me that I happen to know that happened to other black kids. And knowing this, I know a lot of it happened with not much reason at all. And I think I happened to be the lucky one that was just able to not have to suffer the consequences of some of this. And as I told you before, I think much of that was because my mother had worked for people who were pretty well known in the community. They were professional people, like lawyers and stuff like that.

JS: So, you're learning how to get by and how to accomplish things, aware of the consequences of proceeding incorrectly, it seems.

MAXEY: I think I learned how to survive without being too much involved with something that somebody might want me to do. For instance, I've had whites that asked me — who worked in the store with me. They see a good-looking Black woman come by and they'd be, "Do you know her?"

"Yes, I do."

"Would you tell her I like her?"

I said, "My mother wouldn't like me to do that." And my mother always sees the opportunity, also, to continue to tell me some do's and don'ts. That to not be involved in anything personal with people in the store. And if the manager asked me to do things that weren't things that I could tell everybody, be sure and tell her. And I did.

I was — I felt very free to tell my mother things that I would do. You know, like I tell you, he'd have me to carry packages to people, especially to women. And I told my mother, and she'd tell me how to get around that. And I never would — she said, "Well don't you find yourself ever asking him questions or anything about her. Or if she says

anything to you, you play just like it's none of your business, that you don't know about it." And it worked out very good for me.

JS: Yes. It sounds like it has advantages; it does sound risky, too, in a way.

MAXEY: I don't know about being risky.

JS: Because it worked so well?

MAXEY: I don't know. I think it could've been risky if he had told me, don't tell his wife. I think he indoctrinated me without telling me. I think he manipulated me like, most people do young kids. I think he manipulated me to automatically say, "Hey, you're responsible for the work here, and once you do your work, that has nothing to do with you after you leave here." And I think that's the way I took that.

JS: So, if we can move ahead to a later moment. We went back, and now to get up closer to where we were last time.

MAXEY: Sure.

JS: Coming to Portland, I'd like to know what those initial experiences were like to you, the early moments of arriving, and if you can recall some of detail of actually arriving in Portland and the circumstances, and what happened, and the people you ran into; for you to get into a kind of narrative of that experience.

MAXEY: Coming to Portland – let's see, I came here, I think, about the 19th of February of 1943. And I came from Salt Lake City here. I'd gone to Salt Lake City from Texas, and worked there on construction with Morrison-Knudsen Construction Company. And it'd gotten kind of cold there, and he wanted myself and another black fellow that

was with me, to go to Alaska and work there. But I knew being as cold as it was in Salt Lake City, Alaska was going to be worse. And I figured I'd rather not. So I figured out that I'd like to go somewhere else.

So when I got released, he told me, he said, "Now you're not going to be protected from the draft, because once you get relieved we're going to have to let it be known that you did quit." And so I had read several papers around the country at that time while I worked. In fact I read two papers, probably, a day, and that was San Francisco, probably either that or a Los Angeles paper and the Salt Lake paper. And I found out that, you know, where there was quite a bit of construction work and defense work going on. And because I knew that I didn't know too many practical jobs to do. But I felt being able to be able to read and write and do the most common things, that I could be trained to do most things, and that's what I depended on.

And I accepted the Northwest because I had seen where it is — the climatic condition in California wasn't exactly what I wanted, because it was hazy and foggy and a whole lot of junk. And I didn't think I'd like that too well. And Seattle they claimed it rained a heck of a lot more than it did in Portland. And Portland had an average temperature I think around 67 degrees a year. And I figured I'd try that. But I came here to stay six months. For some reason the six months is not up yet.

JS: [Laughs] You really thought it would be only six months?

MAXEY: Yes, I figured I'd leave here and go somewhere else. Because I really had in mind of someday after the war was over, to go back to school. And probably go into something else.

JS: Where would you have gone back to school, do you know?

MAXEY: I don't know. I wanted to go somewhere above the Mason-Dixon line, because I didn't think — about the only profession that I would have been limited — that I

could have gotten would have been undertaker, teacher, minister, something like that, and insurance stuff, and so I'd probably want to go into law and different things. And I think, too, with my – with the things that I had learned, had a chance to study of them, I don't think I'd have been very good person to have gone back to the South then, to live and work. I don't think I'd have fitted in too well. And I think it would have been what I would have been looking to do.

JS: Yeah. You mentioned....

MAXEY: And you mentioned about what happened when I first came here. Well when I first came here I wondered what kind of work was I going to get into. I went down to the union hall – found out where the union hall was and went there. And I found out what kind of work was going on in the area. And they said ship building and construction work, and things of that sort. And I wanted to know about joining the electrical union because I'd wanted to join the electrical union when I was in Salt Lake City, but that was a different type of thing, in that they ran off of different types of electricity union. There was a marine electric was the type, I think, that you could start with less experience than you could with the construction electrical union and I chose the marine electric, because as I said, they would start you off just doing the common things and get you on up and then you'd be doing on up into the ship.

JS: There was no – how did they actually present this? Did they give any indication there might be some limitations that you would encounter because you were Black?

MAXEY: Yes, well, in fact, they told me about the construction electrical union would not accept me at all. But I could get into the marine electric union in the state of Washington, but not in Oregon. And I chose to go over there and join the union working the shipyard there, because, I think, it was about four to six weeks or something like that

you could get upgraded from where you started. I think you started off 75, 85 cent an hour or something like that. And then you would, you could get upgraded from there.

And I worked there but I still lived in Portland. I never did want to live in the housing area because we did have a baby and I told my wife, and I wrote her and told her that I'd have to wait and see could I find a place in Portland before she came, because all the places that — then if you worked the shipyard they'd give you a slip for signing to get an apartment in the housing areas. And all those areas were upstairs and downstairs apartments. And kids growing up, they, all of them went in the same door, but one went in that apartment, one went in the other. So you never did have too much say about where your kids were and they were going to come up. And I was always interested in mine, you know, coming up, more or less, in their own place.

JS: Where was Johnnie at this time?

MAXEY: She in Texas. And as soon as I found a place, well, then I sent for her.

JS: Where was that place?

MAXEY: That was Longview, Texas.

JS: Oh. Yes, the place that you found here?

MAXEY: Oh, oh, the place that I found here. First place that I found here was on Benton, right off of Broadway, right where the Coliseum is now, right on the corner, the north — I would say northeast corner. Kind of northwest corner, I guess, of the Coliseum, right about that is where we were. And I stayed there until after I had gotten out of the shipyard.

I left the shipyard after about two years and eight months. And things were scaling down pretty good. And I saw there were going to be some difference, because I'd had

quite a few difference working in the shipyard, you know, about certain jobs and certain promotions and things like that. And I saw that I was running into some of the same things that I had grown up in. And I began to look at some of the many things that I could get into.

And I'd look at the papers in the afternoon. The first thing that I thought I wanted to do was to get into something that I could be trained in. Because I was aware of the fact that I was not able to do too many things, even after working the shipyard in the electrical union. A lot of time you'd be making steel boxes all day that had nothing to do with electric current. Or you'd probably be screwing brackets together and stuff like that. I mean, you find this in mass production. And I didn't find that to be too interesting and didn't find it getting me anywhere too fast.

So I, first thing that I signed up for, I signed up – General Motors was building a place out in Beaverton where they were going to train mechanics after the war. And I signed up for that. And I was surprised, because once I had made that – sent in the application, sent my resume and everything in, back to my own school, and I had them tell me what they'd be looking for. They sent me the check every month for \$75. And I wrote them and asked them why they sent me the money and they said, oh this was a retainer for me to buy the things that I thought I needed, when, you know, come time to work. And they couldn't tell me exactly what day or anything, they'd be expecting to be hiring.

And yes, I can remember, must have been four to six months that I got that check and cashed it. And when it came time for them to – said that they wanted me to come in take and get signed up and go into my first session. They wanted to train us before they had mechanics come in, and get us into school. And they asked me to send in one of my pictures and I did. And that was when they told me I wasn't mechanical minded. But I – what I had read before, they had said they wanted you according to your education, and they'd rather you not have any experience at all with being a mechanic.

JS: Do you remember that moment when you made this discovery?

MAXEY: Yes.

JS: What was your reaction?

MAXEY: I was let down, washed away. [Laughs] Because to me — at that time I think they made mention of the fact that you'd earn \$350 — start off at \$350 a month. And that would be the least you would draw. And as you got promoted you'd go up from there. And you could see \$350 a month, at that time, that was a lot of money. And if I could have gotten that kind of money saved for a year and then got \$400, and expect to get \$425 later, that's a heck of a lot of money. And yes, I was pretty well washed away, you know, at the very thought of that.

And I think it took me about a week or two. I kept looking in the papers and trying to figure out some other thing. I even had in mind going to embalming school to become an embalmer, or going — and get my own place. And I decided, I said, well you know, I cut hair when I was a kid. I see where they're advertising here, wanting people to come to the barber college, you know. And if you didn't have a job, then they could help you to get in to the school. But I was already working, so what I did, I just made application and then changed from day shift to graveyard. Wasn't getting along very well on the job anyway since I was demanding to get promoted like everybody else and they weren't doing it. So I was glad to get away anyway, so I started going to barber school.

And after I cutting hair some every day after I went, and had done my introductory work in school. I began to carry people down that I knew, you know, to cut their hair and all, and so. And when I had a chance to take the exam, the state board exam, I passed it and I was able to go out and get a job. So I did.

JS: So you did the barber school?

MAXEY: Yes.

JS: And what was the name of it?

MAXEY: Moler

JS: Moler? Alright, that's, that's still in existence, I think.

MAXEY: Yeah. Moler's Barber College. In fact, I might have been the first or second Black that ever went through there.

JS: Oh really? It wasn't common for them to have Black students?

MAXEY: No, because there weren't any young barbers here. Now I understand that all the barbers that they had here were people who had been given their certificate by making application, once that law came. I think that law came in sometime in the 1930s, they tell me, that you had to finish barber school. But otherwise if you went and passed the Board some kind of way – I don't know what it was. You had to do to pass the Board, but you passed the Board and they'd give you a license, and you started cutting hair.

JS: Now when you came to Portland, what were your first impressions of the place? The look of the place; also of the people you started running into?

MAXEY: It was weird in a whole lot of ways in that you would run into people from all over the world. There were even prisoners in Vancouver at that time; German prisoners.

JS: Oh.

MAXEY: Yes, and just about that time they were just ending up getting the latter part of the Japanese out of Portland, about the time I came here. And things really hard about Japanese, and because of the fact that there was still some Japanese and other Orientals here that – they were getting a bad time because people wondered whether they were Japanese disguised and all that stuff. So it wasn't only a lot of attention paid to a few blacks that were coming in; there was still high attention towards the Japanese that were here. And, they had, as I said, they had Italians and German prisoners over in Vancouver at that time. Because I know they got special permission, even — this is shipyard bus, they carried several of them on the bus; prisoners on the bus that we rode to the shipyard, where they'd have prisoners.

JS: Did you meet any of them?

MAXEY: No.

JS: But you saw them?

MAXEY: Yes, I saw them, yes. And this was the early part of me working in the shipyard, and as I said, I worked there for two years and eight months. Then went over into barbering. And I barbered about six months with somebody else and then went into business for myself.

JS: Can you describe what it was like being Black and, say using the town, or going about the town? Shopping and transportation and that sort of thing. Entertainment.

MAXEY: Yes. Yes, that — shopping here was another thing because at that time we'd had a second kid, so I had two kids and we'd carry them for a walk and want to buy ice cream and everything. And there were very few places that Blacks could sit down to a soda fountain, and you know, and ask for a drink or ice cream. They'd want you to buy it

and carry it out. And most of your ice cream parlors and drugstores at that time had ice cream and that was the going thing. Everybody'd go and have ice cream, you know, and a pop. And, and the smaller cafés also didn't particular care for black trade. This was — Portland was pretty well — I didn't see too much difference in Portland at that time than I did from the South when it came to going in places to trade, to spend your money.

JS: I think you said last time that it was even better in Salt Lake.

MAXEY: Salt Lake, because I didn't know that much about Salt Lake. I was at quite a distance from Salt Lake City; I was in Tooele, Utah.

JS: Oh, all right. Yes.

MAXEY: Yes, I was in Tooele, Utah. I'd go in Salt Lake, but you know we'd go in on a bus, and I think I went to an entertainment. They had a dance once or twice in Salt Lake, we went, and I noticed there, in fact they had a big ruckus that one night. There was a Black band playing. And I think most of the soldiers were from Provo, Utah. And they encouraged some of the younger fellows, (at that time I was in my early 20s) to go up and, you know, go to the dance, because that's what it was going to be. And so it was a free bus ride for us to go up there. And there was a whole lot of objection there because I know they had a big fight that night. Some Black boys, you know, dancing with the white girls and doing the jitter-bug, and throwing them around and catching them, and all that kind of stuff. White boys couldn't take that. [Laughs]

And I think that's more of a jealousy, in a way of speaking, because white boys didn't do that dance that way, you know. Seemed like the Black boys, they were enjoying themselves too much. And yes, they had a big fight. And I never knew if they have another one, the whole time that I was in Salt Lake.

JS: You used the expression a moment ago there were places where they didn't particularly care to have Blacks come in. And it's — "particularly care" is the old soft way of putting it.

MAXEY: Right.

JS: Why do you put it softly?

MAXEY: Okay, in many places, where I was talking about, they probably had drugstores. They had kind of a sandwich shop type of a — they'd sell you sandwiches and pie and pop and coffee and stuff like that. And it seemed like that, you know, if you'd walk in and get a prescription, or you'd bought something out of the drugstore, it was okay for you to walk in and buy it, and go on out, and things like that. So, but to buy something you want to sit down and eat it there, you were not welcome in most of the places to do that.

About the only place I know on this side of town at that time, that you, that I never was said anything to, I don't know if somebody else might have, and that was the drugstore right on Williams and Broadway. It was a drugstore there. Then there was another one up on Russell and Williams. Now, those two places. But those on Union Avenue and other places, in many cases I've known the time they'd tell them that they had the right to not serve them there. Yes.

JS: Well they were right. It's almost in their economic interest to you know, really be more receptive to their Black customers.

MAXEY: Yes, I think this is found out...

JS: Or was it a personal thing?

MAXEY: This is found out later, I think people were getting to feel that way. At that time I think prejudice was so deeply ground into human beings. People didn't care at that time. Just, I'm just not supposed to associate with Blacks, and people who come in here don't want to be associated with Blacks, and, I'd just rather not have the money. It seemed like to me that was the feeling.

JS: So, I guess that leads to the question as how you figured out what these people were like here, these Portlanders. And part of it is – well, how did you make sense of it? I mean, you came expecting them to be better and...

MAXEY: Yes. Sure.

JS: And how – what did you make of what you found?

MAXEY: I thought it was one of the worst places I'd ever been. And I thought it was going to get worse. And the only thing that kept me here is, as I said, I was making pretty good money. And I felt that one day, that once I stayed here and worked, I would leave here and go somewhere else where it would be different. And I'd have money to buy whatever I wanted, whenever I wanted it.

What I did not have in mind at all was going back to Texas. I never – the moment I got away from there – in fact I left there later than I'd wanted to. I'd said that I'd never want to live in Texas. Because I thought that I had been extremely lucky as a youngster growing up there and nothing had happened to me. And I did not want to grow up there.

JS: So, Portland and Oregon were a real disappointment, but you figured that there was still someplace that would be good to you?

MAXEY: Yes, I felt ...

[End of Tape 3, Side 2]

Tape 4, Side 1
1994 March 25

JS: [This is an interview with Charles] Maxey, and today is March 25th.

I did want to ask you again, here we were just talking about fighting. Earlier, we have part of the story of your father's fight, but not all of it. There was the fight that your father had that you had told me about.

MAXEY: Yes.

JS: I wonder if you could go back into that, and also your mother's part in it – I think your mother somehow had a part in the outcome of it.

MAXEY: No, it was his stepmother.

JS: Oh, his stepmother? Okay.

MAXEY: Because at that time my father was not – he and my mother were separated. It was his stepmother because of the fact of my stepmother — born and raised herself in the same neighborhood, and she had trained herself to be a midwife, and she had delivered most of the babies in the neighborhood, especially most of the pretty well-to-do white people in the community, where they lived at that time.

And my father was a very, kind of a, what people'd say a hot-headed person, or a person who didn't conform too much to what the status quo was, at that time, as to what Black people was supposed to be in community, as compared to whites. And out of all the sisters and brothers, he was the one, more or less, that was little different, when he got pushed by white people in the community.

And this particular time, I understand that he had done something that somebody was displeased with and they felt that he should've backed down with something. He refused to back down and they went to the local police and told the police and then the

police in return decided first time he met him he was going to put him straight on the matter, whatever it was. And they got into hot conversation, and it ended up being a fight between him and the deputy sheriff. And the deputy sheriff had on a gun, my father took the gun off and threw it into the store in front of where they were fighting and they kept fighting, until somebody came out of the store and stopped them, because there were other people gathering around, and everybody saying, should mob him, let's kill him, because he's fighting a white man.

And the people recognized him and told him, "Hey, that's [Dame Annie's?] son and we can take care of him; don't have to do that." So this was one of the times, I guess – during that time, this was enough for most any Black to be lynched or mobbed, was to fight a law officer. And this he got off with because of the fact that they did know his mother. Eventually they continued to pick at him that he had to leave that part of the country though. And he finally left there and went to New Mexico.

JS: He went to New Mexico?

MAXEY: Yes, yes he did.

JS: What did that story mean to you? I mean, it's quite an impressive story. How did you learn about it, and what meaning did it have for you?

MAXEY: I learned about it because my father came home and he had some of his clothes were torn, and he did have some scratch marks on his face, and I think he was a little riled up over it, because he came home and began to get all of his guns and things, and get all of his shells, because in doing this – and I mean he was just naïve enough to tell what had happened. He was saying they were supposed to come back and lynch him that night. And he got two of his brothers he had to come; they all had loaded guns and they were going to see that nobody bothered them and stuff like that. And it was a very frightful time, even though I was a very small kid.

JOHNNIE: Do you take your coffee black?

JS: Yes. Thank you, Johnnie.

JOHNNIE: Here's a wipe for you.

JS: Oh yes, I can use that.

JOHNNIE: And a napkin. Would you like some bread?

JS: Oh, wonderful.

[Tape stops]

I wanted to ask you, what this meant to you then, and, you know, and you had described how your father had come home and you heard the story and they were talking and there was talk about they were going to lynch him and so forth. I'm interested in learning something about what this meant to you then, and the rest of your life in general. Seems like a very important story of your father.

MAXEY: Yes. This is quite a frightful time for a Black family at that time. And this is one of the few times that I had given thought to things happening in my family between black and whites. And this seemed like to me it was going to be a time that probably my father would get killed, my father was going to kill lots of white people or whatever, because he and his brothers had gotten these guns together and it so happened that night nobody came. And it was a time you were wondering, well, from what he said yesterday, the way things were, and the way — he pictured the way ordinarily he talked to the family, what usually happens to blacks that this happens to — and he'd made his

mind up he wasn't going to take it. And with this in mind it's frightful to a young kid. And to the rest of the sisters and brothers, I know it was equally as bad. And this being a thing that had happened at our home, I was wondering where was he going and if he went, and then how were we going? There wasn't time to plan anything. So, yes, it was quite a time.

And I think he stayed around there probably for about a week before he left. When he left he went, oh, I guess, 60 or 75 miles from there and got a place and I think – the way it seems now it must have been about three or four months before the rest of the family moved there. But we did move from our own place, because we still – the place where we still owned the property there as of this day. And in 1994 we still own that property there, which is a farm that he and my mother bought during World War I. And we just left it. And we went to another place and that's where – that –.

It had such an effect on me that I always felt that I wanted to get out from around him, because something bad would happen. Even being that distance away, that wasn't too far away. Even though that was a long time ago it was farther away than it would seem now, which would be a distance from here to Salem or a little further. And I always felt that I wanted to get out from around him because if something real bad was going to happen, when they came in on him, he'd made his mind up that he was not going to be mobbed or lynched. And that's what he'd figured that sooner or later, that probably somebody would try.

JS: And why did he go to New Mexico?

MAXEY: Near as I can gather that, and there continued to be rumors that they still had in mind to do something to him, and this was about a year later that he decided to leave from where he was and go to New Mexico. And the reason why he went to New Mexico, I understand they were supposed to had an oil field coming in down there and it was kind of a place where they were developing things like cotton. They were doing quite a bit of experimenting on cotton in western Texas and New Mexico at that time,

because he felt in Arizona and California, they were improving on cotton, so he moved to that part of the country. I understand he got a job working there after he went there.

But I was not with him at time, because I eventually left him and went to my mother, because he could not be a real parent at that time. It was a – you had to live more or less with an animal, because he was mad at everything and everybody. And I don't think even the kids cared to try to get along with him. And that was when I left him and went to my mother. And in going to my mother, I told my two younger brothers that I was going to leave and go, and they told me not to leave them, to carry them with me. So I did.

JS: Did you?

MAXEY: Yes.

JS: Do you have any thoughts about what you got from your father? In terms of things – what part of your father rubbed off on you, is another way of putting it, I guess. It's not a very scientific way of putting it.

MAXEY: I don't think I carry too much of his temper. I think it takes me a little while for it to kick in with me on – you know, I think I reason a little better than he did, and, then when I get to a point, I cannot kick off the part of him that I don't like. It's there.

JS: What is that?

MAXEY: When I feel that someone has maliciously mistreated me, I'm not very forgiving. [Laughs] And I don't go out of my way too much to be forgiving if I feel that a person has deliberately mistreated me. And I think I probably have that, and it's not a thing that I cherish. But it's a part of me that I think, it's like everybody else they have

something in them that is not a thing that they're proud of but it's something that they have that they can't rid themselves of. It's the heredity.

JS: Do you kind of admire your father's — in some way you might call it courage. He had a lot of nerve.

MAXEY: Yeah, I could, but it seems like to me — see my father was a person that, at the time that that he married my mother, was a person who had had one year in college and I think about half of another. And that was so very unusual at that time. And I was thinking that a person who was able to think and to reason and to know that — the country and the world as he knew it, I think he did himself harm by staying where he was as long as he did. Because he had a knowledge of what was going on.

He knew geography, he knew government and things that were going on and how things work and stuff like this. Most people don't know how the world works with the exception the county where they live, and scarcely that in many cases, especially during that time. I felt that my father was a person that could have gone a long ways had he have used his knowledge in a better way than he did, rather than to rely on the fact, well I'm here and this is the way I'm going to do it. If he'd have had a movement on with other people I could see it, but he did not have a movement on with other people. His was an individual thing. And I don't think during that time you had a win at all, trying to change the social atmosphere in the neighborhood where you lived at that time.

You asked me if there's some parts of him. He was a person that was able to reason out and see the economics of things. Not that he took advantage and had a lot of things. He knew a lot about how to do and how to accumulate, but he's the person if you tied money on him, it wouldn't stay with him. So I don't know. I've always wanted to reason how a person would do in life if they tried. That is, by raising a family and by having some nice wife. I've always wanted to go into business for myself. I never knew my father to work for anybody. He always worked for himself. I've never known him to work any — at all for anybody.

JS: What did he do mostly?

MAXEY: He had a farm.

JS: Oh, he did the farm.

MAXEY: Yes. And at that time he had a truck farm and he raised stuff the year around because in — mostly where we lived, I think most people raised cotton and corn. I don't think my father ever raised any cotton. I think he raised whatever he could carry to market and sell. Practically every day he had something he'd carry to market. He'd carry some greens, some peas, some beans, and stuff like that.

And this may be some of the things that are responsible for me always being in business for myself. My father never did work for anybody. I worked four years and eight months, after I got out of college. As a kid I worked quite a bit around people, but after I got grown, I didn't. And if accumulated anything from him, I think it would be that.

JS: A moment ago before we started you were talking about the situation in Texas, how it was changing as in the war period, and for the worse.

MAXEY: Yes.

JS: I wonder if you could describe that situation again.

MAXEY: Yes, and I had heard quite a bit during the time when all beginning around 1939, when they thought it was going apparent there was going to be another war, people began to talk about then, that they're going to make sure that this would not be another World War I. For an instance, how Blacks were permitted to intermarry in other

countries and bring their wives back to this country. This seems to have been one of the major things everybody was concerned about.

If you have a war and you carry Blacks, and believe it or not, it was into – Blacks were screened very carefully up until around 1941 or 1942, before the average person, black, could go into the army. You were screened very closely. I mean, it was nothing for eight or ten Blacks to volunteer, and they had all these signs around even though then they were needing soldiers awfully bad, you had to fit the exact criteria in order to get into the Army – into the armed forces of any kind; volunteer. You had to fit a certain temperament, you had to fit into a certain psychological pleasing of the board, in order to be accepted as a volunteer into the Army.

And I think whole thing hinged on the social thing of the community, compared to what it had been in World War I, and with things are progressing more at this time around the late 1930s and early 1940s, they were feeling that total integration was going to be a forced thing, whether they liked it or not. Because once Blacks went into the service and they had guns and went into certain situations, there were just certain things they weren't going to accept. And I think that's what most of the white –

I'm talking about the community where I was and it seemed to have been their air of even your newspaper articles whether they were in New York or whether they were in Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi or where. You had lynching aplenty. You had mobs aplenty at that time. But I think this was the air of the whole United States at that time. And you began to find, also – you didn't have riots, but you had lots of killing from Blacks to whites, where Blacks had just been mistreated; so they say, putting them in their place; being mistreated. I think Blacks were rebelling tremendously at that time.

And I think much of this was responsible for the change in the attitude of government officials. That Blacks are going to kill, just like they killed him. If Blacks do a certain thing that wasn't near that bad, it was bad enough for somebody to hold, might say, kangaroo court on him, decide they need to mob him, lynch him or whatever. And rather than to take it, a Black said, well I'm going to get killed anyway, let me kill some people. And this is – a lot of this is going on then.

JS: So things were really intensifying.

MAXEY: Yes.

JS: This is about the time that Ralph – is it Ralph? Anyway Ellison wrote *The Invisible Man*. Did you ever read *The Invisible Man* by Ellison?

MAXEY: I remember *The Invisible Man*. No.

JS: It's a very early expression of that intensification of things. Specifically, what happened in the jobs situation that was a worsening of things?

MAXEY: The job situation, at that time, was being handled by the same, you might say propaganda that was going on in the social world. You were getting that don't give Blacks these kinds of jobs, because in the first place communism is taking over in the world, and believe it or not, the number one target in the United States would be to get the Blacks on the side of communism. If you can get all the Blacks on the side of communism they're not going to work for poor whites who's not able to pay them enough anyway. They're the ones who's going to be doing the work so they're going to demand to work.

So we got two things to fight, and that's this social upheaval that's going on, and the part that Blacks are going to be vulnerable to communism. And communism would entitle Blacks to socialize with whites and whatever the bugaboo was, I don't know.

So it was a thing that they figured to take the best jobs from us, would also take away the tenacity to try to progress equally with anybody. Because if you don't get the jobs to do the work to get the pay or whatever, you're not going to be able to drive as good a car, you're not going to be able to live in as nice a house, you're not going to be able to afford yourself with health benefits, same as other folks.

So I think it was a very silly planned out thing, as far as I'm concerned, but when it came to a group of whites, that keep them right down to where they'll have to submit, and then they'll have to live the way you want they to and they'll be at your door begging.

For an instance, I remember a case in my home when they covered up all the wells there. Wells that were dug in yard, you know. If you went to a home or build you'd always dig, you'd always dig a well, to have water. It wasn't long there before they found out that those wells and those ponds that you created down in the Black part of town was creating mosquitoes. Creating T.B. [Tuberculosis] carrying mosquitoes or malaria carrying mosquitoes. Those same blacks are working in your place; those same Blacks are feeding your kids; those same Blacks cooking your food. And whites began to die from tuberculosis. Whites began to die with typhoid fever. White kids began to die with malaria fever.

And there was a young fellow that became city manager of my home and he pointed this out to a group of people. He said, "Those same people that we are, that we are permitting to live in these conditions are working in our homes. And we're eating the food they prepare. They're nursing our kids. They are doing everything. In other words instead of us – and we're putting them back down there where they got wells to get water out of. When we needed some dirt we went down to the Black part of town and dug a hole to get gravel and stuff and there's a pond of stagnant water down there. And when you got all this, well, it seems like, to me, we're perpetuating the very thing that we're trying to do. We're trying to keep them down, yet we're keeping ourselves down because we're doing this to people of whom we have doing domestic work for us."

JS: So what was the conclusion drawn from this?

MAXEY: Cover up all the wells in the city limits and everybody won't be able to pay for water, but the city will have to put one water faucet in every three houses, and the bill would be – they would – you'd make an application, they'd found out whether you were

able to pay a dollar a month or what – you got water. Your house was not piped for water. The water would be put out into this house, and the house on that side and the house on this side would have equal rights to draw water from that faucet. And this was what was done. And until this time –.

Oh! Another thing was that all of the toilets in the neighborhood had to be torn down and covered up. And if you didn't have money enough to dig a pit to put your toilet, and then they'd give you chemicals to treat it with, you know every so many days you'd have to put so much of the chemicals in this toilet, and dig it, I think five feet what they had to dig it. And that was the beginning of the improvement of health conditions in the small cities in East Texas, I'm talking about.

JS: Sure sounds...

MAXEY: And this got to be a thing that – it was a thing that had to do with the health problem of the whole country. Because most everybody, if you're poor enough, be it Black or white, you did not have a pit toilet, because you weren't able to have one dug or built. But the city built those and put them in. People who were able had to pay so much a month for it. But if you weren't, the city saw that you got one anyway. So, this was the beginning of it, as I said. That to improve the community, not the black community or the white community, but improve the community you had to improve health conditions. Improve conditions, you had to do away with certain things that were existing in the community.

Number one: toilets were on top of the ground. You'd put your toilet in the back of your lot and whatever happened to it, happened to it. And otherwise, vomits and everything else scattered around and that's the way it got cleaned because most people didn't go out there and bury it.

So it's kind of on the – you can't hardly imagine, I don't imagine, a person like you, you've never lived under those conditions – that things were like that. Where you'd go out to get water, there was a toilet over on this side of you and a toilet over on this side

of you, and then you had one in your own yard. You had to believe that water was coming from somewhere. This had to be some horrible conditions.

JS: Well, I do remember outhouses, but, and that sort of thing, but no, I have never thought of it as, in terms of the mass problem that the country faced.

MAXEY: It did. Whites were dying of tuberculosis in my home, and white kids were dying in most cases – in fact I remember one time when I was very small, there was an article somebody wrote, an article in the paper, saying that – trying to explain why more white kids died with malaria at that particular time than Blacks. And they tried to say that it was because maybe Blacks were immune, more or less, to the germs, than whites. And I don't know if anybody ever got away with that argument or not. But I do know it brought the attention to people.

And it happened at a very good time, when you remember the Roosevelt W.P.A. [Works Progress Administration] days. And this was the work that did that kind of improvement. That did help the community in the South, especially the part where I lived. And where people living in another community, and they didn't have to endure with that, I don't know. But I've been in other parts of Texas, and most every part I've been in, in the poor part of the city, be it white or Black, those were the conditions.

JS: Now you were also talking about job conditions and experiences that you had; you were talking working on construction...

MAXEY: Yes.

JS: And the situation was changing at about the war time. And that's one of the reasons why things became uncomfortable enough that you needed to leave it.

MAXEY: Yes. At this time there began to open up defense work in most of your places. I mean, they were turning different manufacturing places into defense work. And when they had defense work, then you had the matter of jobs probably paying better, because the federal government had taken – they'd take over. If you were doing type of work that would enhance the mobilization of the armed forces. And whether it would be making baskets for fruit, or whether it would be making tools for a farmer. If the government come in and put in an order, they'd have to defer whatever you were doing and make whatever the government wanted you to make. And when they did that and then they had to adjust to a salary.

And this is the reason why that the Bill 8802 came in, which was a civil rights bill, was passed down as an emergency bill; was passed by Roosevelt.

[End of Tape 4, Side 1]

Tape 4, Side 2**1994 March 25**

MAXEY: By memory; that's what it was. That was an emergency bill that Roosevelt passed, I think it was about 1940 to 1941, I believe it was, it passed, to say that anytime a person worked on a job where federal money was being spent, there'd have to be equal salaries; there'd be no discrimination. And it makes no difference if it was the lowest job there, whether sweeping the floor, whether it was making machinery. According to the category you were working you'd get paid for that. One person would get paid for whatever job he had done.

And this was the reason why the South was drained so much to do in World War II, I don't know about World War I, World War II because they flatly refused to go into a lot of places because of the social conditions in those places to manufacture things. And many of those places cost the government so much more money to, to come here when they could have built boats in Mississippi and Louisiana in the Mississippi river, but instead, I mean, you come to the West Coast which is the most dangerous place at that time because the Japanese were subject to blowing everything up. So this why this emergency bill came up, this civil rights bill, 8802, which was an executive order passed down by the president; Roosevelt at that time.

JS: And so you were saying that your experience of it was...

MAXEY: Yes, my experience was, at that time, I worked in one of the low part of the jobs at that time as a carpenter helper. And I think, at that time, I started off at 40 or 50 cents an hour, which at that time was paying more money, way more money, than the local salaries for doing the same work. But because of that being a war effort, I was able to make that kind of money.

And I felt that since I was making that kind of money, working overtime and all – I was young, it didn't matter, I worked sometime 14 and 15 hours a day, because they had those trucks coming in from different parts of the country loaded with material, we'd

unload them all day and all night. And that way, that wasn't very much money a week, but when you figured out, once you did time and a half and you did so much, and then you get double time, you get, you know, you have pretty good money. At least I had enough money to, after I'd worked a couple of months, to buy and pay for whatever I had, and also pay off my indebtedness, and have money enough to buy me a ticket to somewheres, and that's what I did.

Because I saw that I – and the working conditions they were still bad, in that one man had to do just about two men's days' work. And that's what they expected of you. And it wasn't a steady work. They wanted you to do awfully heavy work. And do it long hours. At that time young as I was it didn't matter with me too much, as long as I had in mind, too, that I did want to leave there, and that's the way that I would have a chance to leave there.

JS: And describe again, if you would, the experience that you and these other guys had when they saw that they – when both of you discovered that you actually were more literate than they. I mean, that's an interesting aspect of it.

MAXEY: Usually, if that person could – if you fitted into the pattern with most of the whites, and he found the literacy part of both of you, you were ahead of him, if he could get you to do that and get along with him, you were a favorite. But now, if you did it and resented him being your boss, or resented him pushing you too much, then it wasn't too much getting along; then if they possibly could, they would fire you, or get you fired, because of that.

And this was because you were able to read blueprints, you were able to read instructions and things of that sort. And many of them weren't able to do that. Many of poor whites. And this is no reflection of a whole lot of Blacks that couldn't, but equally as well there were quite a few whites that couldn't do it. And yet at the same time they were the ones that got those jobs without any qualification exam at all. [Laughs]

In most cases the, I would say, for an instance, there would be four or five of us sitting out there, and they'd just come out and look at the physical being of you and, "Do you want to work? What kind of work are you able to do?" You'd say okay. "You're hired." Probably say the same thing to the white. They'd automatically find out a lot of times that the white guy that they hired, say, "Okay, you take this — that group of men over there and you do so and so."

He'd take the paper not knowing what it's saying, probably give it to you. "Here's what we got to do. What does it say we have to do?"

You say, "Oh yes, this says that we go over there and we separate that lumber according to the measurements of it; that we put it in different stacks."

"Okay, then I want you to go out and see that these fellows get this done." So he goes out and sits under the shade tree somewhere and smoking cigarettes and give it to you.

But now, once he gets that done and you seem like you would like to make it known that you were the person who was responsible for that, that's when you start getting along bad with him. He doesn't want you around. And he'd rather get you fired and let another person who — you know, all along, it was the psychology of it. He could take four Blacks in his crew and he could tell which ones that he could get — probably didn't know as well as what the first person I had doing this, who the next person I'm going to put in his place that would do this, and won't endanger me being the boss. Because, being the boss, a lots of times, instead of him making 50 cents an hour, he'd be making 60 or 75 cents an hour. And that was the psychology, to find out who would be the next person you'd replace that person with, because you don't think you are going to get along with him. And they'll find out that he's not doing that work, that you're the one actually doing it.

JS: Well, I wondered if now we could — oh, I wanted to ask you one more thing before we go into get more current to — not current, but to the end of the late 1940s. You mentioned Wendell Willkie's *One World*.

MAXEY: Yes.

JS: Can you tell me more about what that work meant to you? What was in it that appealed to you?

MAXEY: I read the book, and after reading the book of Wendell Willkie, and I'd read several other people, I don't — I think too many people miss the point on what he was talking about the one world. That book seems to be more apparent now than it did then, simply because he was saying then that, economically, everybody is going to have to do, to get along in the world, because knowledge has no secret. Everybody's going to learn how to make a bomb. Everybody's going to learn how to fly a fast moving plane. Everybody's going to learn how to improve on farm products. Everybody's going to learn how to raise food products, whether in this country, China, Japan, or where. And that if this didn't happen then, if we didn't have a one world type of deal, whoever develops the fastest is going to impose on the other. And then the others have the same knowledge. They may not have the material but one — the smaller people who do have it, they can get together and we're not going to have any big mighty people anymore.

And I think that has been seen here when our own presidents, beginning quite heavily with Reagan and Bush, and more so than Carter, but, believe it or not, here with Clinton, meeting with different peoples of different heads of government. And we were deciding, what can we do to enhance your better living? And here's what you can do to enhance ours. And instead of the strongest nations of the world, which is Britain at that time, which boasts the fact the sun never goes down on the British fleet. Yeah, but at the same time it never goes down on the needs and wants of people either. And that is whether they were in Japan or whether they were in England, whether they were in Africa, or whatnot. That everybody has something to offer everybody. And if you have something to offer everybody then you use what you have to get what you want from other people. And in doing this, you're going to have to have an accord, because if one is

the biggest and the mightiest, then they're going to take everything, make everybody act like they want them to act anyway.

But here it is much easier if everybody give what have to offer, and everybody – you live your government, as near as you can, as to how you can get along, and whether everybody has a democracy or not, you're at least giving people a chance. And whether or not everybody is going to be a capitalistic form of government or not, you're going to have to learn to trade with each other in what situations that it will be. I don't think everybody will ever be all capitalists. But I think it's going to come a time everybody's going to have to learn to get along with everybody, regardless of what their form of government is. And I don't think that's it. I don't think it was an 'ism' at all. I don't think it was...

JS: Sort of an international view of things.

MAXEY: Yes. I think it was international view and international cooperation, rather than somebody thinking that communists is going to put everybody to dirt, and the socialists are going to put everybody to dirt. I don't think that was the intention.

JS: Well he sounds likes he was really quite an idealist and, at the time, his idealism appealed to you.

MAXEY: You said, did it appeal to me?

JS: Yeah, it sounds like it did.

MAXEY: I don't know if it appealed to me as much as it gave me to look into deeply that it was a possibility and that is the same way with the household. If you have a household of seven people, and seven people live in seven different ways, then you're going to have to have seven different times of day that everybody is going to cook.

You're going to have seven different types of rooms that everybody slept in, because everybody didn't agree with that.

I don't think it impressed me too much about, because at that time I think, I had been indoctrinated with the same thing that most people had: better watch it, it might be somebody trying to get their 'ism' going. And I, I think Nazism, and communism and those things, I think they were great where they happened. I don't think they had a chance where – that was a democracy and democracy worked. And anyway you've seen democracy work; you haven't seen communism thrive at all. And they tell us that we're living in a shattered part of capitalism now. But it's way greater than anything that – most countries that you can make mention of.

No, I don't think I was impressed too much about it. I mean, I was impressed by the deal that people were going to have to get along. They are either going to get along together or they are going to destroy each other. Now that was the thing that rested in my mind, because when I learned that, when I got up usually and found out that $a^2 + b^2 = c^2$, and it's the same thing here as it is in Germany. And when you found out that $[e =] mc^2$ is the same here as it is in Pakistan or North China or some of the other countries. It's the same! You know. And I found that if you're going to learn that that means something here and we're going to suppress it somewhere else, then it's not going to be.

JS: Yes. We don't have control over other peoples.

MAXEY: No. And this same thing happened in most countries where you suppress people. People find a way to get out of it. Once they get out of it, then they destroy whatever suppressed them.

JS: Well it seems like it has some parallels in other places, too. But it struck me that knowing that you were a Republican, I think, at that time, that Wendell Willkie was a Republican and here is a Republican that is actually preaching some international

idealism. And it seems like maybe it would reinforce your feelings of the value of being a Republican.

MAXEY: Might have. Might have, and also I think it might have said that – well, during that time, believe it or not, it seemed like that the liberal people in the country, at that time, were Republicans. Very few liberal Democrats. That’s funny but it’s true.

JS: But they weren’t in the South? Actually the South produced its share of liberals, too, didn’t they?

MAXEY: After they had been Dixiecrats or hard shelled Democrats, or whatever, and they had gone to Washington, especially people like Pepper, and what is the one from Alabama? He’s a powerful man, but he – I think Tullulah Bankhead’s – what is the name? Many years ago he was from Alabama – but anyway after he’d gone to Washington, he became more of an idealist than he was a Dixiecrat, because he found that people used him to be the fool he was, to suppress everybody they wanted him to suppress, but when it came to him getting something, they didn’t do too much to help him.

For an instance I think this is some of the reason why the Longs of Louisiana came to be as liberal as they were. They found out they were going to have to do what they did on their own to get what they wanted for the state of Louisiana. Because if they didn’t get what they wanted for the state of Louisiana, and helped everybody get what they wanted in their state, Louisiana was still going to be one of the poorest countries in the United States. This happened right next door to them, the Bilbos of Mississippi.

JS: And you were aware of the Longs and the Bilbos at this time.

MAXEY: Sure, sure. I came along as a youngster during that time in government. And I could see, studying government, what those people were like; that they were the tools of people that hated their guts. They kept things going exactly the way they wanted

it. Because the people of whom they helped, whether they were Northerners or Southerners, they'd say, "Hey, here's what we need this to do so and so."

"Yeah, but this is going to suppress so many people."

"Oh! What difference does it make, I mean as long as we keep things going, that's what it's about. It's okay whether it's white, Black or whatever."

And I think this is the thing that made it apparent to some thinking white people, more so than thinking of Black people, was the fact that, "This is funny, I'm being used for the very thing that somebody tells me that I'm getting. I'm being used to enhance somebody else, somewhere else for this." And I think had it not been for the whites to feel themselves, "Hey, my family is half starving to death right along with all the Blacks. And somebody tell me you ought to be glad to work for 35 cents an hour. Why?"

"Well, you're making more than the black dude. He's only making 20 cents an hour."

"Yeah, but 35 cent an hour? You're making 50 cents an hour. Why should I be satisfied? There are more poor whites than there are rich whites."

JS: It's a deception that may work for a while, but not forever.

MAXEY: It has worked in this country for a long time.

JS: Let's move to the period when you started getting active in the N.A.A.C.P. [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People]. Let's start out – we've already gotten a bit into it, and I do remember some of the things we talked about. But I thought it would be nice to go back to your entering it. Why you entered and what it was like as you began to get connected with the N.A.A.C.P. The people you met and the experiences that you had.

MAXEY: I got started with the N.A.A.C.P. about my second year in college, I believe it was. I think I paid 25 or 50 cents for my student membership within the N.A.A.C.P. And I

was told at that time you don't carry your card around and show it, because if you did they'd – you probably won't get a job. People probably won't hire you because they know – and at that time what impressed me with the N.A.A.C.P. was, they were going to the courts, fighting against discrimination for jobs and for the bills against lynching, the bills against intimidation and stuff like that. And there was nobody and no organization in the country at that time that were – that would stand up and be counted.

I remember the first time in my home that I can remember that the N.A.A.C.P. came up to me when I was early in high school. It was a high school that was a – foundation in the South, I don't know if you heard of the Rosenwald Foundation? Did you ever hear about that?

JS: No.

MAXEY: Rosenwald Foundation has been depleted, I think, in years. When I was growing up the only painted schools in the South for blacks was Rosenwald school. This was a prerequisite that you had to sign for, or else they wouldn't let school districts put it up. "We will build a school, but you must paint it, you must have heat in it, you must have fresh water at the school." And this was a Rosenwald deal.

And I remember certain community, there used to be fights and you'd hear discussions around in community about different communities weren't going to allow a Rosenwald school to be built there, because they were insisting on Black schools having – painting it. You had to – they would build it, but they'd have to build it and they'd have to have window panes, glass window panes, because many of the school huts I understand were built with no open, no light whatsoever. But these had to have open and shut windows, with glass windows. And later they had to have electric lights in them. And this was Rosenwald Foundation that built these.

These were Black schools only, because in most places in the South you only had schools, I understand, I don't – I've never seen this, but I've seen some very poor schools, to where they were part of a barn. Anywhere for shelter. And the Rosenwald

come in and say, “Hey, in this – if you accept and sign for us, we’ll build a school here, for schools only”. And in many places they had to agree to let them use the school for a church in the community, I understand. I don’t know this to be true, but I’ve been told this. That they’d have to agree with the school board that they’d let them hold church in the school, and also use it as a kind of community meeting place.

But this is why – this is the first time I remember getting interested in the N.A.A.C.P., because the school boards in some places in the South wanted to fight against the regulation that which the Rosenwald Foundation would stipulate that you had to do, in order to put a school in the community. They wanted those things limited. And they wanted to – and the Rosenwald Foundation you had to have a place for fresh water, you had to have a place – if you built a school it’d have to be deeded to the school district for whatever use the school was for and that wouldn’t be for the Black school. This was not to build white schools; it was Black schools only. And that’s when they began to fight that that – to not let Rosenwald build schools, I thought that the N.A.A.C.P. must have been a pretty...

JS: Oh, that’s how the N.A.A.C.P. is connected with it.

MAXEY: Yes. That’s how the N.A.A.C.P. was brought to me, because they got right in on it to say, “Yes, that’s unconstitutional. There must be a school where you have Black kids in community; there must be a school.” And they did not – I’ve never known a place in the South, never heard of anybody saying, in most small community places where they had buses for black kids. But the Rosenwald insisted that you put it in the middle of the community where the kids wouldn’t have too far — that they could walk.

JS: So when you got out to Portland is it just an automatic thing that you did, that you went to the N.A.A.C.P. meetings? You remember what it was like starting out getting involved here in Portland?

MAXEY: Yes, when I was in college we had what is known as a college branch of the N.A.A.C.P. and we used to get – and get *The Pittsburgh Courier* and *The Chicago Defender* newspaper. And we'd usually take those articles and get most of the news that something – what the N.A.A.C.P. had done in different parts of the country to stamp out segregation and to try to increase the chances for Blacks getting an equal education. And those are the things that we discussed, and also we'd also find all the lynching and mobs and how they had burned places in the Black community and all that stuff. All that stuff would be discussed.

And the – quite often at that time, they wanted to brand the N.A.A.C.P. as being a communistic form of thing. But, at that point, in time I've never known anybody to advocate communism to me; I've never known anybody to be a Communist, as I know; they might have been. I don't know. And it still – I'm still kind of backwards on what communism is or what it would mean as to why Blacks are more subject to being a Communist, than a white or anybody else.

JS: Well, they really branded Paul Robeson as a Communist.

MAXEY: That's very true. At that time, there were quite a few – most, most Black people that were able to stand up for themselves – I remember there was another Black that came along, he was a singer during the time that Paul Robeson was. I don't know if you heard of him. Roland Hayes.

JS: No.

MAXEY: Never heard of Roland Hayes. Okay. Roland Hayes was before Paul Robeson, I understand. And he was – I think he was from the South. And they accepted him, more or less as in his place, so to speak, that he was always welcome to come in, and render these programs. He was a good singer, just like Paul Robeson. And it wasn't until – I think he was from Atlanta, or he visited Atlanta, he and his wife. And his wife

went in one of the places to buy some shoes and she asked to put them on, and they wouldn't permit her to put them on. In fact she wouldn't get up out of the chair, and said that they slapped her or roughed her up some kind of way. And Roland Hayes then began to speak out against discrimination. Yes. And then they began to say that he was being fed by the communists.

Yes. That was said about Paul Robeson, sure. I went to see Paul Robeson speak when he came here. And also I went to the speaking of the fellow who was the Vice President of Roosevelt's. What was his name?

JS: Wallace?

MAXEY: Wallace.

JS: Henry Agard.

MAXEY: Right. Henry Wallace. You remember he ran for president?

JS: Yeah.

MAXEY: Okay. And most Blacks in this community – and I was working the N.A.A.C.P. at that time. They were afraid to go and listen to those people speak.

JS: Oh, here in Portland?

MAXEY: Here in Portland. This is white and Blacks told me. "Wallace is a Communist."

JS: What were they afraid of?

MAXEY: Well they were afraid that people would say, “Hey, you’re a Communist now, and we’re going to turn thumbs down on you.” As I said, I’m sorry nobody never showed me a good picture of a Communist. It never was imprinted in my mind as to what a good or bad Communist was.

JS: They said the same thing about Goodman. Irwin Goodman.

MAXEY: Right. Right. Irwin Goodman was a person who was – that was said by – and later, I worked with Irwin Goodman when I came here in N.A.A.C.P. And I remember the group, after I got to be, I think I was program chairman, the congressman from New York that was a minister.

JS: Adam Clayton Powell.

MAXEY: Adam Clayton Powell! Adam Clayton Powell was making a swing around the United States right after the war was over and we got him to come here. We sponsored him at Benson High School. And at that time, there were members of the black N.A.A.C.P. board, that didn’t particularly care about going to that particular program because they said Powell was getting soft on communism. Can you believe? And this is – any progress, seems like to me that black was going to make, people tainted it with communism to keep you away from it, seemed like. And I...

JS: So they tended to use it for more radical or outspoken...

MAXEY: Yes.

JS: People in the Black cause.

MAXEY: Well, it seems like to me – and especially if you felt like you wanted to take part in something that other people hadn't taken part, whether you outspoken or what? I don't know. I don't know if I was any more outspoken than...

[End of Tape 4, Side 2]

Tape 5, Side 1**1994 March 25**

MAXEY: I felt once the war was over and Blacks started getting out of service, not only blacks, whites and many others who had into the service, had found out they learned more about each other than they ever dared to believe before. Simply because, I think in six months in a fox hole together or six months in a barracks together, you most certainly are going to live down some of the junk that you've heard. And I just knew this was going to be different, because, as I said I was at that age at that time and I knew just about how a young person would be thinking at that time. And once people started coming back from the service, I mean, it was different. It was different.

And some of the people came back worse than when they left. That is, "I don't want to associate with Blacks. I associated with them when I was in the service and I didn't like it then, I don't like it now, so I'm not going to ever do it." But there were some who saw that Blacks were no different. They were good, bad, and indifferent, like everybody else. Like we found out that whites are. There's no such thing as just right or scrip on all Blacks being bad, or all whites being good.

JS: So, at the time, you were really seeing the possibility in this – that's the way it turned out. How much of – how strongly did you see the possibility at the time? That the war would really change things?

MAXEY: I saw it strong enough that – and I think the thing that helped me to see it most, was the fact that pretty soon I found out I wasn't going to get a very good place to live in Portland. That I was going to have to buy a place. And once I bought a place and I found that in dealing with people in business, even like the realtor company and insurance companies, it was a little bit different. And I began to see that if you had money to pay for something and you acted like that's what you wanted to do, other than what somebody thought about you being Black, that you were going to get a different type of society. And this is what happened. Because I remember the first home we bought – and

I never knew this, I never knew they wouldn't show Blacks homes anywhere other than the area around where the Coliseum is now. That's the only area they would show you. But I only asked about houses in that area, because that's where we were living at that time.

JS: So, did you hear from other people what the situation was and the experience they were having getting a house?

MAXEY: Yes, I was told by other people who had seen houses in other parts of the city, had wanted to look at them, and realtors refused to show them to them. I had never had anybody do that to me. I know after I lived down where the Coliseum is now for about three and a half years, we had seen a house below Emmanuel Hospital, right down below Emmanuel Hospital on Borthwick. And we didn't know whether they were going to show that to us or not, but we asked to see it and they did. And we saw it and we liked it and we bought it.

And after we were there for about six months or a year, and then the other Blacks started moving in. So I don't know whether they moved out because we moved there, or whether other Blacks saw the places and they had the money to buy it or whatever. But I do know at time they began to open up.

But there were areas in and around the city here, they would not show Blacks. And this far up on Williams Avenue even. There were no Blacks that I know of that lived up here. In fact, I learned after I moved down below Emmanuel Hospital they would not show you a house up here.

JS: Let's see, what year – do you know that you bought the house down by Emmanuel?

MAXEY: Yes. Yes, this is 1945.

JS: How long did you live there, then?

MAXEY: I lived there until 1959.

JS: Oh, quite some time!

MAXEY: Yeah.

JS: And then you moved up here?

MAXEY: Yes. Right. And because when I moved down there I got a barbershop of my own and in this barbershop on – let's see, we probably had three kids by that time. I knew that we weren't going to be able to raise kids like we were and they just roamed the streets while I did nothing but cut hair, and she did nothing but raise kids. And I made up my mind. I told her that I bought me – I moved out of the place where I was and I bought a place. Had three store fronts in it. And this would give me a chance to put something else in there, or rent it out in some other kind of way. So I did. I had a small utensil place, and the first job my kids had was they'd come up and dust the stuff, and all.

And I had no more than got settled in that before the highway department took that place. And when they took that place I told my wife that the next place I'm moving, I'd like to try to get a place where I'd have some kind of a store or shop of some kind that my kids could work in.

JS: A place – you would live near your stores?

MAXEY: No, I was still living down on Borthwick at that time. I was living on Borthwick when I found this store. But they were going to take my barbershop. So I didn't know that the same deal was going to take my home also.

JS: Oh! Alright. Okay.

This – I wanted to also ask you about your recollections of Portland. What it was like on account of the war. Because there is – it must have been very changed, I would suppose by – there's the shipyards and so forth. What else do we need, in order to have a picture of Portland during the war, and also Portland for blacks during the war.

MAXEY: Well, I think during that time that there were Blacks coming and leaving here, just like other people. Nobody was staying here very long at the time. In fact, people come here and work four or five months, and a year would be a long time. People'd be moving out. And, and different people coming in, moving out they began to form some kind of a pattern, like, for an instance, places to socialize that became very distinct. Notices that Black and whites weren't going to be able to socialize together, and, like, going to dances together.

This is what the establishment had established, but people themselves broke that up. Because if they'd have dance at Jantzen Beach, okay, there's only certainly no Blacks who go out there. You'd have a dance anywhere besides McElroy's dance hall downtown – the Blacks would go down there at McElroy's place and when the band go other places then they wouldn't expect to go. But it got to the place where if a band came to town and Blacks felt like going to that dance, they went to it. And most of your bands began to get onto that too. And they found out – they see a lot of Blacks showing up at the line and wasn't nobody, no Blacks in the place, they began to question it. And they began to when they began to sign up here they said, "Well, I'll play but I'll play for a place, a public dance where the public will be coming. We will not play to a place where you'll only say, what some people come in and those some people be white only."

And I remember going to a dance, my wife and myself and two other couples we went to when Lionel Hampton was here. You know Lionel Hampton?

JS: Yes.

MAXEY: Okay. He came to my barber shop. He said, "Maxey, you and your wife coming to the dance tonight?"

I said, "No." I said, "They don't allow Black people to go to dances at Jantzen Beach."

He said, "To hell you say! So you want to go to Jantzen?"

I said, "Sure." I say, "I bought tickets out there and been turned down."

So he said, "I tell you what. You buy your tickets, this time you won't be turned down. And any other blacks who want to go, you tell them to get their ticket." We did. We went out there.

In fact, it was about three or four of his fellows in the shop getting their hair done at that time – some getting shaves, massages and all, and so he said, "I want all – all of my boys to pay these barbers well and tip them because they're coming to the dance tonight." And everybody did. They got nice tips.

So we went to the dance that night. I think dances at that time was about \$2.50, for a dance. And when we walked up there my wife and myself was in front. And I went up to the guy and said, "You got to move over." And so he said –

I said, "What's the problem?"

He said, "We haven't fixed no place for you all."

I said, "For who?"

He said, "Your people."

I said, "No, no. I'm going to the Lionel Hampton dance." And Lionel Hampton had his men do their checking tickets with my own, so he heard the conversation. But he wasn't in the shop that day when Hampton was there.

So he walked over, he said, "Ho ho, wait a minute. Let's stop the count here." So he walked over to where the conversation was going on between me and the person who had me held up. And he said, "I think there's a misunderstanding here, sir. I don't think Hampton played at these kind of dances — that's what his manager said." So he said, "Don't sell another ticket until we get this straight."

So there was another Black fellow with him, so he sent him in to get Hampton. Lionel Hampton came out and told them he's pulling his band off of the stand if he didn't sell us tickets. He said, "They can go in but they can't dance."

He said, "That is for them. If they go in and they don't want to dance that's their business. But they will sit where they may or dance where they may, or else I'll pull the band off."

So we went in. We danced all over the place, and never had more fun in my life. Nobody said nothing to us. In fact, there were other people that me or some of the other three couples knew, who were white. They danced with them and their wives; and they danced with my wife and others. And had a ball. Yes.

JS: Sounds like a good moment.

MAXEY: That was the type of thing that had started a whole lot of places then saying, "Hey, if the band comes here, whatever the band say in the contract, that's the way it's going to be."

JS: So the Hampton episode was a – the start of it.

MAXEY: That I remember. I don't know about other places. I happen to know, that happened to be the first of it because, you see, Portland didn't have a civil rights bill, you know, until up in the 1950s. And I think what happened was that – well I know any time a Black man came here they'd have a dance at McElroy's say on a Monday night, for Blacks. Then probably whites would have a dance on Wednesday night.

JS: Oh. At McElroy's, too, they were doing that?

MAXEY: Yes, same place. Sure, sure.

JS: Where was McElroy's by the way?

MAXEY: Do you know where the [Portland] building is downtown?

JS: Yes.

MAXEY: That's it. They tore it down put that there.

JS: Right downtown?

MAXEY: Yes.

JS: Well that's part of the military scene. I mean – and a lot of people in uniform – and...

MAXEY: Yeah. Lots of them. And, as I said, again, I think the young people themselves did it, more so than anybody. This is white and Black. I think the younger whites enjoyed it because that was difference in the type of carrying on in dances of Black and white. Black guys seemed to be laughing, dancing, having a lot of fun, joining in the songs, and all that kind of stuff. And I think white kids enjoyed that, too. And the first thing you know, everybody enjoyed public dances. And I went to public dances for a long time and enjoyed them. And I – and the public dances were used at the time that some of the testimony was going on about the civil rights bill in Portland and the state of Oregon.

JS: They used that fact?

MAXEY: Yes. That they are getting along in dances – what's the reason? Mahoney was the – I don't mean to stray. Do you remember the attorney?

JS: Tom Mahoney?

MAXEY: Tom Mahoney was the fellow I told you introduced the first civil rights bill in the state of Oregon, and they laughed it down his throat, because they said that they had a party the night beforehand and he had done some blackface jokes and things. He did this because this is the way some of his Black friends act; some stuff like that; I don't know what it was. Tom Mahoney. Right. Was a Democrat.

JS: Yeah, I've heard of Tom Mahoney.

MAXEY: Yeah. And believe it or not Tom Mahoney got honestly behind the civil rights bill after that, about a year after that, and worked along with some Republicans and others and got the bill passed.

JS: So you can see Tom Mahoney as sincere about this?

MAXEY: Yes, he got sincere. At first I think it was a joke that he introduced the civil rights bill, because Blacks, ministers, and the N.A.A.C.P. and others had talked with him, and he'd given the okay that he'd be glad to introduce it. And later the bill passed. And I think – I'm not too sure but I think the state bill passed before the city did.

JS: Yes.

MAXEY: Or the city passed and then...

JS: Well I think the state bill – the first accommodations act and...

MAXEY: Yes it was a kind of a deal like – seemed like to me because I know Mrs. Lee was mayor when the civil rights bill passed for Portland. And I might be right when I said the Portland bill passed before the state.

JS: Yes. We can check that. As a matter of fact I've got something here that will give us the facts. So did you get close to Tom Mahoney? How — did you actually know Tom Mahoney?

MAXEY: No more than just with the group. I never associated with him; I never said anything to him. No. And there are some of the people that I did work with that gets that bill passed. Now Hatfield was not in the Legislature at that time; he was teaching down at Willamette.

JS: Yes. Well I want to save that for a little later and we'll certainly get to that. And it's going to be good to look at these individual people. Tom Mahoney's an interesting guy. I always hear so much about him. And it's too bad we can't interview him.

But I did want to also ask you – well before we go on to another subject, are there other experiences, you know, like the entertainment experience of, you know, how the whites and blacks came together, or didn't come together? I mean shopping downtown for instance, and transportation. That seems like...

MAXEY: I think on small — individuals would sometime run into something like that, because I remember an incident when I was working in the shipyard. I had ridden the bus all the way over town on 6th and Marshall, I believe it was, where the First National Bank was. And I cashed my check and put some money in the bank. And coming back I rode the bus that would come up Williams Avenue, cross the Steel Bridge. And there was a very old white woman on there and she's holding bags and trying to hold her hand hold and all, she's just slinging back and forth, and people just crowded, you know. And I just

touched her and offered her my seat. She told me, “Get your Black filthy hands off of me.”

JS: Oh.

MAXEY: “I don’t want to sit down.” So. [Laughs]

And there’s a lot of people on there felt the same way she did, because I know the sailor on there, he took exception to it, and I told her I said, “Well you filthy old witch.” I said, “Hey, I hope you fall down and break your neck.”

He told me, “You can’t talk to that lady like that.”

I said, “I don’t want to talk to her like that.” I said, “If it was you I’d do you the same way.”

So he and I went on word for word – in fact we started a fight on the bus. Because of that; because he came back, he came to me. To jump on me because of that, yeah. The bus driver put us off. Right at Holladay and Williams Avenue, at that time.

JS: And what happened when you got off?

MAXEY: I got off and then invited him off; and he wouldn’t get off. The bus driver couldn’t put him off. And of course the bus driver said, well, since I got the two fools apart, the Black dude is out and he’s still on, he wouldn’t get off, so he drove on off.

JS: Were you aware of reaction of other people on the bus, at this time?

MAXEY: Yes, there were comments made. “Won’t somebody to do something to that nigger?” You know.

JS: Nothing on the other side?

MAXEY: No, no.

JS: And they kept...

MAXEY: Oh, I think one or two Blacks might have been on it. Seemed like maybe there was a Black.

JS: No, but there was nobody else who was taking your part?

MAXEY: No. No.

JS: Had they heard what she had said to you or....

MAXEY: I'm sure that they did, because I mean she said it loud enough.

JS: I'm beginning to sound like a lawyer. [Laughs]

MAXEY: No! I mean it brings to my mind what actually happened in that. Yes. And you know that put a bad taste in my mouth in a way that I didn't appreciate because I had always been told, you know, to respect older people and women, and I got to the place where I'd ride the bus and dare not offer a woman my seat. I really did. And that bothered me. Kept up as long as I rode the bus, I used to do that. And my wife and myself – white sailors, white soldiers, Black soldiers, sailors or whatever, when we get on the bus and I'd be carrying one of my kids and wife have them, I've seen too many of them get up and give and give us a seat. And I'm the same way. I always felt that way. But it put a bad taste in my mouth. And this is not just one experience on top of another. It just happened to have been one that I ran into like that.

JS: But a big one.

MAXEY: Yes. It's one that could have been very explosive.

JS: Yes. Were there experiences of the opposite kind that made, you know, Portlanders look as though there was some hope for them?

MAXEY: I don't know. I'll tell you, I think the Army made that difference – and I should have said the military instead of the Army because we had the air base out here where the airport is, and then you had soldiers being, you know, all around, marines and all that thing. And those fellows alone refused to be separated from their buddies.

For instance, sailors, I think more so than soldiers. They'd come in here and if there was a speakeasy where they had open gambling, they went in. And if they went in together and they'd tell them, "Hey, you can't come in here; this is for whites only."

They'd say, "This is my, this is my buddy. I haven't seen nobody but people who look like him for the last six months and I'm not going out." And, they had several fights and things where the white boys fought right along with the Black boys because they said, "No, no, you tell me. If this is a closed club, close the door." You know.

And there was one instance where – there was a club here right down where the – what's the name of the café right across the road from the Coliseum? Behind it, right next to the river?

JS: Well, there's the Thunderbird.

MAXEY: Yes. Thunderbird. It used to be down there. It used to be a street and I remember it was a club down there at one time, and there came a lot of sailors and soldiers and Blacks, there'd been a band and then the band was playing and they all went to the dance and they wanted to – supposed to have been, going to separate the Blacks from the whites, you know. Told the Blacks they couldn't come in because they

had a number of whites in there. They tore the place up and threw the furniture in the river.

JS: Oh really?

MAXEY: Just walked — you know, it's right down on the river. They just walked right down on the river and threw it in the river. This I know, because, I told you, I lived not too far from it. That happened.

JS: You didn't get into the military. What happened?

MAXEY: Oh, I volunteered for the Air Corps. You remember the Air Corps was known as the Air Force at this time. And I was supposed to go to Tuskegee where this was the Black unit for training. And when I took the exam, I passed the written exam and they were sending us upstairs to take the physical, those of us who had passed, and I was called out of line, and was told that you, you filled out beneficiary papers. When we got through with our test they told us to fill this paper out here would include your home address, your beneficiaries and how many sisters and brothers you had at home and all that stuff. And I put that mine was my wife and my baby. And they told me they weren't taking any at that time. And that's how I ended up in Salt Lake City, because they told me that they would notify me later if they were carrying married men. Because they have to carry more insurance if you had a dependent. So I wrote down that I had those so they told me that I'd be notified later.

Later there came up a big fight about the planes that the Blacks were being trained — the first group they'd sent over were flying planes that had been used by white boys to train with. And blacks are using them in northern Africa in combat. And a lot of them were falling down; they weren't being shot down, they were just falling out of the air. And the N.A.A.C.P., at that time, was headed by a man — I don't know if you remember Walter White, do you ever remember the name Walter White?

JS: No, I don't.

MAXEY: Walter White was as white as you are. Nobody could tell whether he was Black or white if he didn't say so. And Walter White was Black. And he had asked all Blacks to not enlist into the Air Force because of the fact that they were discriminating and they would send you out there to be shot down with no recourse of defending yourself, cause you were using planes had been white boys had trained with, and they flying them in northern Africa. And they kept the heat up like that until they made a law that they would not send anybody out, unless there was a well-equipped plane.

And I didn't get notified until I had – let's see, I got my first notification when I was in Salt Lake City; some papers that I filled out and sent back. And I got an answer from that once I came here and started working at the shipyard. And each time they automatically deferred me.

JS: Oh, they did. Because you had children?

MAXEY: Yes but I – well, that and I working in the war effort see.

JS: Oh, alright. That...

MAXEY: Yes. They automatically – I didn't ask for a deferment. They automatically gave it to me. When my mother got the mail in Texas she sent it to me. And I got deferred. And I kept getting automatically deferred until it was over. But I was going to join the Air Force.

JS: Well how did you feel about the war and not getting into it?

MAXEY: I didn't feel like getting in it, to be frank with you. I tell you something that had happened. In the 1930s, when I was in high school, Hitler was solidifying his base in northern Africa at that time, and Mussolini. And if you remember they were doing that and doing it fast. And there's a lot of people don't know today, or they don't remember that that was one of the most fierce battles we ever had with Hitler, was down in northern Africa. Rommel to be exact, the general, Rommel, and Montgomery was the Allied general that was fighting him down there.

There began to be quite a bit of agitation about the fact that it doesn't make sense for Blacks going down shooting up Blacks in a place that they can't enjoy in the first place. That Germany is going to take it over and they won't be able to live down there anyway. He'd said he didn't want Blacks down there, and he wanted Africa; he didn't want Blacks. He – I guess it was because of the resources that they had to offer down there; natural resources. And this was resentment, not only from me, but many young Blacks at that time. But...

JS: So – it – what exactly were you objecting to? I mean, Hitler was threatening to take over North Africa.

MAXEY: That is correct.

JS: And he failed.

MAXEY: But at the same time, Blacks were being sent down there in second-hand planes. And we were told that it didn't make sense. You were going to get killed defending a place that you're not wanted and won't be down there too long.

JS: After you win, it's not going to be...

MAXEY: It's not going to be yours anyway.

JS: Free anyway.

MAXEY: Yeah, right. It won't be free.

JS: Well, was this presented in the Black press, or – where was this being – wouldn't – it wouldn't have appeared in *The Oregonian* or any – you know, this information wouldn't have shown up there.

MAXEY: Oh, *The Oregonian* might make a mention about that. That came out of *The Chicago Defender* or *The Pittsburgh Courier*. Yes. It was in those papers.

JS: Oh really?

MAXEY: Yeah. Did you ever hear of *The Chicago Defender*?

JS: Yes.

MAXEY: *Pittsburgh Courier*?

JS: Yes, I'm just beginning to hear about that. Yes.

MAXEY: Yes. Okay, okay.

JS: So they were read and they had a real effect on people's thinking.

MAXEY: Yes. Sure, sure. And I think this put some thinking, deep thinking, in a whole lot of people at that time, because not only were blacks given better equipment to deal with once the war was over in the, in the Atlantic, it went over into the Pacific.

[End of Tape 5, Side 1]

Tape 5, Side 2
1994 March 25

JS: This began to spread to...

MAXEY: This thinking began to spread into all facets of the armed forces, at that time. And Blacks began to see a different picture in the Pacific than what had been going on in the Atlantic at that time.

JS: Oh, you mean they had a different feeling about the whole thing.

MAXEY: Sure, because I understand that they had several naval officers that they didn't put in the European war; that they served in the Pacific. Before the war was over in Japan, they had several officers in all the military; Black officers.

JS: So this meant that they...

MAXEY: In mixed groups.

JS: This meant that they were changing in the military?

MAXEY: Yes. Yes. I mean, that came down by order of Truman. I think the latter part was in 1948, which the war was over in both places, but there had been some voluntary – changes had been done on certain ships, and I understand in certain regiments in the Army.

JS: There were episodes.

MAXEY: Yes, there were episodes that they had put them together.

JS: So probably, historians, say, of the scene in Oregon, need to have in mind the impact of the *The Defender* of the Black press, and *The Pittsburgh Courier*. Did you buy them locally? Were they on newsstands?

MAXEY: Yes, they were on newsstands, sure.

JS: Where would you buy it?

MAXEY: Did you ever hear of Rich's Cigar Stand? There, and it seemed like to me, at one time, there was a stand in the Union Station. I'm almost sure that I remember walking across the bridge two, three times and buying my *Defender* and *Courier* there. Then, after a while, they began to get a lot of heat put on them about carrying *The Defender* and *The Courier*. There began to be different – Blacks themselves began to order those papers and to sell them several places here. People demanded it, to read them, you know, and they weren't getting them. And they began to get them themselves and peddle them.

JS: It's called power of...

MAXEY: But the Rich's Cigar Stand, I remember distinctly, had both those papers. Yes.

JS: Why Rich's? Do you know?

MAXEY: I would think so, because he seemed to have been a very independent person. He seemed to have been a person that he wasn't fighting a political battle. He sold whatever he could. I mean, he boasted the fact that he sold – you could buy most

any paper from anywhere in the world at Rich's Cigar place. That was one of the things that you could do; you could buy the paper there.

JS: Maybe he's somebody we need to learn about.

MAXEY: Yeah. I don't think – I think I've heard lots of people – yes, it'd be good for somebody to mention Rich, who ran – I don't know the man's name who ran Rich's Cigar Stand. I think that name has gone through just continuously.

JS: Well, we'll find it.

MAXEY: Yeah. But what I was going to say is I think, time and time again, there was tried to be some agitation from certain groups who called themselves Communists or socialists or whatever, or might've been some Nazis at that time did agitating. I know that there were quite a bit going on at that time, all groups. That there should be some agitation on immigration, but I don't think too much of that did any good. I think most of it happened by what the people actually did here. I don't think too much of the agitation coming out of New York papers or San Francisco papers or whatever had too much impact. I think things were changed more by the people here.

JS: But their thinking was helped along by their reading.

MAXEY: I most certainly know so; I know it was. Yes.

And I'll tell you another thing. Did you ever hear of the Bill 8802? An executive order that Roosevelt passed down...

JS: No.

MAXEY: At the beginning of the war because of discrimination in war industry? Bill 8802. And this was the civil rights bill giving people the right to work in – not on everybody else’s job, but any place that was receiving money from a federal agency could not discriminate on the job. That’s what the Bill 8802 was about. And that was an executive order that he passed down, that said – I can’t quote you the exact wording of it, but the essence was that there will be no discrimination on jobs that are building war implements, or something of that sort; whether it was ships, planes, or whatever.

JS: I was just reading that Roosevelt intervened directly in the situation in Portland. It was with regard to the laundry unions and the boilermakers unions, when they refused to do anything for Blacks.

MAXEY: Seemed like maybe I heard about that laundry deal. I know the boilermaker was true, because with me telling you that I couldn’t get into the other unions. The electrical union was one that I could get into. The boilermaker union was definitely one, which had to do with a whole lot of shipyard work.

JS: There was a Tom [Wray?]. Did you hear about him?

MAXEY: I’ve heard of that, but that’s been so many years ago. Yeah, I heard of Tom [Wray?].

JS: And it was actually the Longshoremen and the laundry workers, who were a problem.

MAXEY: Right. The president of the Longshoremen at that time was – what was his name?

JS: Probably Harry Bridges.

MAXEY: Harry Bridges! Everybody said he was a Communist. Right. Harry Bridges and the president of the Teamsters also, at that time, was instrumental. He came in later. He – was it Beck?

JS: Well, Beck was certainly one of the – at some point.

MAXEY: The name rings a bell with me. Beck was the one that had a lot of input.

JS: Dave Beck.

MAXEY: Was he the one that lived in Seattle?

JS: Right.

MAXEY: He was the one, then. Yes.

JS: What about Communists? Did you know any Communists? Or were you aware...

MAXEY: I learned some after this was all over, but I – to be frank with you, it bothered me less who was a communist or whoever. I tell you, I was bent, a whole lot, on what was going on in fascism and Nazism was perpetuating what was going on in America against me and other Black people. Communism didn't bother me a bit, as to be a part of it or be against it or whatever, you know. My feeling was, I'm not against anybody, whether they be – in fact, if a fascist came up and said, "Hey, I'm going to work to help give Maxey civil rights," I was for that. So it didn't bother me to worry about whether people said – Irvin Goodman, what was the attorney's name!

JS: I was going to say. I was just...

MAXEY: Irvin Goodman happened to be that attorney. Irvin Goodman.

JS: I was just going to ask you about [Irvin] Goodman. I'm moving toward him because he was said to be a Communist at the time.

MAXEY: Was said to be a Communist. That is correct. I worked with Irvin Goodman in N.A.A.C.P. You told me about Bogle?

JS: Yes.

MAXEY: Okay. I worked with her. You might ask her sometime, "I talked with Mr. Maxey. What's Mr. Maxey like as a young man?" Because I was young compared to her and other people. I was the youngest board member of the N.A.A.C.P. at the time; in my late 20s.

She might tell you, "Well, I don't know. He's pretty rampant-like." She's right. [Both laugh]

JS: Oh, you tell me what you were like at that time. Can you describe yourself?

MAXEY: I would describe myself as being – and I'm describing myself as of working with the N.A.A.C.P., at that time. I was a young fellow, at that time, who had gone through, looked like to me, wars forever, beginning around the late 1930s, when Hitler began to invade the Balkan countries in Europe. And here it was coming up about the latter part of the 1940s, that I began to work with the N.A.A.C.P.

I went in there because I had gone to meetings, along with many other young people in N.A.A.C.P. and listened to them read minutes and come up with proposals. "Well, I make a motion that we do so and so."

“We can’t do that, because the first thing we know, people’ll be saying we’re having Communists in the N.A.A.C.P.”

That’s what fired me up to get into the N.A.A.C.P., get elected on the board, and to fight the board, rather than fight the racist white people they told me were out here. I got on there and fought the board more than I did racist white people. I was angry. I was surprised. And real disappointed, because I could not see Blacks at that time, who would be my age now, in between my age, which at that time would’ve been 30 years in between where I am now. I could not see that they’d say, “Well, I don’t think we should do it this time, because people’ll be thinking that we are going to go Communist, we’re going to be Communist members.”

My feeling was, and I spoke this in many a board meeting – if Mrs. Marple [were] here, she could tell you I’d make these remarks. “I don’t see how you can maintain the fact that we have just got through fighting a war to save democracy, and you’re going to tell me what somebody’s think to help keep us exactly where we are.” I said, “I don’t see where we’re going to better ourselves any. If we’re afraid to take a vote, if we’re afraid to say what we dislike about what is going on, I don’t see how you can tell me that you’re a good American citizen. And I don’t see why you’re afraid of being a Communist. I say if you make democracy work like I’ve studied in school, I don’t think we’ll have to worry about communism.” I’ve said those remarks in a board meeting.

JS: And what was the response?

MAXEY: “I have a son your age. I have other young people. I’ve heard this before.” “You all don’t know how much we have to lose.” “You don’t understand what’s on the planning board right now to make things better.”

I think the time has come, my answer would be. The time has come. Looked like to me we were worrying too much time fighting all these isms, and weren’t worried about making democracy work. I think that’s a big job, to make democracy work. Each time we go out, I don’t think we should go out waving a Communist flag. I don’t think we should

go out talking about how bad the Nazis are, how bad the squint-eyed Japanese that you call are. I think we should go out, talking about how mean we are to ourselves, and talking about how we just won a war for democracy. And I think we Blacks are doing less, I think we're setting ourselves back, if we don't stand up with N.A.A.C.P. and speak out against it. Yes, that was the type of thing.

You can imagine some of the accusations. I got called a Communist. And I got called that, I think, more by the Black people on the board than I did whites, because I think most of the Black people figured that if they didn't shut me up or sit me down, then the white people'd be thinking that they are perpetuating me worshipping Communists. And I was not. I have never, never said I wanted to be a Communist. I've never felt that communism could stand; fascism and socialism – I don't think any isms, if you make democracy work. I really don't. Didn't think it then, and don't think it now.

JS: Was anybody on the board receptive to you?

MAXEY: You say anybody. Now, do you mean white or Black?

JS: Oh, on the N.A.A.C.P. board.

MAXEY: We had whites on the board, too.

JS: Oh, that's right.

MAXEY: Yes, Mrs. Marple was on the board.

JS: Were any of them white or Black?

MAXEY: Irvin Goodman was on the board.

Mrs. Marple had another woman that attended meetings with her. I think Mrs. Marple was in betwixt and between, for some reason. A funny thing happened to Mrs. [Marple] one day. Mrs. Marple had a chance to speak up where I was being addressed as: "It's funny, you came from the South and you took all that. Now you're here, going to make us give up what we gained for some of your youthful nonsense ideas."

And I asked Mrs. Marple, I said, "Mrs. Marple, is your husband affiliated with any foreign agents for the United States government?" And I asked her that because her husband would come to meetings with her and he would sit there and would not take part; never did take part. And Mrs. Marple was always making sure that she was going to be somewhere down the center. Not to the left or not to the right. [Both laugh] And I thought she was a beautiful woman. I laughed with her in her older age, many times about that. I told her. I said, "You're a real person, because I don't think you took that near as well as I thought you would have, in order to get a real good fight out of me."

And she told me, "Yeah, you know, I've been young like you. I felt a lot of things."

I asked her, I said, "For real, you still haven't told me whether your husband works for a foreign agent in the government."

JS: Well, why did you think that he might?

MAXEY: He took trips abroad quite a bit. And she never did say what he did. I never knew what he did. Did you ever know what he did?

JS: No – yes, he worked for Bonneville Power.

MAXEY: I never did know. I knew that he travelled quite a bit abroad. Some, I'll say. I don't say quite a bit. Some.

JS: [Laughs] Well, it's quite an accusation, isn't it? The suggestion that he worked for a foreign government?

MAXEY: It really was! But I was young and stupid, I guess, at that time. [JS laughs]
Angry, sure.

JS: Alright, it was a serious thing for you.

MAXEY: Sure, it was serious. I knew that. I think it was a serious thing for people to tell me this is the best country in the world, and get it right up to where you're saying, well, here's democracy, but don't come over here, because we're not quite ready for you over here. Yes.

JS: Now, Irvin [Goodman], I feel that the more we learn about [Irvin] Goodman, the better off we are. Can you give a description of the man? An impression of this man?

MAXEY: I don't know if I could or not, I'm being frank with you, because the time when I met him, as I said, I was young. It seemed like to me that they had just formed a coalition to put him in his place, for some reason. And especially with being on the board of the N.A.A.C.P., because he had been the Legal Redress Chairman of the N.A.A.C.P., I understand, for years, when I first came here. I don't know who had been before he came. But after that, he came and there was a black attorney who came here from Kansas City and his name was Ulysses Plummer. Somebody might've mentioned his name to you. It came up – they put me on a nominating committee, and when the nominating committee came up, the open discussion was that Goodman was a communist, and that we should dump him and make the Black attorney the Legal Redress Chairman.

I took an exception to the fact that the man had worked free of charge all these years, I understand, and we didn't have a black attorney in Portland. And I felt that we should make him chairman and Ulysses co-chairman with him. And if Goodman did not serve as he should, I thought then we should automatically see that Ulysses Plummer did

that. I think that's why I got called some of the funny names. And I would feel that way today.

I don't go to too many N.A.A.C.P. meetings now, because I can't afford to get into too many fights like I used to because of heart trouble. And I certainly wouldn't sit quiet, like people do on some of the things. I don't feel like the N.A.A.C.P. is doing its job now, I really don't. I think they should do much more than they – I think we could be better receptive from things that the N.A.A.C.P. would suggest, than some of these committees that are appointed by the city commissioners or the county commissioners. And for that reason, I'd get into some big fights with them if I went. I still pay my dues.

Am I a Communist? No. Have I ever been? No. Have I ever known many communists? I know who people have told me were Communist. Have I ever been to a meeting? No. Have I ever made a contribution to the Community Party? Not knowingly.

JS: Used to be, those were dangerous questions.

MAXEY: I know. I know.

JS: Did you hear about – well, why did they think that [Goodman] was Communist? What had he done? I know that he defended a man who was a Communist, De Jonge. Had you heard about that?

MAXEY: Yes, I heard about that.

JS: Why else did they think he was communist, do you know?

MAXEY: He had represented Blacks in several discrimination cases in Portland, also. Also about some problems with miscegenation in the state of Oregon. He had defended Black and white couples, who had had some discrimination problems. And everybody said this is because he was a Communist, that he did that. And I never knew whether he

was charging people, or whatever. They were saying, any time it's – for an instance, a lot of times, [if it's] a Black man married to a white woman, or a Black woman married to a white man (I've seen both when I first came here) you might find all kinds of things. You might find a dead dog or a dead cat thrown on their porch or in their yard, or that kind of stuff. And Goodman would absolutely make statements about that to the paper and to the radio station, thing. And they were saying that he was a Communist.

I don't know. I never heard – have you ever heard it proven that he was a communist? A member of the Communist Party?

JS: No, I don't know. I don't know.

MAXEY: I was wondering about that.

JS: Yeah, and I really don't know. We've talked to some people who have, you know, talked about him, who knew him. Judge Solomon, Gus Solomon, was a close friend of Goodman's and he only talks about it being said that he was a Communist.

MAXEY: Doesn't he have a son that's an attorney?

JS: Well, perhaps he does. I should eventually talk to him, I think.

MAXEY: Somebody told me that he did. In fact, I'd like to meet him. I've never met him; never met his son.

JS: I would too. Were you aware of Gus Solomon?

MAXEY: Yes. I've met the man.

JS: In those days — you know, how things have changed, and all of these subjects have got a present counterpart, so that it sometimes makes it difficult to get back to how you actually looking at things at the time. And the relationship between Jews and Blacks is one of them. What was the relationship like, and whether you were aware of that relationship, back then, in those times?

MAXEY: That's a good question. I've been asked that before and, believe it or not, I had a chance at that time, me and my wife, more than most Blacks at our age at that time, and I don't want to get into politics, but we went to all the political affairs of the Young Republicans and I had a chance to meet a lot of the older attorneys, businessmen, things of that sort of affairs. A lot of them had given money to the Young Republicans, put on a certain thing, we'll be there. I met a lot of people and knew them by name and they knew me by name and knew my wife. I have never accepted, or remembered, any preferential treatment we got from a Jew. I really don't.

JS: No special attention or interest?

MAXEY: No, no. I know a lot of them were Jewish, and they'd come up and talk and tell me, they said, "You know, well, hey, you're not the only one getting discriminated against. I get discriminated against." Tell me at a meeting or something, I'd come up and offer a resolution on some particular thing, they said, "I understand. I know how you feel."

For instance, that's how I got to meet and know Phil Roth, who is a judge now. He's a Jew.

JS: Yeah, I don't know him.

MAXEY: He's about ready to retire now. You should ask some of the older judges about him. And you can talk with him about me.

Did I disagree with him and other Young Republicans? Yes, I did. Most certainly did.

JS: What were the issues?

MAXEY: Many of them were civil rights issues and many of them were job related things. They all would tell me, "I agree with you, but don't you think you're pushing it? Don't you think you're a little pushy?"

No, I didn't, and I don't now. Was I forward? No, I think I was just a person who had probably been a part of this injustice and probably had never had a chance to speak out about it, but here you're telling me, "You're above the Mason-Dixon Line. It makes a difference. How do you like it?" I don't. Yeah. I don't.

JS: You know – did they use the word pushy?

MAXEY: That and worse. "You don't want to give food to the Communists," they'd tell me and my ideas. You know, there are certain ways to break you down. "People aren't going to like you because you sound like a Communist."

By accident, I became a Republican, as I told you. When I found out that everybody expected Republicans to be conservative, I said, "Hey! Let's put some cream in this thing." [Both laugh] And you know what I found?

JS: Well, explain that to me, please! [Laughs]

MAXEY: Okay. I'll tell you. I found out the difference between a conservative and a liberal. One is, according to the majority of Americans, a liberal is a Democrat that will vote in favor of minorities and equal. A Republican is a conservative because he feels that he has the money – I'm giving you people's conception now. I'm not telling you – nobody's told me this; haven't seen it nowhere. He's the person who has the money and

he'll hold onto it and make everybody beg for it. He's conservative because he has money and he knows the difference when he has to spend it. He makes a lot of them are sound judgements and a lot of them are very unsound and against people. That's generally the conception that people use as Republicans and Democrats, as far as I'm concerned.

And okay, I'm very conservative, I think, because when it comes to spending money, I like to question it. I like to say, well, hey, this doesn't seem like this is going to be the best use for most everybody who should be benefitted by it. Now if that makes me a conservative liberal, I don't know. [Laughs]

But I do know that's a good way to make you a conservative, is to have somebody come up with some ideas for spending money and not much explain what's going on. I don't know why that should be a Republican or a Democrat deal.

And a liberal? Makes no difference; let's have the program. As long as money's going to be spent, what do we care where it comes from? Yes, I think I'm part of both of them. I really do.

JS: Now I want to, when we get back, I want to save the subject of working with Hatfield and the civil rights thing for next time. But that's going to be a good thing to follow up on, you know, how seriously you were taken by the Republican organization and the Republican individuals that you were getting involved with. I'm just sort of setting that up for next time.

MAXEY: Okay, that'd be good, because then I'll you about my visit to Salt Lake City.

JS: You made a visit to Salt Lake City? For a convention?

MAXEY: [Yes].

JS: Oh, good. Well, let's be sure to include that.

MAXEY: It's juicy.

JS: Good! [Both laugh]

MAXEY: And I'd like for you to – some of these people that still live, I'd like for you to talk with them about Charles Maxey. I have no hidden agendas, at all.

JS: Well, there are going to be opportunities. We hope to get around to some of these people, definitely.

[End of Tape 5, Side 2]

Tape 6, Side 1

1994 April 1

MAXEY: And this is – and another thing that made something very uneven with me was the fact that people of whom I knew that they had branded as Communists, never showed me anything different to what I wanted. And that was a chance to work, a chance to live, and a chance to be. And they wore that name being a Communist and I never wore that name of being a Communist. But it seemed like to me the very things that they wanted were the things that I wanted: a place for my kids to go to school, a place to work, get paid for what I was doing. And overthrowing a government or becoming a undercover worker for an ism, a foreign government? I don't think I'd do that for the United States government. [Laughs]

JS: Now were you saying these things at that time, back in the late 1940s and the early 1950s?

MAXEY: Yes.

JS: Because at that time it had already struck you that it didn't make sense?

MAXEY: Yes, it did. And people – my wife and myself, when Paul Robeson came here to sing, well when he first came here to, to play in the Shakespearean play *Othello* – if you remember he played that. He – in fact I think – I don't think there's been but two Blacks played that part. And as far back as you can remember *Othello* was Black.

JS: Sure.

MAXEY: And this is the first time that a Black had ever played that part. And I don't think but one time since. And a travelling deal of *Othello*. I think it has always been played by a white. But when we went to the – to see *Othello*, I don't think we saw half a

dozen Blacks there that night. And yet there were a lot of Blacks who wanted to go. But it was beginning of that time that it began to say Paul Robeson beginning to get soft on communism and you better not go. And I don't know at that time whether I'd have been any different. I was working for myself. And I told my wife, "Hey, this is an honor; a man like Paul Robeson being this way."

And I'll tell you another person who at that time began to travel, not only in the United States but travel abroad, just like Paul Robeson did and that W.E.B Dubois. Okay, he was doing the same thing. I said, "Hey, here's a man that the very word of him just almost, you know, lifts me up, you know." He's a brilliant man; he's an educated man; he's a man who has stood up and spoken out against injustices. I don't see what that – is that communism? In fact, if wearing the name communism had meant that much, I don't see why I shouldn't have been. But it didn't mean that to me.

I only wanted to be a human being, as I said. I have not trained to change my registration. Didn't change it then; won't change it now. And don't intend to change it even with many of the people whom I disagree with, you know, and wearing the name it – well I tell you, if you remember all Republicans are conservatives. I'm conservative in a whole lot of ways. And I'll tell you the difference between a conservative and a liberal. Most liberals are people who want everything, regardless how it's going to be paid for. Most liberals. Most conservatives figure, "Now since I'm going to have to pay for it, I want to think it over." [Laughs] So I don't think it has no party label on it. And I don't think I'd be a bit different if you called me a communist. I think I'd say, "Hey, let's see how we're going to pay for that."

So, I don't know. But all in all I think it is too easy at that time to label a thinking Black with communism and then the social evils would naturally come right along with it.

JS: But it sounds like a lot of that tagging people with communism, it was just kind of a threat. It sounds like...

MAXEY: Okay, why?

JS: It sounds like it worked in the Black community, too.

MAXEY: It did. It did. Well, in fact it worked in the Black community, I think a whole lot better than it did in the white community because of the fact that a Black knew that once he's branded with it, jobs would be held from him and nothing could be done. And there was whites said, well "Hey" — in fact I say more people white who told me they were Communists than I ever dared to see a Black tell me they were Communist.

JS: Oh, you did really encounter people who said they were Communist.

MAXEY: Sure. Sure. I mean I've seen people on the streets who were selling this *One World* paper, was it? Not *One World*, what was the, the, the little paper they used to sell in the community?

JS: The People – The Workers...

MAXEY: *People's World, People's World, or Worker's World*, or all those kind of...

JS: Trying to think. There was one of them was *The Worker* — I forget what it was called.

MAXEY: Yeah. They tried to label it, that the working people was going to be the one that put, put the world into shape. Well, I think that's true. That is very true. Yeah. I think the working people have the power to do whatever's supposed to be done. But at the same time, they're not going to be able to do it unless they work with the people who's got monies to do it with. And tell me that all the working people got to do, "We walk off the job." Yeah, fool. Once you start getting hungry somebody going to go back to that job and work too. Yeah.

So I think all of the things bringing back into the *One World* deal that Willkie wrote about, is the fact that people with money see that they going to have to do that, in order to keep money; and the people who don't have money, doing the labor, your labor unions, whatever, we're going to do this in order to make a living and feel like a human being and I got a chance to get more.

I never saw too many people who were Communists who'd give up capitalism. If he did, tell him how he could make a lot of money and give it away. Not too many. So all people want to be a good Communist [Laughs] only as long as they could wear the name, and don't have to give up anything. But as soon as he gets enough, he can move over into the other group of hierarchies. Yes, so I'm not a Communist.

JS: That does tend to happen. Somebody else who was called a Communist at this time was Monroe Sweetland. Do you remember him?

MAXEY: Monroe Sweetland, yes I do.

JS: Can you give us an...

MAXEY: A Democrat from Milwaukie.

JS: Impression of him? Your recollections of Monroe Sweetland.

MAXEY: Yes. Monroe Sweetland was a very gentle fellow. A thinking man. He never did come across to me as believing in too many isms, as he was a person who was just a person. I never did hear too much – I never did hear him tell too much about why it was better to be a progressive Democrat than it would be to be a progressive Republican. I never heard that. Monroe Sweetland was a person who said that progressive people is what we're going to have to have, because we live in a different world to being a Democrat and a Republican. And I'm in – I'm a progressive Democrat because I think I

share the ideas with my own people. That's the thing I got from him. He never did tell me – he never did show me why he was a Communist.

JS: Yes, well I'm sure he didn't – he wasn't a Communist, but he knew that people were trying to tag him with that.

MAXEY: Oh yes, he knew that. And I don't think that – I don't think Goodman, he never did talk to me about Blacks supposedly Communists. He always told me that (and told others in my presence) – I don't know if I was ever in his presence alone that he'd had – that he'd tell me that that he didn't want anybody else to hear. Or he might would – I don't know. But it seems like to me if he made much of being a Communist, it was the fact that he was just pleased with the democratic group and the republican group, same Wayne Morse.

I think Wayne Morse fits into the category of a, a Monroe Sweetland. And I think he went from a Republican to a Democrat and from a Democrat to an Independent because he was displeased with people. People used him to get what they wanted, but when he wanted to get something, he was too liberal. And I think this is the thing that had driven the man out of political parties and into independence and everything else. I think he's the only senator we've ever had in this country to win on all three tickets. Isn't he?

JS: I think so.

MAXEY: Independent, Democrat, and Republican.

JS: Yes. He was Independent long enough to run for election as an Independent.

MAXEY: Yes. And he won.

JS: Yeah. Oh, yeah.

MAXEY: Yes he won, Independent.

JS: He made a big transition.

MAXEY: Yes.

JS: Inside the N.A.A.C.P. at this time, as you're attending the meetings and so forth, this is over a period of time, there are some major events coming along. But what are — are there some internal discussions? Some disagreements? Points of disagreement that, that we need to be aware of in thinking of how that organization was operating.

MAXEY: Yes. During the time that I worked with the N.A.A.C.P. you had two groups of white people that belonged to the N.A.A.C.P. You had the people of whom people said were liberal (well I imagine you'd have to put three groups in there) and then you had the group who called themselves Communists and there were people who called themselves, kind of care-takers of the system. They were against anything that was progressive. And they were in there to oversee the N.A.A.C.P., to see that the N.A.A.C.P. didn't take on communism, or didn't take on liberalism, or didn't take on justice, as far as I'm concerned. And those were people who labelled...

JS: Who for example? Who belonged to this group?

MAXEY: Many whites, I know them best by their appearance at that time, and I do — I can't of this woman's name. She was kind of a heavysset woman and she did not believe no kind of — she always brought up the idea of social intermingling between groups any time something came up in her discussion. She's supposed to have been a lobbyist down in Salem. Trying to think of her name. She was a widow woman; I think somebody

said that her husband had been a politician at some time, and I don't know whether it was the county, city, or what. I remember her very well and I know there were several of the whites that would make meetings and they were in there to be dissenters, it seemed like to me, to see that nobody – and remind Blacks that “you're getting it bad enough as it is, you better not be a Communist, you'd better not take part with them commies, you'd better not take part with those so-called liberals, they're setting you up,” you know. And yes, I think we had those groups of whites, and then they worked at N.A.A.C.P. over there.

JS: Oh? They sound like a real problem.

MAXEY: Yeah. At that time we had a – before Walter White was director of the N.A.A.C.P. at that time. He was a pretty strong fellow and he was the person that was so white that he could have been called white, which he was. And he looked white, and he could give a lot of information about the national things that were going on. And he could get a lot of international news about what was going on in the armed forces and things, get it back to us. And that carried us above some of the local intermingling of people to destroy the N.A.A.C.P.

And I think to a point the N.A.A.C.P. is at that point right now, to where if we can keep it down to a Black social type of a thing, rather than a thing that's talking about jobs, and schools, and qualification of people working with our kids, and stuff like that. We don't want it in that too much. I'm talking about, they've set the tone of the way the N.A.A.C.P. will work. Use it more or less as a social thing and not...

JS: This group wanted to do that.

MAXEY: I believe there're still people that are in it, that's working along those lines. Yes.

JS: Okay. Now some of the individuals; we've talked about – do you remember any dealings with – “dealings.” Any experiences that you had with Irvin Goodman that would help to give a bit more of an impression of the man? What was he up to a lot of the time?

MAXEY: Yes, I would think that Irvin Goodman was up to trying to make thinkers out of black people and to make black people express themselves; good, bad, and indifferent.

JS: How would he do that?

MAXEY: I think that happened quite often. I never shall forget the first N.A.A.C.P. meeting I attended. It was a boy that's supposed to have killed a trainman up here, between here and Klamath Falls. And never shall forget his name because the papers would not let you forget his name. And they were Waddell Henderson. And Goodman continued to say that he wanted to get the N.A.A.C.P. on that fight. And they were on it, and they got off of it, because they said that Waddell was a person that – they kept saying his background showed that he was a person capable of doing what they accused him of. And that's cold blood murdering this trainman. They'd had several run-ins, I understand, on the train. He's supposed to have been a cook on there and he's supposed to get up in the morning prepare the stuff, and he got into an argument with this man, and supposedly killed him. And Goodman was fighting the fact not that whether he did it or not, but how he was driven to do this. He had taken physical abuse and some and a whole lot of mental abuse from this particular man, at times that he'd worked with him, and that he should not be given the death sentence.

JS: Oh. That was the issue?

MAXEY: Yes. And he, he was executed.

JS: Oh, he was?

MAXEY: Yes, yes he was executed. In case you don't know the name you write down Waddell Henderson, the first Black that I remember that was executed in the state of Oregon. And I think they executed him around 1943 or 1944. Somewhere along there.

JS: Oh gosh. Well that's really early in your – in N.A.A.C.P. thing, here in Portland.

MAXEY: Yes. That's right. True. And I said I was attending the N.A.A.C.P. then, more so than — I think it was about four or five years before I had taken a part what was, at that time — they figured out I was awfully young and nobody offered me a chance to work in the N.A.A.C.P. But later on, in the late 1940s, then I was offered a chance to work in membership and stuff like that.

JS: Irvin Goodman, Irvin Goodman was interested in making Blacks think. How did he go about doing that? Or what..

MAXEY: I think in many cases he was saying that the thing that you are satisfied with now is not what it is. If you were insistent on this being a permanent thing, where you have a job, then a black would get a job according to qualification. And you should be fighting in the N.A.A.C.P. for qualification, not for Black and white. I never heard him offer to get Blacks to fight Black and white. He always fought qualifications, and rights and wrongs. I never met any of his people either. I never met his wife, or — seemed like maybe I did meet his wife. I don't think I met any of his children. But I'd never heard him advocate any people in the N.A.A.C.P. to go to any Socialist or Communist meetings.

JS: Now, I'm not too worried about whether he was a Communist or not, but I know that he was thought of as pretty radical.

MAXEY: I heard that he was a Communist. He was, at that time, what they would call a radical. I don't know if it's a radical or a person who would speak out, speak their feelings.

JS: Did you know Gus Solomon at the time?

MAXEY: Yes. I never was very close to Judge Solomon.

JS: He was close to Goodman.

MAXEY: Yes, I understand they were. I think socially they were too close. I think they were closer because of the association in law. I don't think they were too close otherwise. Of course, I don't know too many things they did together. I don't think, for an instance, if Judge Solomon took part in a meeting, it was not usually with Goodman.

JS: Okay, yeah. They had lawyered together at one time.

MAXEY: Yes.

JS: Did you have any thoughts, at that time — you know, sometimes it's difficult to leave behind the thoughts that you've had since then, but I'm thinking about how do people like you think of — what is your awareness of, of say the Jewish factor? The fact that Goodman is Jewish? Does that have any particular meaning to you that, back then, "Goodman is Jewish." What did it mean to you?

MAXEY: I think probably I got an impression of Jewish people. even before I got to be grown. In the South, Jewish people would give a Black kid — as I said I have no way of knowing by Black adults, because I didn't know. I know in getting jobs, I know I could get a job where a Jew had a jewelry shop or a drugstore. I think I was hired much quicker

than I would in an ordinary store where a person of another nationality had. I don't know – I don't think it was because I was Black. I think it was because the Jewish people recognized that given a chance a Black person could do that job, and treated right, I think, would pay as good or better dividends [Laughs] than the average white in their place. That's funny, but I got that impression as a youngster.

[End of Tape 6, Side 1]

Tape 6, Side 2**1994 April 1**

JS: April 1st. April Fool's Day, 1994. And to start out with, I thought we would look at the N.A.A.C.P., where we've begun talking quite a bit about it, sort of generally. I wonder if, getting back to it, if we could look at the principal efforts of the N.A.A.C.P. when you first were joining, and also the leadership at that time. Was Otto Rutherford there when you first joined?

MAXEY: Yes. Otto Rutherford was. Otto Rutherford was on the board, and what capacity on the board, I don't remember, but I do remember he was on the board. At that time, I was not on the board when I first joined the N.A.A.C.P. in Portland.

And by the way, Portland – being in Portland was not my initial joining of the N.A.A.C.P. I joined N.A.A.C.P. when I was a student when I was in college. And I had familiarized myself quite a bit with the work of the N.A.A.C.P. and had seen some of the fruits, and a lot of the reverse actions, also, because of the N.A.A.C.P. And I did join the N.A.A.C.P. immediately after I came to Oregon.

JS: What was Otto Rutherford's principal drive? Could you – do you have sort of a sense of purpose that he had? Sometimes it might be real expressed, but maybe more generally what he hoped to do.

MAXEY: Yes. I happened to have been, probably say, the Southern end, because at that time you had the Southern Black and then you had other Blacks that had come into the N.A.A.C.P. And it seemed to me, at that time, the people of whom I met here in Portland that were involved in the N.A.A.C.P., seemed to have been more or less the moderate people who got more involved with the N.A.A.C.P. probably than they had before, who had been taken in by the propaganda that the N.A.A.C.P. is going to lead all Blacks into the Communist scheme of things. And they seemed to have involved themselves, both Black and whites, that were at that time, who were involved in the

N.A.A.C.P., to kind of be the moderate wing of the N.A.A.C.P. Because the Blacks came in – those of us from the South, those of us who had had prior privilege to work in the N.A.A.C.P. and knew what some of the things were, ours was to better it now that seemed that the federal government was going to have to step in and be more or less a referee as to what must and what must not be, because of the war that was going on at the time.

For an instance, during that time the N.A.A.C.P. had had influenced some of its national Black leaders, most of its Black leaders, to encourage President Roosevelt to pass a civil rights bill, one that would maintain the right for Blacks to join any branch of the fighting force, or to be involved in any part of the working force, and be treated equally on the jobs, without a separate shop or separate pay. And that was when it came into being that President Roosevelt passed the civil rights bill, an emergency civil rights bill, which was stated that there should be no discrimination in the workforce of the nation at that time.

And I would say that, yes, there were two branches, seemed like to me of the N.A.A.C.P., because of the fact that those of us who wanted it improved as it seemed like it would affect everybody. Then there was a group who wanted it more or less to see that, politically, that it would not adhere to what somebody had thought is going to turn all Blacks or minorities into the Communist camp. And I don't know where that idea came from.

JS: So there was group that was very afraid of radicalism.

MAXEY: Right.

JS: And then there was the other group that was really kind of banking their hopes on federal oversight of things. And were they primarily the Southern group? The newer arrivals?

MAXEY: I think the new arrivals were those of us who had seen the worst of probably what one could expect to come out of a so-called democratic country. And we were, at this time, found ourselves deeply involved into the defense activities, whether we were in the armed forces, or whether we were working on jobs. To see that people understood and would work toward more of a harmonious type of living together, fighting together, and seeing that democracy would work, and to accept some of the great promises which we'd been promised in the constitution.

I don't think there were no new things coming up. I think these were old things that we had looked forward to being a part of everything that happened that was for the good.

JS: This – now, what the attitude that you're describing there, that's more on the part of the new group of Southern Blacks.

MAXEY: That is correct.

JS: And, now, where's Otto Rutherford in the midst of this?

MAXEY: I would feel, in attitude, Otto Rutherford would have been more or less with group thinking of I would like to see civil rights, but it had been indoctrinated into seemingly Blacks, and so-called Northern and Western liberals that you can't be too fast. To give a person a privilege is carrying it too fast. We're not ready for it. And I think that was the thinking of many Blacks, unknowingly, at that time, I imagine in most of them, part. That this was the part that they were betraying. That, "Let's go a little easy. Things have been pretty good, and maybe we can do it a little easier. Maybe we're going to cause conflict."

But to many of the younger group who was the Blacks out of the South at that time, many of them had left the South because they didn't have anything and going to another part of the country didn't bother us as bad if we were the older set who owned

something where we came from. And I think we were saying, “Well I am here and I’m still in the United States and I’d like to get some of the benefits of everything that it has to offer me, as far as progress and involvement into making this a better place.”

JS: Well, was this kind – this sort of conservatism on Otto Rutherford’s part, was it a kind of a handicap in some way in, in the organization? In, say, in attracting new members from the new groups? From the new arrivals?

MAXEY: I don’t think so, too much. Frankly, I think a lot of it Otto Rutherford wasn’t just the one person who did this. I think this happened probably in many. That they happened to have been, at that time, saying that we didn’t have full civil rights in this country, but we were better off than the Blacks who came here from wherever they came. And it seemed like to me if we go a little slower, we can be better thought of. This is the general feeling. And this is no indictment against Otto Rutherford.

I think where people had been for a long time had – this became a part of them without them knowing. Yes, you’re for Black or negro or colored or whatever you said at that time. You’re not a Black of a part because you were in Washington or because you were in Oregon. You, too, are a part, and you would be unless somebody said, oh, he was born and raised in Oregon, he was born and raised in Washington. But the best guess that I could give is that I think that most had gone to integrated schools, most had worked on jobs – not integrated jobs, because there weren’t too many integrated jobs at that time. But had lived in a community probably of mixed neighborhood, and this had probably been a part satisfying to them. Rather than feeling that they were going into something new, and they were going into an expectation of something better than they’d been used to. I think they – what they were used to was not exactly what they thought, until they had formally been involved with other Blacks who came here. And I saw that as we went on with our work in N.A.A.C.P.

JS: When you spoke up in those meetings and were urging them to be more forward, who responded to you, of the board? Who sympathized with your more forward approach? Or were you all alone?

MAXEY: Well, to begin with I was very much alone, because in the first place on the board I was the youngest Black on the board at that time. And I got referred to quite often as a whipper-snapper or a young Black who emerged lately who doesn't know the score, because he can't be looking for all of these things, because he didn't have them in the South where he came from. And this could be a dangerous thing that he is advocating or that he will go along with. He doesn't believe in all these things himself. Mostly. He's had to be different because he's never had a chance to.

And who came to my rescue on that? I'll have to say in many cases it was the refusal of many whites on the board, who refused to be a part of making this a racial issue, to set the tone for the N.A.A.C.P. to tone down, rather than to continue to fight and maintain the things that they had been founded for.

And it's pretty hard for me to say that Otto Rutherford or anybody in the group attracted any support from any other group, with the exception of silence. There was a lot of silence. And this came from Blacks probably from across the country, whether they were from the mid-part of the United States, or where. But any time you were from Oklahoma down, you were considered a Southerner. Or if you were from Missouri up, well, I mean even black folks in St. Louis had a different feeling.

JS: So you're saying when Otto Rutherford spoke in this cautious way, that he was met with silence.

MAXEY: I think for a lot of people once this thing had been brought out intelligently, rather than verbal — you see, there was no verbal fights against who was the best, the Black above the Mason-Dixon line or the Black below. But there's always a caution of it was going to be easier to get the Blacks from the South to be part of whatever other

people of the United States thought was good. And that was a kind of a laissez faire feeling is, leave them like they are and maybe they'll get better. Rather than, this is the way it has been all the time and it hasn't worked. Why not change it? Why not give – you're not giving people anything but what's due them. Everybody'd due their promise of the constitution, and we haven't been given ours. Give us ours. We've proven it on the foreign line and everywhere else.

JS: Okay. So they — generally there, we're looking at two groups and one is more, more, has higher hopes and higher expectations and the other is more cautious.

MAXEY: Yes, and then, too, you had to remember that at this time I think there were whites who were working in the N.A.A.C.P., to be a part of it, to see that it did not adhere to the movement. That's what they said, the movement. To see that the movement did not catch hold into the Black community. And the movement was the Communist movement. And I don't understand this, because there were no Communist threats at that time. It was, it was the Nazi.

JS: Yes. So, but that was a very real thing for these people. They weren't making it up or they really believed it.

MAXEY: Right. And I think the reason for this particular thought was the fact that you had a very few editorials of papers in the nation. Mrs. Smith, I think her name was, who had a paper, I think it was in Monroe, Louisiana, who was a very liberal-minded woman, had written article on top of article of the mistreatment of Blacks in the armed services and the — she had continued to write against the Bilbos and Eastlands of Mississippi. And congressmen and senators like those who had taken hours and hours on filibuster of real good legislation to do something in the war at that time. But they would tag something onto it which would be silly, because it advocated equal opportunity for

people involved. And these opportunities were involved would be Black and white. Because you didn't hear too much about Hispanic or Indian. It was either Black or white.

Now if people accepted Indians, they were considered the whites in a community where they were considered whites. If they weren't, then they were just some other people, during that time. But Black and white, this was it. You didn't hear about the Hispanics and the Haitians and the South Americans and the Africans, over here from Africa. It was a matter of Black and white. No matter what you were. If you're Black with kinky hair, then you're considered a Black.

And I don't know if I'm answering your question or not, because I don't see how I could help anything by attacking personalities of anybody, be them Black or white. But I will, and I have, and I will continue to say of people who use a format for a popular reason, to use this Black or white thing, to say whether or not you're better because you came out of the South, or whether you're better because you came from the North or the Midwest, or whatever. So what I'm saying is it, it was a Black and white thing, and it was a thing that was perpetuated to put the two groups of Blacks against each other.

JS: Oh. Racism underlays the whole thing. The politics.

MAXEY: Right. And many times the Blacks were trained into it, to help do it, and were not conscious of the fact that that's what they were doing.

JS: Yes. No, I'm seeing now what – the point that you're making now about the Communist threat. And in the 1950s of course, it's the McCarthy period, the McCarthy 1950s, and so you know maybe that explains a lot on the part of, say, white liberals who are being pounded and are really kind of running scared under that Communist threat thing of McCarthy.

MAXEY: This is very true. In fact, in most cases, this threat was not so much to whip the Black into line as it was to whip the borderline whites into line, you know. Because

after all, if they're liberal you've got to say, hey you either a nigger lover, or you've got to be a Communist or whatever. Because they preaches that all things are equal; that everybody's an equal participant.

So as I said, without labels, I don't know. And it seems like to me the label was used very loosely. And it was used to put people into line. What line? Into the line that we wanted to put them in, in order to say that we have a master race without saying it's a master race.

JS: Yes. Controlling.

MAXEY: Yes. Control the minds and people.

JS: This is the time when two advances are made. In 1948 and 1953, public accommodations are dealt with by the Legislature in 1953. And in 1947 and 1948 the Legislature tackles, you know, fair employment. And so in – you're around at the time and perhaps you can give the story from, you know, what you saw, what you were part of to a certain extent.

MAXEY: Yes. At that time I had made it known that I would like to be – I had attended and made it known that I would work with the Young Republican group. And I became, at this time, an intricate part of a lot of this, because in different meetings and committee meetings, people were making reports who were erroneous – some of – many of them were erroneously stated. And there were many of us who agreed to do some of the things that we could bring back a report about some of these lunchroom situations, some of these job situations, where Blacks had made application for jobs and they'd been turned down. And behind it whites had been hired and there were indications made where Blacks were qualified for certain jobs according to what they'd hired whites for in compatible situations. And I have – I did meet and did discuss with many about situations on job activities and also about lunchroom incidents.

In fact, I was with several groups and most the time they were part of the groups of whom I had worked with politically. And I don't know of any Republican group that I would say that made me feel that they were part of a Communist group that went to lunch counter with me after a meeting. I said, "Well, we're going tonight after a meeting."

"Oh, I don't know. What do you think?"

I said, "Well, go somewhere and have a cup of coffee, or something." And it was very few that I saw back up and not take part and go in with me.

And I have the first time to have been a part of a group, and most of the time I was the only Black, or even my wife and myself. Unless somebody saw us going in there with the group, and I've seen this happen, once somebody see us go in with a group of whites going in this place, "Well, I'm going in too, I see those Blacks going in." They go in and sit down and ask for service just like we were.

JS: Yes. How would it work? What happened on those occasions?

MAXEY: We were – never were physically ushered out, but I mean we were physically taunted in many cases and were told, "We are not going to serve you." And this is funny because a lot of these people that were with me were people at this time, like Hatfield, who later became secretary of state and became governor; Clay Meyers who became secretary of state and then later treasurer; I don't ever remember Tom McCall going in a group with me but I mean he would be a group in the meetings before we'd go. But these are the people – Bill Ireland from Molalla.

I've got a lot of pats on the back and encouragement from people like Rudie Wilhelm. I worked with Rudie Wilhelm quite a bit. I'm sure that name sounds familiar to you. Very nice fellow, one on one. But Rudy just was not ready for what was going on.

JS: You mean going out and...

MAXEY: And, and being a physical part. Now he would lend his assistance. I would say that. Give you his opinion of whatever, he would. I remember questioning him, and Bob Hazen. Does that name ring a bell with you?

JS: Yes, it does.

MAXEY: Bob Hazen, I remember getting those two into a conversation one night after a meeting. And I said, "You know, Bob, you mentioned the fact that – I heard you make mention of the fact you was starting a new program. You would get young people working. Why don't you give me an idea about some Blacks. I have two daughters now that are in high school and I certainly would for them to get in on your training program in your bank," like that.

And of course at that time that was too direct, you know. And I got promised and said, "We're going to get to that; don't worry; we're going to get to that." And later he did. But hey! How much later?

Rudie Wilhelm, I don't remember whether or not I'd ever seen a Black working in the Wilhelm trucking...

JS: Warehouse?

MAXEY: Warehouse. If there were I didn't know about it. I mean, I didn't know where all of them worked. They might have. They might have done it.

But as I said, as an individual Rudie Wilhelm was a very nice person. And Bob Hazen was a very nice person. But they weren't people who were constantly seen and discussing with me at this time about changes and some of the things would do to facilitate it. They were telling me things that they thought were going to happen, and the best way for them to happen was Blacks getting the vote, and also about other things.

And I made mention of the fact, "How about the complete facet of civil rights?" You know, whether it's eating at a lunch counter, or whether it's looking for a job, or

whether it's running for public office, or whatever. And I will say that I think I got more support from people like Bill Ireland, who's in Molalla, who had no close contact with Blacks, than I did from many of whom I associated with right here in Portland.

At this time, I was not on the job with these people; I was in business for myself, at this time. And let me say again, I think that was one of the things that caused me to be just a little bit more truthful with myself and truthful with people of whom I met and talked with. And mine never was a fact – I never would let nobody get off with me on this conversation of miscegenation. And verbally it would lead to that.

JS: They would lead it there?

MAXEY: Yes. Yes. Somebody would lead to this that, you know, the thing that is going to cause this to not be seen too much like it's a social thing if white and Blacks are seen together. Somebody will say, "Well, this, this guy is going having lunch with a white woman and he's dating a white woman," this thing. I never did allow that. Because in the first place I was married. And the next place if I walked into a coffee shop — in fact I've been downtown at times and I run into people, sometimes women. "What are you doing downtown, Charles?" I say, oh, I'm down seeing about such and such thing. "Oh good. Would you like to have – why don't we have a cup of coffee?" I'd have a cup of coffee with them. That's it.

But it never was a deal – I never allowed anybody to have to come up to me and say, "You see, this is what it's all about." If by chance a white and a Black socially got together, that was their business and their problem, not mine. I was not – that was not my interest – not a social, 100% participation. No.

JS: This fear of sexuality, the sexual aspect of it is a really, real deep sort of thing. And it's a real problematic sort of thing. I mean when you talk about racism, it's near the core of the problem. You know, it's so problematic.

MAXEY: It eventually does get to be...

JS: And so — it generates so much feeling deep down inside people. I don't know. In your thinking about it and observing things...

[End of Tape 6, Side 2]

Tape 7, Side 1**1994 April 1**

MAXEY: Did you get your question through...

JS: Not quite. I'm just not able, myself, where to place this issue. I know it is so deeply ingrained in racial prejudice, that I guess I just would be interested in knowing what you thought about it.

MAXEY: Having part of my family being into it, my children I mean, which is one daughter and a son, I've kind of seen it as not an interesting thing, somewhat to me, most of the time. Because my children and my grandchildren seem to have their associates on both sides and they seem to get along. And as far as my family is concerned, we don't take sides one way or the other, but with people of whom I know who happen to find out that my kids are involved in an inter-racial marriage bring up the conversation sometime, and it's a thing that I think that each person is just going to have to work it out within himself. Because when you get down to it, it's nothing you can, that you can very well add to it or take from it. If you've got quite a bit to offer into it, you must be involved with it one way or the other. And if you don't know anything about it, well you look ridiculous trying to discuss it, or trying to be a part of it.

So what I'm trying to say is, in order to show that I am not against intermarriage or inter-socializing, I don't think I should go any further making pretend that I enjoy the fact that a Black girl is dating a white boy, or a Black fellow is dating a white girl. I think it's a thing that each group of people, the more they think about it, the more ridiculous it is. That it's personal. And if it's personal, I don't think our opinion should be in that too much. Not only our participation. And if you don't see fit to involve yourself with the person of the opposite race, then you have no conversation too much. If, if you have not completely involved yourself, for social reasons. And not only for social reasons, but I mean for intimate reasons, I think that this is a personal thing and I think these are two people that are going to have to decide this.

JS: I've always wondered what kind of a problem it is. Which is the essential thing? Is it just simply the expression of the ignorance of the people? I mean they don't — whites don't know Blacks and so just the thought of getting close to people that you don't know that — you can't get closer than if there is a marriage or people actually going off and marrying together, then the frightening aspect of association with an unknown people is maybe most intense there. It — what happens to it? It just — does it just evaporate as people get to know each other?

MAXEY: I would say that it gets to be a thing, and I think many of us would rather not believe that it actually happens. And some people are silly enough to think that once a girl, be it Black or white, marries a fellow then there's a commitment that she likes everybody just like the boy. Or the boy likes everybody that's like the girl. And I think that's ridiculous. I think it's a personal thing. I think those two people are attracted to each other for a particular different reason. And I think for one Black person to think because a white girl marries a Black fellow that if she doesn't make it with him, she'll marry another Black fellow, I think is ridiculous. I think it's a personal thing between those two people.

And I think the more we experience that, (and I experienced it quite a bit because, as I said I have two kids that are involved with inter-racial marriage) I think this is more apparent, because those two people had a particular reason why they were attracted to each other. And it's not just the fact that somebody's experimented with the fact that I want to see what a Black is like. I think those people who experiment what a Black's like, I don't think they'd ever marry one. I think those people who experiment what a white is like, I don't think they'd ever marry one. I think that the thing that's attractive to each — that each one of them brings something to the table of where the two meet. It's something that those two — and what it is, I wouldn't like to try to figure it out.

JS: Could be a whole complex of things or some...

MAXEY: Right it's the complex of things.

JS: Underlying things.

MAXEY: Yeah, right.

JS: When these people, say, Young Republicans and other people that you were miscegenation thing on their minds, so how did you deal with it? Were you shocked by it, or did it trouble you that their thinking was arriving at that point?

MAXEY: No, it probably would now. But then, it didn't because it seems like to me that was an open door for a person to tell you, "You know, you're a nice person. I met you and your wife. You're very nice people. But I want you to know upfront, I just don't believe in inter-racial marriage." People'd come right off the top of their shoulder and say this to you. And I don't know whether that was for me, in particular, or me to tell my kids that they didn't particular want my kids getting too close to their kids, or what. But this, this would come off just that plain.

And I remember coining a phrase once, of saying, "Well, I wish you didn't tell me that because you haven't asked me my opinion of whether I'd like my son to marry your daughter." [JS laughs] You know, and I think this, without being funny, I think that's a good thing to look at.

JS: Yes. Turnabout. Just turn the question around.

MAXEY: Yeah. That those people must have some deep, in-seated interest in each other in order to make it. If they don't, I'll tell any group, and I have said this, I've spoken before high school groups, and I've said to them, you're at the age now that you're

starting going steady, and if you're not interested in this person for more reason than curiosity, if I'd be you, I would not involve myself too deeply. And I really mean that.

JS: It's not a good basis.

MAXEY: Right. Not because the Black dude is a good football player, or not because the white dude is a better mathematician or better gymnast, or something of that sort. It has to be a whole of things in common, that two people can agree on, rather than just...

JS: Did you have any conversations with Tom McCall?

MAXEY: Yes, I've had conversation on top of conversation with Tom McCall.

JS: I'd like to hear some of the thoughts that you heard from him and that you may recall, and your impression of him.

MAXEY: I had a whole lot of respect for the man. He was a deep thinker. He very seldom would allow you to put him into a conversation about direct difference in Black and whites on jobs. He was – he always wanted you to feel that he had the overall picture in mind. And whatever that overall picture was, let's do the thing without thinking of race. Let's do the thing without thinking who's going to be cut short.

Now, I remember telling him one time, "That's easy for you to say," believe it or not. We were in a group discussion in Salt Lake City where I was attending a Young Republican convention of where I was denied – I want to restate that. I was denied the privilege of riding the elevator in the hotel where I had made reservation for a room. Was denied the room on top of that and I denied the privilege of riding of riding the elevator also. I didn't take the room but I continued to ride the elevator and usually I would ride the elevator when I'd see some of the Oregon group, or some group, of which I had met there –. [Phone rings] Could I?

JS: Yes.

[Tape stops]

MAXEY: And I remember discussing with him and a group about the idea that they had denied me the chance. And they – we had an Oregon delegation caucus along with northwest caucus on that, and I said the same thing to both groups. They wanted to know what was my feeling about it. In going about this I'm telling you that I'd met with Tom McCall and some of the things I had discussed with him. And this is – I'd met him before but this is the first time we'd gotten into across the table like here, a group of us discussing, and we knew then that it was a discrimination thing that had brought us into this room to discuss this, and I was the only Black in that group.

In fact there's only two Blacks at the meeting. One person from Kansas, and you can talk with some of the Portland people at that time and they can tell you who that person was and tell you who the Oregon person was who attended that meeting. And this was in 1949, I believe it was, or 1950.

But anyway, Tom McCall always wanted to show me the picture of, that this thing is bigger than somebody discriminating against you going into a hotel room. This thing is bigger than a person denying you chance to ride on an elevator. "Would you feel, please, if we pull out of that meeting? We'd just like to hear your feeling. What would be your feeling, if we suggest to you that we get you a room in town and give you a car to drive back and forth to the meeting." Those were some of the things put before me.

JS: From McCall?

MAXEY: By McCall and, at this time, Sig Unander. Would that name ring a bell to you?

JS: Yes.

MAXEY: Okay. He was treasurer – secretary of state or treasurer at one time.

JS: I think he was secretary of state.

MAXEY: Yes. In fact it was his car that was offered to me. He had a brand new Mercury at that time. I never shall forget it. And he let me use it. I accepted the fact – I studied over it, and I said, if I were to go back to Oregon, this was that afternoon we got there, and we had not had a meeting because the whole convention was scheduled to have a meeting that afternoon, but it didn't meet on account of that.

JS: Oh really?

MAXEY: Yes. And everybody had gone into the caucus. And the next morning we had a joint meeting; just a general open discussion meeting. It wasn't no planned type of meeting. And everybody was at liberty to express themselves. And I was quite impressed about Tom McCall at that time, the overall thing that he figured, but I failed to see his sensitivity to what was going on with me at that time. Not because he should have come and put his arm around me, and tell me how much he liked me or how much he thought I was compared to a lot of the whites there, or something of that sort. That was not it.

I think Tom was, at that time, was older than most of us there. He and Sig Unander were probably of an age group a little older than we were, and I think they probably saw what the political ramifications of it much deeper than most of us did. And I think this was the thing that many of them who thought themselves, at that time, I must be a liberal because, you know, I'm caught up in this and I'm forced to give an opinion. And these things as you said at that time were being blossomed out by such figures as, at that time, as McCarthys and, and the Bilbos and the Eastlands and people of that sort.

And I found him to be a very deep person. In fact little bit much deeper than I was able to comprehend at that time, because I think he was thinking more or less of what it was going to mean to him and others who ran for political offices later, and what would be the advantage. And he uses a kind of language and appeasement to agree with me, and at the same time, don't rough up too much of the status quo.

JS: Yes. It sounds like it were – how about some of the others? Were there other people who were – let's see. Was Hatfield there at that time? Or anybody else who took a different position?

MAXEY: Hatfield was there, yes. He was teaching at Willamette at that time.

JS: Yeah. Well let's hear about Hatfield, what's...

MAXEY: Hatfield, at that time, as he is now, was a very plainspoken person, and ventured very cautiously into a situation. And he did, on several occasions, make suggestions to the effect that I think it's wrong, but let's don't condemn it as a thing that we will go back as a delegation and let's don't say how right it is if Charles were to go back. But we should listen to him and take it from there. And I think that's where I got – I'm almost sure it was Mark Hatfield that left that. And then that was the time that I was given the floor as to my feelings and direct questions came from the Oregon delegation from me. And it was on his suggestion that rather than so many people give their suggestion, let's hear Charles. Any questions you have, ask him as if he is – he may not be an authority but let's see what his feelings would be like.

And that was when I agreed that if I was given the chance to make a resolution to the effect that no segment of any group of the Young Republicans be accepted or would take part in anything that was going to affect any portion of that organization, to not take part in it, regardless of where it would be, whether it was in Salt Lake City or whether it would be in the nation's capital or anywhere else.

JS: You proposed that.

MAXEY: Yes, I proposed that and asked for the privilege of making that resolution. I was – that was agreed on with one stipulation, that Clay Myers would present the resolution. They figured that it would be kind of tough to give to Arkansas, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, and people of like that, a feeling of mine from a resolution like that, without feeling that I was kind of bulldozing about it. And I agreed for Clay Myers to make that resolution, and he did.

JS: He would make the resolution rather than you?

MAXEY: Yes. Right. Right.

JS: Okay. Well, that's – well, in a way, politically, that's a stronger way to do it. Don't you think?

MAXEY: Yes. After, after he'd gone on, I agreed. But at that time, it seemed like to me, that yes, it'd be good if I'd make that resolution but, I think the best possible thing was done. And that was, he did make the resolution.

JS: But you wanted to.

MAXEY: Yes. And so much so, that when he made the resolution and it was on the floor for discussion everybody wanted to know my feelings about it. And I did give my feelings about it.

JS: You got to speak to the entire group?

MAXEY: Yes. Right. And it was not a speech to me. It was just, I was talking just like I'm talking to you. It wasn't the fact that I got up before South Carolina, I got up before North Dakota group, or California group. Let's see. Because after we – when the Oregon group we met, with the western group. And [Waters?] at that time, was he the governor – didn't he run for governor of California?

JS: I don't know.

MAXEY: I know the Browns were pretty heavy into that politics at that time. [Waters?], I think was secretary of state, state of California, I'm almost sure. I'm trying to think of his first name, [Waters?].

But anyway, I think this was one of the biggest things that came out of that meeting. And so much so that [Laughs] (this is kind of a little humor to it) after that came up, whenever food was served, usually they made sure that the service started with me. And there was a young lady from Klamath Falls at that time, who was going to Reed College. Her name was [Marjorie Bullid?]. I'm almost sure that was the name, [Marjorie Bullid?]. And usually they would give me the first plate, I'd pass the first plate to her, and several plates maybe before I'd take one. And I probably wouldn't take anything from the first person who brought a whole platter full of stuff. I'd take it from somebody probably be serving that side or something. I'd ask them, "May I have your plate?" [JS laughs] I don't know if you get the gist of how I felt.

JS: Yeah, it actually created more tension for you.

MAXEY: Yeah. It also created a fear. Somebody might put some lye in it. [Laughs] I don't know.

JS: Oh. Did you feel anxious at the time?

MAXEY: I did. I really did. I felt like that – that’s why I mean to switch meals with different people. I thought you would realize what I was saying.

JS: Oh.

MAXEY: No. I did...

JS: I thought you were just being polite.

MAXEY: No, I was not.

And also I remember we went to – we had a barbeque afterwards, and I remember the state of Arkansas brought a whole truckload of watermelons and donated to the – I think they brought the beef and the – Oklahoma probably brought the beef. But anyway, the person who brought me a piece of watermelon. Watermelon must have been that long! And sit that watermelon right in front of me. And that was the first time I’ve ever denied the fact that I like watermelon and the last time.

Because to me, I said now, all the – they must have had at least a half a dozen photographs around in the room, and every time some attention went anywhere near me, I got in on that picture for some reason. And I said, now everybody’s taking my picture that Blacks like watermelon. And as soon as he bites into it, we’re going to get his picture. [Laughs] Every paper all over the country. And I said after that, I said, you know, I am not going to let this thing be a bugaboo with me. I like watermelon and if I like it I’m going to eat it. But I did not eat any of that watermelon and that was some of the best looking watermelon I’d ever seen.

JS: It – so when they brought your food, you thought there might be lye in it...

MAXEY: Not only – anything!

JS: But not poison.

MAXEY: Could have been poison. Anything.

JS: But if it were lye it would have just embarrassed you.

MAXEY: Oh, yeah, yeah. But for any reason whatsoever.

JS: Were you, were you afraid of, you know when this thought came to you in this moment, were you afraid of dying, or afraid of being humiliated?

MAXEY: Afraid of dying. [Laughs] Oh man.

JS: Okay, yes. There's that threat of humiliation too, that with the watermelon that comes through.

MAXEY: Sure. Sure. Sure. I think that was humiliation, more than I would be thinking about somebody might want to poison me, but in the food I thought, yeah, this is a person of whom – and I don't think that was a small thing to think about. I think that was serious. I really do. And whether or not that was a possibility, in anybody's mind, I don't know. But I do know there were some frank discussions and frankly there were some people whom would meet me in the hall and discuss it with me frankly. I'd listen to them. Most of the time, I'd tell them, "Well, right now, you know, I don't know. I'll think about it." I never did try to discuss it one on one too much with anybody. But I was there four days.

JS: What happened to the resolution?

MAXEY: It was passed. They had some discussion, but I don't know a state that got up and, and opened — there were some statements made as such, but I mean, all in all it passed.

JS: What happened when, they served you first? What happened to the people who were there? Do you know how they felt about it? What their experience was at that moment?

MAXEY: I think the people around me probably passed it on better than I did, because when I gave it to [Marjorie?] she said, "Oh no, Charles," she said. "That is yours," she said. "The service is starting here."

I said, "No, why don't you, you take that. I'd rather."

Somebody said, "Oh, you're afraid somebody going to do something."

I said, "You know, just might." I kept it with humor and they never did. But I was very serious about it. Because as I said, I took several plates that they gave me there, and somebody give me another one and I continued until I just now decided to take one.

JS: Yes. I can imagine how being the center of everything and your concerns, that you would be pretty preoccupied. Could you see any emotion on the part of the people around you?

MAXEY: Yeah, well...

JS: How were they taking all of this?

MAXEY: Well there were some two or three who came to me and told me they thought that I was nitpicking; that some of the things that I was concerned about and my feeling was — they thought that I was not taking it too serious, but I was making too much of it.

JS: Yes. I am thinking of the whole emotional thing of this resolution and after the resolution is handled, then they served you? Is that right? Am I saying that right?

MAXEY: Yes. Right. This is a day or so later.

JS: Okay. I just – oh.

MAXEY: After the resolution.

JS: Oh, okay. I'm just wondering if some of them weren't kind of emotional about what had just happened, because it was quite a moment. I mean it's a – it was a – did some of them feel it as a big step forward or?

MAXEY: Yes. And I think the highlight of answering your question came from a young woman who was Bob Elliot's wife. Do you remember the name, Bob Elliot? Does that ring a bell?

JS: No. The comedian?

MAXEY: Doug Elliot?

JS: No, I don't know of him.

MAXEY: Okay, Doug Elliot used to work for the light company here, and Bob Elliot was in the insurance business. He was also chairman of the Multnomah Republican Party, I think, a couple of times.

There were several open discussions and to put fire in it, I don't remember whether the young woman's from South Carolina, Georgia, Mississippi. It is one of the

states. She got up and made a very emotional speech about the fact that she felt the shame that anybody would feel that she, or any other young white woman would feel, that this'd be encouragement for them to want to date a negro, or [men?] or anybody else of that sort. It seemed like this is what the discussion was going into.

And Bob Elliot's wife got up behind her. She's from – she's, by the way, she was from Kentucky. She got up and addressed the whole meeting. [Laughs] She went into tears and talking about the fact that, "There are many of you sitting there who feel the same way this young woman did, and she so eloquently used this time to spit out her discriminatory feelings nicely." Most of them were college kids and probably had gone into other work forces. Many of them were college professors and things like that. But she did, she addressed the whole group by telling her feelings about it and no one – me and my family – if she had known us, and she felt somewhat ashamed herself to feel that somebody would, in her group, would give this as an opinion of all whites there. This is what we whites think. And she said, "We whites don't think this way. And the whites who are from Kentucky or anywhere else don't think that way. I am from Kentucky and this is not my feeling. And I don't think it should be yours or anybody else's."

JS: Oh my God. It was quite a conference.

MAXEY: Yes. Really was.

JS: My God. And this was – the date was about 1950, did you say?

MAXEY: About 1949 or 1950, I think it was. Sig Unander...

JS: Sig Unander – gee, I think he ran for secretary of state.

MAXEY: He ran for governor, one time. He never did make governor.

JS: [Yes], and Hatfield beat him out for governor.

MAXEY: Yes.

JS: Getting back to Hatfield. I wonder if there are some moments in your knowing Hatfield that you got close to him that you might recall some of his – well, maybe working on the legislation of 1953, that you can give us more of a picture of Hatfield at work on civil rights.

[End of Tape 7, Side 1]

Tape 7, Side 2**1994 April 1**

MAXEY: Hatfield has always been a diplomat. He would take part, and a very eloquent, intelligent part, but he just didn't stump speech too much, you know. What I mean by that is get up and just be blatant about his – it is or it isn't. He was always a very diplomatic person and I don't think he hid his feelings, as such, but I think that's his personality more anything else. But as far as being a genuine, thinking person, I think he is, and I think he still is. I think – I've seen him change a little bit as he has gotten older.

JS: How's that?

MAXEY: I think he's gotten a little more conservative, now that he's gotten older. And I think that is possibly true in a lot of us.

JS: Any particular things that seem more conservative?

MAXEY: Yes. I think he's a little slow to involve himself in a situation as to what his thoughts are until he feels that he has enough commitment from other people that he won't look ridiculous for taking a stand.

JS: What issue are you thinking of?

MAXEY: One that I can think of that has come up in many years has been the doctor situation and insurance situation. Those are the most recent ones.

JS: The health reforms.

MAXEY: Yeah, the health reform. I think it has been made apparent to him that there are certain things just not expected of Republicans, even though if you call yourself a

liberal or whatever, you just shouldn't do that because even though you feel pretty well stationed in your position, there are others that this will hurt in the Party. I think he's come – well let me put it this way, I think he's become more of a party man than in his later years.

JS: He's become a more of the party man, that which means the more conservative party that it's become.

MAXEY: Yes, right. Right, right.

JS: How about Bill Ireland? Bill Ireland – he was out of Molalla.

MAXEY: Yes.

JS: But he was a state legislator.

MAXEY: That is correct.

JS: Now it would be nice to have some more information on Bill Ireland: where he was coming from and what he did in, in these efforts.

MAXEY: Bill Ireland, and I didn't know this until later, that Bill Ireland was married to an Indian woman. Yes his wife is, I think she's about three-quarter Indian, probably, probably a full Indian. But I don't think, ordinarily, that Bill Ireland as a person was thinking in terms of he was doing this because she's Indian, but I think this helped to really put him in his thinking position, that some of the comments were made, even about Indians, some of the comments made about Chicanos, some of the comments made about Japanese, Chinese, Blacks and all. And I think it's pretty easy for a person to realize that, "Hey, do you know I happen to be in that boat? I may not be quite in as

deep.” And I don’t think that he did the help on the civil rights. I think in his experience even before that, being married to his wife and probably being associated with different groups more than many of the other white legislators had, was probably, was causing some of his thinking. And as I said, I found him to be a genuine person.

JS: So you – in talking to him you could see that really solid...

MAXEY: Yes, yes in talking with him. Yes.

JS: There was another man who gets some credit for, for the civil rights work and he was from Klamath Falls and he’s listed as one of the authors of the civil rights legislation of 1953, and here’s the name: Phil Hitchcock. Did you know him?

MAXEY: I heard the name thrown around quite a bit and there also were times in the N.A.A.C.P. and among many civil rights workers as to the sincerity of Hitchcock. And so much so that I’d heard make, make mention of the fact wondered why it was Hitchcock when, when the Ku Klux still boasts the fact that Klamath Falls at one time was the head of the Ku Klux Klan and it might reappear. What would his feelings be?

JS: Oh! Hitchcock comes from an area that’s not noted for its diversity, except, you know, Indians, and can be, in issues like that, a pretty conservative place.

MAXEY: Exactly what I’m saying.

JS: But I just wonder why was he involved at all in the civil rights movement?

MAXEY: I don’t know. I don’t know. And as I said again, I don’t remember him being a staunch part of. He could have been, at that time. I don’t know.

JS: But he – people actually thought he had a Klan background, huh?

MAXEY: No, no. The question was when it came up that he would be a supporter of civil rights.

JS: Oh, they just thought of him as pretty reactionary, huh?

MAXEY: This is one of the statements: why hadn't he tried to do something or why hadn't he made mention about this. This had gone on even before he got into politics. This is years ago that the Klan was organized and had their headquarters in Klamath Falls. And the question would come up, you know, well, I wonder what stand has he made, or wonder how does he feel, saying he is against – he is for civil rights laws passed, and things of this sort, and it's not in conjunction with the Klan.

And the Klan has always been the person who spoke out and nobody ever saw why the Klan fought Hitchcock, or whether Hitchcock fought the Klan. But I mean, it's just one of those things.

As I said, he might have. He might – I don't – I didn't work on all committees on that and I never knew, and I never did meet in a group where he was one of the persons, was a leader and made speeches to the concern of the civil rights law in the state of Oregon. I'd heard his name as a supporter.

JS: Yes. And what exactly was your involvement now, in the effort to have a public accommodations act in, in 1953?

MAXEY: My part at that time was, more or less, just as I said; at that time I was membership chairman of the N.A.A.C.P. I had worked with the younger group in the N.A.A.C.P. before that, and mine was, more or less, just would set in on committees as chairman of the membership committee. And whatever committees would meet about, I would always give a pitch for being a part of the N.A.A.C.P. It was not just asking for

membership from Blacks. It was asking membership of whites, because they, themselves, too, believed in the legacy of the constitution and what it had promised. And they, too wanted to be a part of seeing that this legacy did come to pass. That it would be passed on to everybody that the constitution spoke of when it spoke of one person, whether that person appeared in your mind as being Black, Indian, Chicano, or whatever. That person is a person that I'm interested in. He is a person that I think I'm working for. I'm working for everybody. The melting pot of the United States.

JS: Yes. The constitution has no color biases.

MAXEY: That's right. And so consequently, if you asked me did I have a definite part? No.

JS: I wondered if you'd been given some assignments to — in the work of preparing the legislation or developing support for it, or...

MAXEY: I was called into meetings and, and given — and was asked my opinion on, on things of how I felt as an individual.

JS: Yes. You were pretty aware of the situation at the time. Maybe, it might be a good idea to describe the housing situation at this time.

MAXEY: I think, and another thing that'd brought me into focus probably a little closer than probably most people at my age at that time was the fact that I had my own business, as a barbershop. And I think this was a thing that came through a lot, probably in more discussions than you would the average person at my age, at that time. I think if you found people of my age discussing it, they would have been probably people at parties, and stuff like that. It wouldn't be in form of where people were in their own place

of business. I know quite often quite a bit of information was given through my barbershop.

For an instance, if we had literature passed out, or announcements about local, state or national meetings of importance, or an important vote coming up, that usually was advertised in my barbershop. I didn't allow posters in my place, but the N.A.A.C.P., I'd carry their announcements and posters. But I – a personal poster about people having a dance or having a party or a fried fish deal, or something like that, I never did put them up in my place. But about the N.A.A.C.P., I did.

And I never did put political posters in my place, as much as I liked a lot of the people of whom I associated with, many of them would often ask me, even Mrs. Lee at that time, who was mayor. All – many have asked me why I didn't allow posters. But I had this feeling that I was not cutting Democrat, Republican, Communists, or Nazis or whatever's hair, you know, socially. I was cutting people's hair, and I didn't think that I should let them put posters in my place. Or *The People's World*, I think the paper was, any publication if you had one and you wanted to put it in my place, you were perfectly welcome to do it. But I didn't allow posters.

Now, *The People's World*, and several other papers that – shipyard workers' paper, and the electrical union's paper and people like that. They would bring them and put them in my place and people who wanted to see them, this is fine. But I just never would allow posters to be put up.

JS: Yeah. Did you talk politics with people while you were cutting their hair?

MAXEY: Very seldom. Very seldom. If it was, I was making a comment mostly of people being negative in their discussion, where I'd ask people to not be too negative. You know. People weren't to just to gum off for the sake of talking, you know. While, here's what it ought to be done this way, or if it isn't done, it's going to be done this way, and stuff like that. I always tried to make known the fact that it'd be better if it was discussed and not screamed. And when you start talking about what is not happening

and the way it's got to be done, then people get these [Inaudible] ideas that somebody's supposed to make somebody do something. No. I never did want to take a shouting.

JS: You didn't use that as a pulpit.

MAXEY: No.

JS: That's a funny term.

MAXEY: No, no. Never did. Never did. People asked me my opinion; I'd give it. And I'd certainly accept the fact that their opinion as their feeling, and I'd ask them to do the same thing for me. A lot of times they'd come up, "Well I'm surprised you" – well, look. Don't be. You asked me my opinion, and I'm giving you my opinion; and please accept it, and I'll accept yours, whether I agree with you or not.

No, I never, I never did, and I was watching never have shouting matches in my place on politics.

JS: Okay. You're living through a period back then, when the community, the Black community is really transformed. Vanport. And then it gets, much of it gets concentrated in this area. You saw what was going on. I wonder if you could describe what you did see of what was going on in creating this confined community.

MAXEY: Yes. At this time, with the Vanport community; also at this particular time, was the time that Blacks were becoming more concerned about not being accepted in the teaching force of the school system here. There were no Blacks in the school system until 1946, I'm almost sure I'd be correct in that. And after Blacks were accepted in the teaching field there were – first people accepted were much older. They accepted the fact that, I think at that time, Mr. Ford who was a man at that time of around 45, and

Father Stone's wife, who was the woman and man, Black teachers, the first two who taught. They were people in their 40s.

Then it came up, why not some of the younger people accepted as teachers? Because if people going to be shaped, if their lives are going to be shaped, lot of the time it is passed those people by. And here with younger people we can get a better chance to get the thoughts and minds of the younger whites, Blacks and everybody in school, if we had younger teachers doing it. And these were some of the fights. Also along with the many other things of the N.A.A.C.P. The teachers.

Now, there was a teachers'...

JS: They wanted more teachers? They wanted then distributed around the city?

MAXEY: Yes. Right, right, right. The black teachers, at that time, were very careful, though. They did not want to be too much involved with the N.A.A.C.P. or anybody else, who wanted to push them into the teaching field. Later they realized that they could use the N.A.A.C.P. and other things about Blacks being hired into the teachers, but at first they shied away from it some, because of the fact, many, as I've told you before, probably some of the opinion was — somebody always left the idea that they're going to plant certain people into the N.A.A.C.P. to do this thing or not do this thing. So consequently — [Phone rings] She got it.

JS: Okay. Did you see some of the real estate practices that were...

MAXEY: Yes.

JS: Limiting things to this confined area.

MAXEY: Yes. I think probably you have to remember — you might be a little young to remember the name of Frank L. McGuire.

JS: Frank McGuire, I've only heard the name.

MAXEY: You've heard it?

JS: Yeah.

MAXEY: Frank McGuire was one of the biggest real estate dealers here. And it was only through Frank McGuire, that they – at that time, was kind of the spoken mind of the realtors as to what part of the city could be sold to Blacks. And Frank L. McGuire usually would get the call, it seemed like, of people, and move wherever you saw Frank L. McGuire's signs, more or less in this area you almost felt assured that he would show you property. But he was kind of the guiding post. If Frank L. McGuire sold you property in the Irvington district, then others would. But if Frank L. McGuire wouldn't sell it to you, you could almost bet that nobody else would sell it to you. And he seemed to have been the sounding post.

JS: Oh really?

MAXEY: Yes.

JS: Well how did the new legislation work? How well did it work and, I guess, how did it work? I mean, I guess how did it work out in practice?

MAXEY: You know, I think the very fact that it was passed and put on the books made it easy. I don't think you found too much opposition. Because it's a funny thing about people, once a thing is made known that it's right to do it, and that it's not really hurting anybody for it to be done, you'd be surprised to know how well it does work.

With the exception of the – and you're always going to have the little hidden sticks that people hit you with, there were, and still is today, ways that are being used to hinder the progress of it. Whether it's getting into the electrical union, or whether it's getting into the plumbers' union, or whatever. It's not how it's spoken, but it is kind of understood that, that John Jameson is the chairman of the plumbers deal and he kind of channels it in a way that you just don't take certain groups into those groups, because we'd rather kind of keep that – kind of the grandfather clause type of thing. That if any more electricians come in, they come in by being recommended by their fathers or their grandfathers, and stuff like that. And this is the subtle way that people get around civil rights and things of that sort. That it's handed down through families, and that still is being done today.

But to come out and just flatly deny a Black the right to apply for membership in one of these crafts, I don't think it's too often you'll find it. But it is ways, yet, to get around it. And they're being practiced today.

JS: Yes. Well, I would believe that.

MAXEY: Yes. And so I would say that it is very seldom – every once in a while you'll get one of the writers in the paper that will come up and write a column and they'll give what they feel is their legitimate reason why that people forced into a craft is going to be dangerous and it's harmful and it's not going to present anything that's worthwhile. Yes, I've seen that quite often. But just mass objection to where people would picket and have, and threaten people's lives and things, I don't think it's that, too often. But it's many other subtle ways that it's done.

JS: You know, somebody that we've overlooked, we haven't stopped to talk about Clay Myers, and I understand you knew Clay Myers.

MAXEY: Yes, I knew Clay.

JS: I wonder if you might have a reading of Clay Myers from this period.

MAXEY: Yes. Yes, I knew Clay Myers very well. In fact I consider, out of all the people that I mentioned you to, that I've had personal relationship with him, much closer than I have in the others. And I don't know whether it was because he was younger, or what reason that I had a chance to figure that he's a personal friend of mine, and I've discussed personal things with him, that I was not able to discuss with others. I didn't discuss with others. And he discussed things with me that I don't think he would felt free, no doubt that he would have discussed freely with many other Blacks. He might have; I don't know.

JS: What, for instance?

MAXEY: Well, I think ways and means that I think that we should use to try to get legislation passed rather than, you know. I think he gave me a lot of good ideas to use in presenting things to different politicians. Ideas they might have discussed with him before he came to me, but it was ways that I probably wouldn't presented myself to them had I not have gotten his idea. He might have read them that way, or he might have known politically sound this would be the best way to do it.

JS: So he kind of prepped you.

MAXEY: Yes, I think in a lot of cases, yes. That's true.

JS: Are there some instances of this where you were working on something and he prepped you on it?

MAXEY: Yeah. I think I used his ideas on a whole lot. As I said, as a young person I'd get his idea, as how it'd sound to him, and along with his idea, I'm sure that he spoke of how he had felt with other people of his group. Whether it was a college group of that time, or just young people out in the community. Yeah.

JS: How would you describe his way of going about things, his personality? Wonder if there are any anecdotes that would kind of illustrate Clay Myers and the way he went about things.

MAXEY: Yeah. He's not flamboyant.

JS: He's not?

MAXEY: No.

JS: Oh

MAXEY: [Laughs] No. I think he's very – moves very cautious. And I think he's a deep thinker. And he had a mystique about himself that drew thinking people to him and he could disagree with you without falling out. And he could agree with you without actually doing it your way. So I would say he was –.

Not saying that he'd hide from taking a stand. That's not it. I think a lot of times, I think he probably had the ability to look through and think many times of how things would sound to him, and along with him, a hundred other people who are along in his group. I think he's able to do that. That I don't think I saw in too many other people.

JS: And so you and Johnnie socialized with the Myers, and what sorts of things did you do?

MAXEY: We liked dances, and he and his wife liked dances, and we'd go to a lot of dances together. In fact, lot of the club affairs in the Black community, he and his wife made sure they got on the register that they'd get invitations to a thing. Or they liked the type of music we danced to, and looked like they enjoyed the people of whom they associated with.

JS: Very uncharacteristic for the time.

MAXEY: And it wasn't that we house partied together, and stuff like that, because I don't think that they were people that would bother drinking too much. [Laughs] I mean, they would have drinks, sure. But I think they were people, if the – and we'd been invited to their home. We'd – and they also had been at our home. It seemed like that we did have something in common, if it wasn't nothing but being able to agree and disagree without falling out. We didn't agree on everything. No, we really did not.

JS: Oh, really?

MAXEY: No.

JS: What are some points that you didn't agree on?

MAXEY: I think most of the things that we didn't agree on would be procedures. When I saw a thing that was affecting me and 90% of the things that – I might have been kind of one sided, because many things that I went to Clay for was usually things concerned me as a Black, and they shouldn't have. They're things that concerned me as a human being but it just so happened I happened to be Black and that's the way they came to me. And usually, I felt that things should be without a doubt, was to be outspoken about. And Clay always had another idea, you know. Sometime ignore it; pay no attention to it. Or accepted this far or whatever. But yeah.

Yes, as I said we agreed on a lot of things. We disagreed and never fell out. We'd have some pretty good fights sometimes. [Laughs]

JS: Yes. Sounds like the respect stayed pretty solid.

MAXEY: Yes. It was. And usually I don't think we had any less feeling for each other. And when he was involved in something and he had his mind made up that that's the way it was and I had my mind made up, we usually would let each do it and not lose friendship about it.

I know in some of the things concerning the city doing the urban renewal thing, he and I didn't agree on a lot of it.

JS: What was your position? What did you think the city should be doing or not doing?

MAXEY: I really felt that it was a conspiracy in a lot of cases to – for an instance, doing the Coliseum area down there and the Lloyd Center area. Blacks had moved in those areas. Those were the only areas that Black were accepted to buy property in, too much at one time.

[End of Tape 7, Side 2]

Tape 8, Side 1

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JS: Coliseum area.

MAXEY: Yeah, and much of going back toward the Lloyd Center area. Those were areas that they seemed to have sold Blacks homes very freely. And once it was made apparent that this was very valuable property, then it seemed like to me it was a very unfair way that they went about obtaining this property.

JS: How were they doing it?

MAXEY: Well.

JS: I haven't heard that story.

MAXEY: It was about condemnation and the freeway. See, the freeway, in order to get that property, and the Coliseum, much of that property had to be condemned. And I felt that they used tactics on that that shouldn't have been used. It just was apparent that it had to be that it was a conspiracy, more or less, to get the property and see that Blacks moved.

But now, in moving they even came up discussions with, "Well now, since we're going to replace Blacks, I don't think so many Blacks should be put into a particular area." Now, who has anything to do with that? I don't think that should even come to the forefront in anybody's thinking, as to what area they thought they should go in.

I thought it – at this time, would have been a good time to say, well, people should be free to go into any area they find a home that they can afford. And if they're given any kind of reason to not obtain property in that, then I think this is the time that – there should have been groups then to go in on there and say, hey, this has nothing to do with

you. If these people decide to buy this home here, and the people who are going to sell it to them, even though they're next door neighbors. Why? For what reason?

So I think to have these closed-door meetings as such, and it was apparent that some of this was going on, whether it came through the Chamber of Commerce or whether it came through different city groups, community groups, or not. I don't think it should have been that way.

JS: About what year are we in?

MAXEY: We're talking about...

JS: Schrunk's administration?

MAXEY: Yeah. We're talking about, and this is beginning to uncover some of the police department and mayors and stuff like that. This had to be beginning around the late 1950s. Probably from 1955 when a lot of the planning was going on and I think they obtained, I think the larger part of that property about 1958 or 1959. For the freeway that comes across, you know, by the Coliseum?

JS: Yeah.

MAXEY: Okay that took up a lot of that area and, and the Coliseum all together, those two things did a lot of it. Then that was also the time that they were doing some planning with the Lloyd Center.

JS: How were they – what tactics were they using?

MAXEY: Well, the tactics they used I think was the fact that the — I know they won't admit this, but it was apparent that many of the real estate people had been told now,

here these people are going to be moving, and if I'd you, I'd be suggesting – because I remember being down in that area and when I went to them and asked them about what type of place I wanted, they would offer me anything that I had talked about, anything between Russell and Fremont on Williams Avenue. They wouldn't offer me anything up this far. They wouldn't offer me anything on Martin Luther King at that time, or back that way. Or anything on Broadway.

JS: Oh. So they were really conspiring to control the movement of these people who were being displaced and they were really – it was really clear, was it, that, where they were going to put them?

MAXEY: Yes. Okay. And this brings me back to Clay, you made mention to me, and I would have said to him, I said, "You know this seems apparent to me that seems like this thing –."

"Oh no Maxey, I think you're getting some funny ideas in your head."

I said, "No, I don't think so. I think it's because I have had several real estate people about a place that I'd like to have, a place that's all – the building is already there and I could put the type of business that I want in it." You know. And I told him I thought I had reason enough to believe it's that way. And he still might have been right. But I'm just saying those are the type of things that probably he and I discussed and we...

JS: But you knew other people's cases, too?

MAXEY: Yes.

JS: It wasn't just your particular experience?

MAXEY: Right. Right. I know about other people's likewise that had just a house, or a small business for that matter, and very few of them were offered anything out of the area, you know, is shown something in the area.

As I said, I came up here on my own. The real estate person didn't show me this place. I came up here myself. And this particular house I bought after I bought the store over there, because I figured it'd be nice. It's a big house; and it's a house that could accommodate my five kids, and we'd be real close to the barbershop and the grocery store.

JS: You told me before, but I've forgotten. Where was the barbershop, now?

MAXEY: Do you know where the Coliseum motel is?

JS: Yes.

MAXEY: Okay. Right in the driveway where you drive into it, you drive in under there?

JS: Yes.

MAXEY: My shop was right there on Cherry Court. That was known as Cherry Street at that time. Yeah. Cherry Street. And then I moved from there and moved up on Weidler right across where the freeway would come across.

Okay. One of the unfair things that was done with the state, when I had to move my shop from where I was telling you the freeway was, and I had a three store front there. This was an old building, true. But that was my barbershop and I had another person had rented a space for cleaning, a dry cleaning place. And the club on the corner of Williams and Weidler there, that was a club, kind of a night club there, and they had rented a space that's where they kept some of their drinks and stuff in there. And there

was Tom Benson right across Weidler on the other side of the street on Weidler, there from me. Now they told me, we're not interested in your building. We're interested in your ground. Now it's no way in the world that anybody tell me that — he and myself had the same type of a lot there. I think it was about, in depth I only had 52 feet and I think he had about a 52 by 100. And — of course, I say his business was much more than mine. I know that.

JS: Now what business was he in?

MAXEY: He had a glass company.

JS: Oh, glass company.

MAXEY: Tom Benson Glass Company. It's down here now right off of Lovejoy. And at that time they wanted to offer me, I think it was about — let's see, for me to move and all, they wanted to offer me, I think it was only about \$4,000 or \$5,000 more than I paid for the place. And I knew good and well, moving into another place — and this did not have a barbershop to it, this, where this grocery store is. But my point was, I was buying that grocery store, and that I was going to have to build a barbershop there on to it. And I was not near compensated, I feel, for what my place should have been.

JS: But you learn what he was compensated for his, is that right?

MAXEY: Yes. Because I understand he was compensated well over a \$100,000 for his place and they were offering me, I think, something like \$17,000 [or] \$18,000 for mine.

JS: And they said, in effect, that there was no value to the building.

MAXEY: Right...

JS: Or minimal value to the building. Did they appraise the building at some value or just very low?

MAXEY: I think they appraised it somewhere about \$8,000 or \$9,000. They said it's just an old building. True. It was very true. It was an old building. But it's one that I had repaired and brought up. Because it was an old Thomas Candy Company place. And I had taken it and some of the boards were falling out and everything, I'd taken it and repaired it, painted it, and had really done it real nice inside at the barbershop, you know.

JS: Yes. They — and did you have an opportunity to use a lawyer to try and challenge their...

MAXEY: Yes, I did. And, and what first happened was they made an offer to me and each morning I'd go there and there was a sign on the door saying it's property of the Federal Highway Department, I think it was, something like that. No trespassing. I'd take the signs off every day; throw them in the garbage.

And one day, I think it was — oh, F.B.I. [Federal Bureau of Investigation] man came in, flashed his badge, and asked who was Charles Maxey. I told him it was me. I was cutting somebody's hair. And I told him that he'd have to wait until I got through. So when I got through, he flashed his badge again, and I told him, well you have to hold that because I read very slow. And I read on it so — and I, "Yes, what can I do for you?"

He said, "Can you tell me who's moving the signs off the door?"

I told him, "Sure, me."

He said, "Well, did you know you are violating the federal law? This is federal property."

I said, "No. No. I have not signed for the federal government to take this. It's not."

So he said, "Well, I'm telling you now, before you get in trouble. Don't take another sign off."

I told him, “Well I’ll tell you, please tell them don’t put another one on then, until I get paid for it and they give me a time that I’m being able to get out of here, cause soon as they put a sign on it does not mean they own it even though — but give me a reasonable time to get out of there.”

So I did at that time went and talked with a lawyer and he told me, well — is it — he was telling me, I think, what kind of money that it was going to cost me from \$1,000, \$3,000 or \$4,000, something, you know, maintain an attorney. So he said, “Well I tell you what, you carry it on yourself as far as you think you can go without it, because it’s only a certain amount that we’re going to be able to fight them and get on it.” And I was basing mine on the fact that I had this place, I was renting to a person who had a business which was a dry cleaning place, and on the fact that I had five kids and I was able to feed them out of in my barbershop. There were two other barbers who worked with me, were making a living out of there. And that it was worth more than what they were offering me.

And I think had it not been for me just playing stupid to the fact that I probably was breaking the law, that maybe they could charge me for it, maybe they could lock me up and charge me for it, but I just continued to do it.

JS: Who was the lawyer that you went to?

MAXEY: The lawyer that I went to is, was — I knew him because he was ran for governor once. And also he ran against Wayne Morse for senator. He’s on the Lloyd Center now. He’s an older fellow now. What the heck was his name? Hm!

JS: He ran against Morse.

MAXEY: Yeah. He ran against Morse. And also he ran against Hatfield for governor. What the heck was his name? Hm! I know him very well.

JS: There’s a...

MAXEY: Walker! Don Walker.

JS: Don Walker?

MAXEY: Yes. You know Don Walker?

JS: No, I don't.

MAXEY: Donald C. Walker, I think is his name.

JS: I'm just wondering how things were handled. Did anybody have any better luck than you did in, in challenging these...

MAXEY: No. No. I think most people had worse. Because many people felt that when they put that notice in your door that the Federal Highway Department, the National Highway Department, whichever one it was, would be around to talk with you about your property most people folded up and said, "Well, this is it. More than likely they are going to give me a fair offer." Most of them took it.

I told them in the community – I went around the community and told them that what I thought we should do is form a group and we would have a class action suit and a group, saying that, I don't think you're offering us what we're entitled to for our property. And I was not able to get anybody to do that.

JS: Nobody would join.

MAXEY: No. And same thing happened with people who had houses. I told them the same thing.

JS: Yes. You know, Don Wilner is a lawyer who's active in...

MAXEY: I knew Don Wilner.

JS: In civil rights work in this period.

MAXEY: I knew Don Wilner. Don Wilner's a very nice fellow. He's a Democrat and he also was in the State Legislature at one time. Yes, Don is a very nice person. I worked with Don some. Don at that time was aspiring, to me, to really go up into the government and being acquainted probably as a judge here and a district judge and then on probably later a federal judge. I don't think he ever got appointed to that. But I think, I think Don did work quite a bit in civil rights movement. But I don't think anybody worked too closely with Don. Don was a pretty nice person, but I don't think Don – I don't think nobody ever was able to get Don to downright support civil rights measures too strenuously.

JS: While he was politically...

MAXEY: Active.

JS: Moving politically.

MAXEY: [Yes].

JS: So, and then you moved. You moved your barbershop and you — into a grocery store – you had – did you build a barbershop then, on the grocery store?

MAXEY: Yes. Yes. The part is built under that building I had built there. Now, let's see...

JS: And what was the address of that?

MAXEY: Say what is this?

JS: The address of that building?

MAXEY: 4624 North Williams.

JS: Oh. Oh. Is it, across the street?

MAXEY: Yes. That's it.

JS: Oh, is it really!

MAXEY: Yes. That's the part you can see when you go out of here. The part that's built on to it is the lower part. That's the part that I had built on there.

JS: Well, as part of your business history, how did things go? This is happening about 1959 or 1960?

MAXEY: About 1959 and 1960s, right. That is correct.

JS: And so how did things go from there as you started over again?

MAXEY: Real rocky. And the reason being I had really taxed myself pretty heavily – barbershop business being personal service. You've got to be there in order to make it. And I'd open the grocery store and I really didn't have any management knowledge, exactly, of a grocery store. I'd worked in grocery stores when I was a youngster. And I didn't actually have any management experience, and this means that I had to tax myself

and my family pretty good in order to make it work. Because I didn't go out of business. I sold out of business. I still own the property though, now. But...

JS: So you taxed yourself in terms of the time and energy that it took.

MAXEY: Right, because in the morning, I'd usually get up at 6 o'clock and go over do things at the store, probably put in orders for the day, and probably put out the meats and things of that sort. And then we'd open at seven. And I'd work in there until nine or 10 o'clock 'til my wife would come over, and somebody to work with her while the kids were in school. And I'd usually work in the barbershop all day until about five or six that afternoon.

And after that, well, then, I was being run so bad that I'd turned the barbershop over to one of the fellows who was working with me. I rented to him, and I just worked as a hired barber like everybody else. Because I know that I had to give a lot of attention to the grocery store, because it was more things demanding in the grocery store than just one individual at a time. There was salesman to talk with me, there's dissatisfaction, there's different governmental people in to discuss with me – health people and license people and things of that sort.

I was pretty fortunate in that I never was given a ticket for my sale of alcohol beverages though. And I know I must have sold something to people who were younger than 21 years at that time, but I made a very good effort to make it very hard for people underage to buy alcohol. And knowingly I didn't allow grown-ups to buy it [and] give it to them. That's the big thing with a neighborhood store, also.

So I only had one deal I remember with the liquor commission. A guy came in and there's a young fellow used to hang around Jefferson high school up there. You always have one at every high school. He wasn't exactly a student, but he had gone to Jeff, and he hung around there until he was about 24 or 25 years old. Now he would buy alcohol for the kids. Now, I knew he was older because I had kids in high school. So I remember one came to me and I told him [the man from the liquor commission], I said, "You all know

that, then don't blame me for it. Because if I see him having kids outside of my store to give it to them, I wouldn't sell it to him. But it's nothing in there that tells me that I have to follow a man home to see that he carry alcohol home."

So I told them that, and so they finally went up and jumped this fellow and especially the principal and all at Jefferson High School, and told them that I was pretty nice about it but I'd objected to the fact that they jumped down my throat. And I was! I did object to it. I didn't think it was quite fair. And I didn't have that problem anymore.

But all in all, I kept the grocery store until I retired out of it and sold it.

JS: Yes. But grocery, or small grocery stores are a difficult business. It seems like.

MAXEY: Very difficult.

JS: What are the ins and outs? What are the – what is the key to succeeding in a small – what are the problems in a small grocery store?

MAXEY: Okay, you almost asked the question. What would you do to succeed? Don't do credit! [Laughs] Okay, that would be the first don't, I would put. Don't do credit.

Realize what are the things in your own home that your family uses and also realize what are the good sellers in chain stores that you can carry and be a good seller also. And one was cigarettes. Carry cigarettes and a lot of them, because people who want a pack of cigarettes would come to my store and buy them rather than to go to Fred Meyer or Safeway at that time, because they had to get in line. Maybe they'd be on their way somewhere. To buy a pack of cigarettes, and while he's there, he'd probably buy a six-pack of beer. So my point would be realizing what would sell.

Also, realize what would be a good markup. Regardless of what suggestion markup anybody gives you, figure out what markup you figure you could use and be sure to use it on cash basis. What you could buy for cash and sell for cash.

And altogether with the credit, I doubt if I'd have \$1,500 dollars owed to me. That includes people who came in with stories about the kids hadn't had anything to eat for two or three days and I gave them something. I finally nailed mine down to anything I couldn't afford to give away, don't credit it. I can't credit anything that I couldn't afford to give away.

JS: So you did some giving away.

MAXEY: Yes. If a person – and my rule was, to my wife, I told her, if a woman comes in tells you kids hadn't had anything to eat, regardless what she asks you for tell her we don't do credit, but now for the kids here is a loaf of bread and a quart of milk. "Well I wanted more than that. I wanted some eggs, I wanted some bacon." Said, well I'm sorry, our rule is that we'll give you this. Now they won't starve. If you call the police they will do something about getting you some kind of food for your kids. We just can't tell you what places to go and how to go through it. And that's the way we operated.

JS: Did you have – were there other people doing your work? Were there other stores that you knew and could compare notes with?

MAXEY: There were a lot of community grocery stores and I could compare notes with them, because people would give it to you whether you asked for it or not. They'd always come and tell you what was wrong with the other grocery store.

For an instance there's one right up here on the corner. They tell you what's wrong with it. And there's one down here on Mason, which – and there's one right here on Vancouver Avenue, which is three stores right here above me and when people come and tell you what was wrong with those stores you can bet your boots they owed those people something and they decided to come and tell you something bad about them so you would let them have something on credit. I learned...

JS: So it was personal thing.

MAXEY: So I learned that that was a type of thing that you better learn, and learn it quick. Now, was there anything I could learn from other [stores]? Yes, I could learn that. Don't do credit.

And all the stores that were around me went out of business. Went out of business. I sold mine because I was retiring and I didn't – my volume, I don't think, was as much as theirs. But I feel that I was able to retire on mine. I didn't retire with as good a retirement as I should have. If I had known what the retirement thing was all about I could have done better, and I was fortunate in that I took the liquor store for about four and a half years after that, that helped me in my retirement, because otherwise I didn't have too much in my retirement.

JS: It helped you with the retirement because it was a real profit maker, is that right?

MAXEY: Not only a real profit maker, it was the fact that when I went to the state after I sold out of my business, my bookkeeper told me, "I'd figured out just about what your retirement would be, and it's not very good."

Then I went to the liquor commission and asked them, "What kind of retirement situation do you think you could do for me?"

JS: Oh, I see. They would help set up a retirement.

MAXEY: Yes, because if I pay in so much, they'd pay in so much, and I was getting a check every month, you see. So that way I have a better retirement than I would have had, had I not have had the liquor store. So I tell anybody who goes into a small neighborhood grocery store, figure out number one, what your retirement program is like. Because if not, you going to retire and have nothing to retire on.

So all in all, I would make a very good person to talk with people who's going into small business.

JS: Did you enjoy the business?

MAXEY: Yes.

JS: Going from barbering to running a grocery store?

MAXEY: Sure did. Most certainly did. I most certainly did.

JS: What did you enjoy about it?

MAXEY: I enjoyed the fact that here is a service that I can do for people and I felt that I could offer some dignity to people in a small neighborhood store, that I don't think they'd gotten too much, because once people had started doing credit there were a lot of people, they had a bad attitude a lot of time for people who came in. And I think – I don't think people had no particular bone to pick with me when they walked in the door. I don't think they were mad at me too much about anything. Only thing they probably would have been mad at me about was I didn't do credit. And I didn't cash checks.

Oh yes. I better put that one in there. Don't cash checks and don't do credit, because those things alone will certainly put you out of business.

JS: You say you gave people dignity. I'm not sure I understand.

MAXEY: Yes. When you walked in – I had learned, in my barbershop, that everybody walked in was an important person. And if I didn't know you by name and you walked in by me (my chair was the first chair), I'd always bid you time of day, "How do you do, sir." Yes.

And I don't think that one thing was recognized by a lot of people in neighborhood store. I mean it's just as they come in, "How's your day, Luke?" "How are you?" or if they spoke at all. Yes. I think — and I got a lot out of it. I don't think I gave all — I don't think I was the one doing all the giving. I think I received a lot out of being in the grocery store. I learned people. I learned to appreciate people for what they were. Even though they weren't like me and I wasn't like them. Yeah.

JS: This is a time when — you said your children were in high school. Let — it would be good to...

MAXEY: My daughter was a first year in high school.

JS: It would be good to now turn, I think, to the children and their upbringing and look at some of their experiences. I want to leave this free for you to get into. Some of their experiences and how you helped...

[End of Tape 8, Side 1]

Tape 8, Side 2**1994 April 1**

MAXEY: Senior, and she finished in 1960. And this, more than ever before, gave me an idea what, some of the things that I should have been looking for, even before then; before this came on me. I had always wanted to go into another type of store.

In fact, I did have an appliance store down in my other place, for a little over a year. In fact I had it when I bought this. But it wasn't a thing that my kids were able to work into as readily as they could this. Because this was being able to handle money, cash money, small amounts of money from kids and other people, and making change, and it was quite different. While with the appliance store, I sold things on contract and things like that. Of course, I got some ideas about that, but I never did go too deeply in that because I was only in that about a year.

And at that time, they had a deal along with that, while I was selling refrigerators and meat quarters. In other words, many of the packing houses sold that meat program, where they'd sell you so much pork, so much beef, so much fish, and stuff like that. And frozen food. And the frozen food program, that's what it was. And I got into that. And this kind of gave me an idea that I had to do something because of my kids. And when I left down there, I never did – I didn't continue that business. I let that go to another fellow, and I went into the grocery store business. And this revamped my thinking about a family deal, because I had to, at this time, give my kids something to do.

So what I did, I divided the time up that everybody worked two hours in the store per day; that is, the kids. Even though if you went to school, you had to work two hours. And they figured out pretty well which one worked what hours. Any my oldest daughter at that time was a person usually get hands-on, thought she could get her hands-on things, and she always figured she could work out schedules for everybody. She was learned to be a boss before she learned how to work. [Laughs]. Because she was working out ideas about kids and – that all worked in very good.

And along with my own kids, I always used about a couple of neighbor kids to help my kids, you know, like stocking up, putting bottles in cases, keeping the basement

clean, bringing stock from the basement, putting in refrigerators and places and opening groceries and pricing them, that I had brought in; things of that sort. Learned quite a bit.

It never did bother me too much as to selling a little cheaper than the average neighborhood store, what I sold. Because I always felt that what gave me a good lead on most people — I had the barbershop, I had a type of income and I was able to run the store, and probably learn as I went along, and it didn't hurt me near as bad as it would have a lot of people. And I never did — I was very careful to not price my stuff to the maximum. And I had a very good business.

JS: Oh, really?

MAXEY: Yes. Very good business. In fact, it still is a very good business with the people that are there now.

JS: Now your kids, when they brought home their problems from their own life, and the neighborhood, and from school, what kinds of things did they bring home and how did you deal with them?

MAXEY: It was a kind of a thing that we weren't ready for that we did receive, because once owning the barbershop and owning the grocery store your kids got put into a category that most would if you were a policeman or a doctor or whatever. The majority of kids' fathers are not doctors. The majority of kids are not policemen; the majority of kids are not store owners. Kids got thrown back in the face, "You think you're so much because your father owns a little grocery store." And you found your kids believing that, making concessions in order to be a part of.

JS: Oh? What kind of concessions?

MAXEY: You got, they wanted to be a little more rebellious; they wanted to be – to prove to other kids that they weren't different. They brought to you, why do we have to do so-and-so? Other kids don't have to be. I told them hey, you're owners of grocery – it's more your and mom's business. I tell them about that quite often now. Them, "Oh Dad, you haven't – so-and-so be asking what's your, have you made out a will?"

I told them, "I have no will for you. You always told us that's for you and mom, the business, you know. We have no will for you." [Laughs]

I kid them a lot. But it does bring home a different picture to you. You have to work with it a little different with your kids once you're a person that's in business in the neighborhood.

JS: Let's see – the kids' names are what again?

MAXEY: The oldest kid, daughter is Carol D.; and Virginia E.; Charles W.; and Donna D.; and Jonathan R.

JS: I'm impressed by five. [Laughs]

MAXEY: Yeah.

But I learned a lot in working the grocery store, and I think it gave me some different thinking of my kids once I'd gotten there. I think it would have been better had I thought about this quite a bit before I did. I always had in mind that I wanted to do something for the kids. But this came on me so fast that I to really get to something. And, and it enabled me – I had paid for the building where I was, and my home was paid for. And I was able to do this because of the fact that my place was paid for, and that's what –.

The Highway Department wanted to really put the squeeze on me because, you see, I was able to get money to buy a place before, you know, they had paid me my money. And that's what they – they was in hopes they could put a squeeze on me for

that reason. But I was able to get the money to get a contract to buy those places and get a few thousand dollars and pay down them. And had I not have had my places paid for, I don't know if I'd have been able to get a second or third mortgage or what it would have taken to do this. But after not being as prepared as I think I should have been, it seemed to have worked out pretty fair after all, but being had my property paid for.

JS: Now what kind of counsel did you give your kids when the issues came up about race and what we are faced with as Blacks in a community that's — where we are really a minority?

MAXEY: In most cases I told my kids that education was going to be the most important factor. That if you got an education, you were going to have some demands, but you weren't going to have too many demands if you didn't have an education. And name calling, was not going to make it, and it certainly was not going to break it. There's going to be a big factor in your life and you're going to have to learn to deal with it. But you most certainly was going to have to make your priority education.

And I tried hard to get all of my kids to learn, at least what I knew, what me and their mother knew once we had gone into the business. That — I gave each one of them a chance to be manager of the store in that you'd run off all of the bills of whatever we bought today, and also you would run the cash register off and you'd see what we made. And then at the end of the week, you see what the store had done. Many times you'd be in debt; a lot of times you'd made a little something; let you know this is the way life is going to be.

I never could get my kids to accept the fact they should have learned how to be a barber, they should have learned how to, fully, how to run a grocery store. It was a thing they wanted to get the farthest from. And all of them wished they had now. They knew that they should have.

JS: Gee. There wasn't a one who kind of lined up to follow into the trade.

MAXEY: Not a one. No. No. I have a daughter that lives in Reston, Virginia, across from Washington D.C. [District of Columbia], across the river from Washington, D.C. She has been toying around with a nursery business for years, but she has done hers, more or less, from her home. She's always had a job, but she's – this is a side business of hers. And I've had a problem with her, when I – and she hates to see me coming. I'm going back there in a few days because her daughter's graduating from the University of Virginia. And she kind of hates for me to come back there, because I ask her, let me see her books, you know.

JS: [Laughs] She knows that's coming?

MAXEY: Yes. And believe it or not she is running a bootleg type of business, rather than a business. I told her any business worth having is worth running like a business. You should know what you bought; you should know how much money you made off of it; you should know how much spoilage you had, and all. All she knows, she makes enough money to replace it. And I tell her all the time, you're not getting anywhere and you certainly could not go into this as a business where you had other people hired, because you haven't done it right.

JS: She has some more lessons to learn.

MAXEY: A whole lot. She has a freezer in her place that is – well, it's a cooler and a freezer combined, it's half as big as this room here. One side is a freezer and one side is a cooler, where she keeps her flowers and things she freezes for the...

JS: What – were there some tough moments when the kids came home with their problems? Were there some really difficult problems for the kids?

MAXEY: Yes. Sure. These were problems that kids ordinarily have with their neighbors, be they Black or white. These were cases where there were problems with my kids being Black and problems with white kids. Sure. Quite a few. And I dealt with those mostly through the school.

I was a member of the Dads' Club. My wife was always active in the elementary P.T.A. [Parent Teacher Association] group. And I usually attended all of the athletic parts of the school, because I was always interested in sports, whether it was track, baseball, football or whatever. And I was pretty well-known. And I — usually it was — after I got married I was always usually the youngest parent among most Blacks or whites that take — participated — there's something about younger parents. It's — I guess it makes them look too old to be members of Dad Clubs and things like that, you know, when they get in high school. But I participated. And I usually was pretty close to things.

And that way I got a chance to meet many of the doctors, many of the policemen, many of the business people in the community, because many of them had kids attending school. And those who didn't they attended other schools. And we usually had, in a group thing together as Dad club. I remember we used to have a golf match during the spring; a Dad Club golf match. All the high schools here used to have a golf match which was a lot of fun, once a year, and you get a chance to meet dads from other high schools.

Yeah. Yeah, we had problems just like everybody else.

JS: Did you ever tell your kids about your background experiences? Your life, early life experiences?

MAXEY: Sure.

JS: How did they react to?

MAXEY: Sometime angrily, by saying that was in your day and this is what you had to take and these are things that I'm not going to take. And a lot of them, they didn't. You know, they would physically fight.

A thing which most of the time my kids are always telling me since they've been grown, that I minimize too much of getting along with people. That I should have let them know before I did that, before you go too far, take a stand there and let people know that, if I just have to fight physically, I will, before and said — they figured that I led them on too far before I told them well take as much as you can take, and when you get where you can't take anymore, and that's it. They felt before they went that far, they should've been understood that they would retaliate physically before. Yes.

JS: They were seeing you as too conservative.

MAXEY: Yes. They felt that once that I had gotten out of the situation where I had, by having everything that I was involved with being segregated, that this had made me have an attitude that would make them a little worse off than me. And mine was that I was afraid that they would become a little too bitter, had I have let them felt to call a person's hand before going too far. And I felt I'd have had too many problems, and I still feel that way. I went against my own philosophy a lot of times because of that. And they have told me since they've been up — because I did physically retaliate some, even after I got grown, even after they were large kids, they know of some cases that my temper got the best of me and I retaliated physically.

JS: And they were aware of it.

MAXEY: Yes. And yet, at the same time, I always told them, it's a way around it. Talk your way out of it. Yeah.

I've never been known to hurt anybody, death-threatening. Yes, I've had some physical encounter, but I've never used a weapon.

JS: Shall we...

[End of Tape 8, Side 2]

Tape 9, Side 1

1994 May 3

JS: Today is May 3rd.

[Doorbell rings]

MAXEY: Could you cut that for just a...

JS: Yes.

[Tape stops]

Backtrack just a little ways and pick up this information because it would be good to have it on tape. And, so go back if you would to the situation of — they actually brought, encouraged Blacks to come here, from certain areas? Where was it? East Texas?

MAXEY: Yes. Right. East Texas, Louisiana, and southwest part of Arkansas, where those three states come in. My mother had told me after World War I there were young couples they were trying to encourage to come to this part of the country and develop sawmilling and to put in railroads. There weren't too many railroads out here at that time. And they were expanding the railroads out into the Northwest. And there were many black families that were encouraged (especially young families) encouraged to come to this part of the country and to start to work in the mills and building railroads. But it met quite a bit of opposition.

And the opposition at that time was from the Ku Klux Klan that was supposed to have been headquartered in Washington State, specifically in the Klamath Falls.

It had been located in Klamath Falls, the Ku Klux Klan group were, and I understand to — they objected to the fact that blacks were going to work in these places

and draw better salaries than other jobs in the neighborhood for common labor people. And I understand that the Ku Klux Klan began to harass and to march and show signs of race hate and things of that sort.

JS: So Longview you knew of, and Vernonia is another place.

MAXEY: And Vernonia, and Eastern Oregon is some place in Eastern Oregon where they started. Thinking it's around Pendleton and LaGrande and some of those places where they were working on the railroads or getting ready to work in the mills and things. And they started to harass them by encouraging the poor whites who also were wanting to work in those kind of places, rather than going into farming, to go into that because it supposed to have been better pay. And that's where a lot of clash come from.

Now I understand that many of the Blacks had to withdraw from these places and many of them scattered out and moved to Salem. She later found out they moved to – not Salem but to Portland, Seattle, and other places because they found out that they'd have to go into domestic work or some other kind of work in order to make it here, because they weren't going to be welcome as workers into the sawmills and into the other types of up-to-date factories.

JS: Yes. Does it sound as though the Klan activity, et cetera, that kind of pressure succeeded in driving the people out of those places?

MAXEY: I understand that. That's what my mother told me. So she told me that – when she found out that I was coming to the state of Oregon, she told me, said, "Well, you probably won't like it because it's a lot of Klan activities. When I was a younger person there were a lot of friends of mine who left here and went there to work and things and they didn't find it so pleasant. Many of them had to move into other places. Many of them came back home, because they had been told that they'd get work in the forest, in building railroads and things of that sort."

JS: So word did get back?

MAXEY: Yes. Word got back that they did – lot of them were not able to go on with the promises and in order to maintain. Many of them moved into the Seattle area, the Portland area and went into other types of work.

JS: So, did other people have a bit of a forewarning about what Oregon was going to be like?

MAXEY: You mean did other Black people?

JS: Yes.

MAXEY: Forewarning – you mean before and after World War I, when they be...

JS: When you were coming out...

MAXEY: No. I – my mother was the only person who had told me about that, and I didn't know that until I came here, because she didn't know I was coming to Oregon, because I had been working in Salt Lake City, with Morrison-Knudsen's construction company. And when she found out – I wrote her and told her that, that I had been ill and that I thought I, when I got well I was going to probably leave Salt Lake City because it was too cold. We were working outside in the frozen ground and snow and ice and blizzards. And I was there about nine months, I guess. And I was thinking about somewhere else to go, and I'd already been deferred by the draft board.

After they had found out that I was not working on the same job, they deferred me there. Then after I left there and took a quit slip and came to Oregon, and went and the work in the ship yard and I guess maybe they just deferred right on from that.

But no, I hadn't been forewarned before I came here. Because my mother didn't know that I was coming to Oregon and when I did write her, once I'd come here, and that was the time she told me she was wondering about whether or not I'd make it here. Because of the past activities and experience that she had had with people, of acquaintances who had come here, that is, Black people, who came here and had to leave because they were not allowed to work in the forest or on the railroads as they had been promised.

JS: Well, good. So – now Ollie Smith was one of these families. Well, you said you knew a couple of families.

MAXEY: Ollie Smith was a family that was already here when I came. This was in 1943. And he told me when his parents came here (and I don't know where they came from here) they came either to Salem or Longview, and, and he had a brother who ran a shoe shop in Salem, I understand, for 35 or 40 years. That is a shoe repair shop. And of course Ollie, I guess, moved into Portland here and began to work in different things, and when I came here he was working in the shipyard. And he was one of the few persons that I met when I came here, Black persons, who had been here before the war. And I think the Rutherford family, I think they came here from, probably, Omaha or someplace, working on the railroad. That is being waiters and the like; cooks.

JS: What kind of a guy was Ollie Smith?

MAXEY: Ollie Smith was a very interesting person in that he was very receptive to the Blacks that came, because it seems that he had had experiences being here that he was not too pleased with, being a black. And to find that the Blacks came in to, and automatically joined organizations like the N.A.A.C.P., in order to be able to work and to object to housing conditions and other conditions here. And when he found that out,

seemed he was very happy to be able to join in with that group and feel part of it, since he was being discriminated right along with the rest of us.

Now, any other job he had worked I don't – I have no knowledge of that. His son might give you an idea of what kind of jobs he had worked in.

JS: Well you said that he really gave you some good advice, or some good counsel, and what kind of situations were those?

MAXEY: Okay. He – the encouragement that he gave, that there were jobs here even before the war, that Blacks were able to work in. And that was the many a labor of repairing the tracks, working as Pullman porters, and the waiters. And many of them worked as porters in jobs in hotels and places downtown. But I understand there was only about 900 Blacks in the whole state of Oregon. But these were the kind of jobs that they were able to get.

And I think most of the younger Blacks that came, they came a little better qualified probably than a lot of the older ones that came, because many of the Blacks, young Blacks, were right out of college, many of them had finished high school, and many of the older Blacks had not. So there were a lot of urgent things going on to employ them, because they were employable. If they were being given a chance to train on the job, types of things, which the shipyard happened to be one of those places since they were in mass production, wasn't too hard to employ them to be trained on the job.

JS: Yes. So – but he – were you around when he ran for office?

MAXEY: Yes, I was. Yes, I was. In fact, he ran on Democratic ticket.

JS: What do you remember of that event?

MAXEY: I remember he took it very serious. In many cases, in the newspaper it was kind of a joke to believe that a Black had nerve enough to run for an office like the State Legislature because there was no chance for him to win. And he ran as if he'd been promised to win. And it seemed like to me that – well, in fact he worked closer with the Democratic Party continuously after that. And I always say that he was responsible for the beginning of Blacks to win, to run until somebody eventually won in some of the state or city or federal job. And to bring back my memory again about him, he had worked, or was working also with the Bonneville Power Administration. I think he's probably one of the first Blacks that had done that. Then after the shipyard and then I think he shifted from there to the – from Bonneville Power Administration to the shipyard, which probably at that time was probably better pay.

JS: Yes. And being federal, more secure.

MAXEY: Yes. And during that time, too, most jobs were laid out in the Northwest here as to jobs that you'd expect, even common labor jobs, certain jobs you'd expect would be jobs for whites only. And during this time, the war was getting pretty hot and everything was pretty well federalized, and that was when the president was forced to pass an emergency bill against discrimination, and the inclusion of everybody in the workplace, at that time.

And this bill that was passed, I might have made mention of before, was an emergency bill, Bill 8802, which was a bill that President Roosevelt sent and got passed at that time. It was an executive order, that's what it was. Instead of a bill, it was an executive order from the president. And this bill would be – and this is anywhere in the United States where the work was pertaining to the welfare of the people. And I don't know of any jobs at that time that was not included in that, because the war had gotten hot and we were losing in some places, and they were needing everybody's effort, whether it was on the home front or the warfront.

JS: How did people react to that at the time? Blacks, in particular.

MAXEY: Blacks in particular received that as very important and went right directly to find out where they could go, in case they were resented on these jobs. And this gave a wider perspective as to departments that Blacks could go to in case they were discriminated on these jobs. And an organization like the N.A.A.C.P. at that time made sure that they got the word out, as to places they could go to insist on fair employment during the war effort.

And, of course, after the war effort — I don't know. It seemed like everything just took off from there; that states, cities, and the like began to say, well hey, this worked good during the war and we got progress, why not continue? It'd be the best thing for united efforts. And I think this is — and if I point to any one thing that has given rise to civil rights movements, I think that the executive order during that time —

And I think we would have been in a heck of a mess had we gone another eight months to a year with that kind of thing, because there were certain departments in the armed forces also were discriminated during that time. And this was the time when we were having our worst fights in Northern Africa and Italy and Germany. See Hitler had moved some of his best army down in Northern Africa to eradicate people like the United States and Britain and France, have them down there. Because they wanted to make sure that they got a hold down there and all that. [If] they'd gotten that hold, then I doubt if we could have done anything with Hitler or Mussolini.

JS: Yes. Now you were saying that they — Oliver's — well, it sounds as though you are saying that Oliver Smith's effort was what? Had a sort of lasting importance, because of his continued connection with the Democratic Party?

MAXEY: Well, I think, I think the Democratic Party accepted him to the fact — at least they'd give time and space to some of his discussions. And I think this also brought around some close thinking at that time as to inclusion of other political groups. And I

know about the Republican Party, automatically, sure. This fellow's asking all these things, there's nothing wrong with it and it's not a Democratic thing, it's not a Republican thing, it's a human type thing. And it seems like to me that the first effort that I would say that we found that there was some public outcry against exclusion was the – during the time when there was some political pressure put on, either through the national or the regional government. For an instance, out of this I think which caused us after the war to get a civil rights bill in Portland and also civil rights in the state of Oregon.

JS: What did he make of your being a Republican? Did he ever say anything about it?

MAXEY: Oh, it was a big joke.

JS: Gave you a bad time?

MAXEY: Oh yes. Well, not only that, there were quite a few Blacks did the same thing. And I maintain that I had changed – well, I hadn't changed my registration but I had tried to register when I came to be 21, and I went to register and they wouldn't register me because I asked to register as a Republican in the state of Texas and they told me they didn't have a Republican Party in the primary. That I would have to – I couldn't register Republican, unless I would just register and would not vote in the Democratic primary – I mean it! That's what it amounted to – Democratic primary, which was most of the Southern states at that time. And this was in the 1940s.

JS: Hardly been able to participate at all.

MAXEY: Yes. And I just said, I don't know, I felt that I'd been denied that privilege in the state that was born and raised in, and I didn't see no reason why I shouldn't go ahead and register with whatever I wanted to. And I registered a Republican. And as I said I

don't think it would have made that much difference being a Black whether I registered Republican or not, or Democrat.

JS: Yes. I think I asked you before if you were aware of Monroe Sweetland and his...

MAXEY: Yes, yes. I knew the fellow Monroe Sweetland. In fact Monroe Sweetland and Oliver Smith were very good friends.

JS: I was wondering if there wasn't a connection between the two.

MAXEY: Yes, sure. Oliver Smith and Monroe Sweetland and I'm trying to think.

JS: And there's also Howard Morgan, is real active with Sweetland and everybody.

MAXEY: Yes, right. And, yes.

JS: Well they were – Sweetland and Morgan, in their efforts were clobbering the Republicans in the mid-1950s. By the mid-1950s they began to really win some elections with Wayne Morse. They drew Wayne Morse into it.

MAXEY: It's true. It's very true. And not only that – both of them took their lumps and bashing of being too friendly with Communists, too. They took their bashing on that.

JS: Especially Monroe Sweetland I understand.

MAXEY: Yes, right. Right. It's very true. And the reason why I remember that – I remember also that the attorney at that time who was legal redress chairman for the N.A.A.C.P. was also an acknowledged Communist.

JS: The attorney – oh, the attorney for the...

MAXEY: Yes. In the N.A.A.C.P., who was Goodman. I mean, I don't know if he announced it, but he never would deny the fact that he continued to fight for and stood for whatever they accused him of; being a Communist.

JS: Yes. I remember that very interesting aspect of Goodwin. And I know that when Monroe Sweetland was tarred with that too. It was certainly a part of what was going on.

MAXEY: Yeah, well, at this time, this wasn't hard to do. And, especially anytime that you found a Black person and white person getting along, regardless of the format was, if you wanted to destroy them, put them together as Commies. And that was a self-built-in destruction.

JS: Yeah. It worked all over the place. This is the McCarthy period.

MAXEY: And don't forget Nixon. [Laughs] You know, I had said a few words before about Nixon and my objection to him running on the ticket with Eisenhower. I'm almost sure both papers carried it at that time when he was running for – well, in fact the mention had been made that he's a possibility of the person that Eisenhower would choose as his running mate. And I flatly objected to it, because he had built his whole political empire on bashing people. And people disagreed with him, that's the first thing he'd call them.

JS: But what happened to you as a Republican when the Party, later on, the end of the 1960s – this is jumping ahead; I don't want to do too much of that. But what happened to you as a Republican when the Party went to Nixon, made him President, and Watergate came along, and then after Watergate, the Republican Party became more and more conservative? What happened to you in all this?

MAXEY: I flatly refused to endorse the man and I flatly refused to work for him. I flatly refused to work too much more in the local affairs, and that includes the state and the city. I mean, I picked my places where I worked. Because to me, it was a slap in the face. To me, for the person who had gone as far as denying, along with others in so many words, me a chance to register to vote let alone be a part of the whole national structure. And then I was going to work and be a part of that, I flatly refused to.

I did not change; I have not changed and don't intend to change my registration from Republican. I still carry a card in my pocket that I'm a Republican. And as far as I'm concerned, I spoke out against it, and I continued to, and I encourage Black people, if you are Republican, if you're Communist, if you're Democrat, or whatever, do anything but work for Nixon and his administration, because he fell just short of destroying any effort that Blacks had ever made, whatsoever, for improvement. And I don't think it was done by accident.

I think he found that assault — see Nixon's a brilliant fellow. And it doesn't matter whether you hit me intentionally or you hit me kind of unintentionally, if the same results is I'm hurt, and you continue to cripple me as you found out I'm hurt, I don't see why I should continue to try to wave your banner.

JS: Now he was doing this by the anti-Communists? By tarring Communists?

MAXEY: Yes. He started out early in California, picking a way that — he found and saw the way he was going to have to go up. He charted his route very carefully, and he found out the fastest way that a brilliant young attorney and young politician can go up to the White House and be the president is step on the most toes with the less opposition. And the biggest at that time was communism. And the biggest at that time at hand was try to see that the 25-30 million Blacks were not Communist. And it's not too hard, because most of them can't vote anyway, and all you can do is brand them as being encouraged to join the Communist Party. And the Communist Party was in — at that time,

if you belonged to the Communist, everybody said the first thing you know you'll be marrying a white woman. [Laughs] And a white man will be marrying a Black woman. Which to me was ludicrous.

JS: Yeah. A little nuts.

MAXEY: Yeah. You weren't leaving anything for people's individual thinking to do. I mean, if people do this, that's their business. I mean, it doesn't me bother whether a person come in my presence with one person or the other. I feel that what you and somebody has in common has more to do with you than their color than the texture of their hair. And I think the something in common would be whatever it is that you two have an interest in. And if you have an interest in that, hey!

JS: Yeah. The reality is more natural.

MAXEY: Yeah.

JS: How did you look upon Eisenhower in the 1950s, as President and what did it mean to you that this man became President, in terms of the status of Blacks? And did other — I'd like to know what you noticed of other people's response, Blacks' response, to Eisenhower.

MAXEY: It's funny, if you listen to me now, because you're going to say I sound like I am using the word in one sense that the Republican Party had shown me, in a lot of cases, that they were not going to stand up and be counted once people came out like McCarthy and Nixon and people like that, and the Bilbos in Mississippi and the Eastlands. It sounded like I would start off by being very paradoxical in my statements and that is, I would say that I think Eisenhower was the savior of a whole lot of things in the United

States, between you and I. And I think it would have taken a man who is almost totally ignorant of the United States politics, but a mountain of a man in the armed forces.

It was at that time we were needing that kind of leadership. And I don't know anybody, since Truman didn't decide to run for another term, if they'd have found anybody who had guts to accept it, but, "I will chart my own course." He made mention of the fact. "If you let me pick the people I want to work in my cabinet." That was the basis that he was accepted, that the Republican Party went after him very strongly, that he'd have a right to pick people. He said, "Well, the people I want are the people who have the most, and who can afford to work in the government, because that's what we need now. Not only United States is torn up, the world is torn up and we need to do something." And it would have taken a man like a general or an admiral to go in there and say, hey this is the only base that I'll accept.

You know Democrats courted him too.

JS: Oh, yeah.

MAXEY: Oh, Democrats thought they had him. In fact that was the party of Wayne Morse and Democratic Party. I don't know if – I mean the Republican Party. I don't know if you know that. Yes.

JS: Well, I knew it. I know it happens at that time.

MAXEY: Yes. And you see it was...

[End of Tape 9, Side 1]

Tape 9, Side 2

1994 May 3

JS: They – you say they turned on Morse. They being?

MAXEY: Reactionaries and Republicans.

JS: The Republicans?

MAXEY: Yes.

JS: And you said reactionaries?

MAXEY: Yes. Yes. By saying Wayne Morse is mad because they didn't give him the top job in the administration. So, he had been made to believe – you know he went over in Europe courting Eisenhower. Wayne Morse. I don't know if you remember that, or not or whether you've seen that, but it's true. And when he got Morse to sign on the dotted line to run as a Republican, it was then that Morse began to do his in-fighting because he thought that it was understood that if he got the man to be the head man – I don't know if he's expecting to be – I don't think he is expecting to be vice-president but I'd thought he'd have been, he's expecting to be high in the cabinet and he was not. And he split with the Republican Party immediately after that, if you remember.

JS: Yes, yes. Well, I've read his – about him, and I've seen of his statements on this, as he rejects, as he turns against the Republicans for particular reasons. Now...

MAXEY: Isolationism is one.

JS: And Robert Taft.

MAXEY: Yeah. Right.

JS: Now, Wayne Morse, at the – what is the source of your understanding this? Is this the talk from amongst the Republicans that you were connected with at the time?

MAXEY: Yes, it was. Yes. Yes.

JS: Anybody in particular who?

MAXEY: I would say most of the people that I talked with probably would have been people around my age at that time, and this would have been Bob Elliot, who was chairman of Multnomah County, and also he was state chairman of the Republican Party. Doug Elliot, and the younger group who was coming along at that time: Mark Hatfield, Bill Ireland, and people like that. People that I can't name a whole lot of them at this time.

But you see, I also had met with people like Rudie Wilhelm who was a young fellow at that time. But you see, Rudy Wilhelm was not allied at all with the young, young group of Republicans because of the fact that Rudie Wilhelm, at that time, was going after higher places himself. And he felt the strongest part of the Republican Party was the senior part, which was a little more conservative, a little more reactionary than the young Republican was. In fact, Wilhelm never did spend too much time in any affairs that the Young Republicans had at that time, whether it was a local or state or national affair.

People like, oh, Sig Undander – now, as I said, there's a lot of fellows that I met who was young Republicans. Sig was older man than I am, was, at that time, but I'm talking about the younger group that I associated with, and we felt free to discuss these things at our meetings. And we always had some of the older Republicans in there to bat us back when they thought we were getting too close to the line, whatever that means.

JS: Any instances that you can think of where they said, hey, you're going too far with this idea?

MAXEY: Yes. And, I remember one congressman here, Congressman Homer Angel. I don't know if you remember him or not.

JS: No, I've heard a lot about him.

MAXEY: Quite a fellow. Homer Angel continued to pound on the, the younger group as leaning more toward the left than the right, or more staying in the middle for that matter. [Laughs] And I don't know how you equate that with people's rights as being reactionary or you're going too much to the left because you want things that everybody else wants, which is free to choose for yourself and free to have a free elections, and stuff of that sort. It seems that the older group always wanted you to be allied with them and work with them, but don't be too pushy in wanting things that you think would be best for everybody.

JS: So, civil rights would be one.

MAXEY: Yeah, yeah. Civil rights was one of the main things. And me being Black, why shouldn't it be the main thing that I had in mind, and it was. And I see no reason why it shouldn't have been. It was a human thing to do, and it has proven so. And it was the thing that had kept me back as far as I'd been back, and after I got grown I often wondered why I, after all the hard works and things that I had done, why was it that I was still so far behind.

JS: You know this makes me think of Dorchester. That's a kind of a continuation of the Young Republican idea...

MAXEY: Yes. You're talking about Packwood, who was...

JS: Did you get connected with Dorchester and have some experience with Dorchester?

MAXEY: No. I was invited to take a part in that, but — I was told by a lot of the younger Republicans who really — this was a kind — and this was a funny thing because this was going to be a kind of a junior reactionary group [Laughs] rather than the old — people who just come out and say, well hey things have been good like this. We don't want to change it. If we're fooling around with civil rights, somebody's going to say you're associated with communists. You know. It seemed like Packwood came along at a time to refute people like — who was the Jewish senator?

JS: Neuberger.

MAXEY: Neuberger. Alright. Such young fellows like that. Packwood came along just in time to be not quite as bad as the older group, but to show that they were going to be different. And in being different, it means we're not going to shake the waters too much about things that mattered, like civil rights and job employment and things of that sort.

JS: They came along and said they were going to be different, but it was just a kind of a weak version of — different meant socially progressive.

MAXEY: That's right. That's right.

JS: But they weren't going to be too much so.

MAXEY: This is correct. And this is where Packwood got his power from. I'm sure you know that.

JS: Yeah. So you stayed clear of it. Who, in particular was, was clueing you in on Dorchester?

MAXEY: Nobody. [Laughs]

JS: Oh, I thought you said some of your Young Republican friends.

MAXEY: Well, I mean, yeah, we discuss these things openly. But I mean as far as clueing me and encouraging me, nobody did. I mean, I felt these were things that I would like to feel free to be a part of and to bring up – now, for an instance, they said, well now, we're going to Dorchester and here's what we are going to do. The committee decided this is what we are going to do. And this'll take too much of our time, the civil rights thing, so let's go for something else that is going to strengthen the Party. So I'm saying that if you're going to strengthen the Party, let's get a platform that all segments of the group can appreciate and be with.

See, when I started with the Republican group, far back in 1940s, I enjoyed it. I enjoyed the breath of fresh air and I'm sure they did, because they had never worked with any Black group at that time. And I happen to have been one of the few young Black Republicans. And I enjoyed it. But I did not enjoy saying, "Now, I tell you what now, and we won't lose face. We'd better not be too pushy." Now, this — is it right? This is what I'm saying: if it's right, it's not pushy.

I met some very nice older fellows. I tell you a fellow that I cherish his friendship and I'm sure if he walked in here, if he didn't call my name he wouldn't know me from Adam's apple. And that is Judge Holman. Do you remember Judge Holman?

JS: No. No.

MAXEY: Judge Holman was a judge lived in Oregon City. And he's a fair judge. He's appointed to the federal bench after he had been – what's the other judges? A district

judge or something of that sort. But anyway, I found him, now, he was an older fellow, and I found him refreshing. Nice fellow. And believe it or not, it is funny how I came to really associate with him, because I played golf. And so he asked me whether I played golf, and I told him, I said, well, I stay pretty close to Portland because most of the golf courses don't allow – wouldn't allow Blacks to play on the course. He said, "I tell you what you do. Let me set up a time and you bring somebody you'd be comfortable with, and I'll get a foursome and other foursomes," and he invited me several times. He's a member of the Oregon City golf club. And he invited me several times out there to play golf. In fact he paid the bill for us to play. And when we get through we just sit down and just have some nice conversation. And some would be disagreement, but we didn't fall out. And some would be indifferent, and we didn't fall out. And he had had quite a knowledge of the Pacific War, because he was an officer in the Pacific, and he had been around quite a few Blacks. And he had some reservations himself in places, but as I said, as one of the older fellows I'd say he was one of the nicest fellows I ever met.

And I met Morse, and I didn't take Morse as a liberal. The funny thing is until I met the man and had a chance to talk with him and find out that — he's never encouraged me to get away from the Republican Party, and when he, when he left. I continue to associate with the man. And to me he's a real nice fellow.

And, all in all, what I'm saying is I don't think that the people who fought against civil rights were feeling – if it wasn't politically expedient, I would not be against a certain thing, you know, whether it was civil rights or whatever it is. I think a lot of things that we voted for and voted against after the war could've been eliminated if we had just take civil rights out of it. The whole thing. Now, this has been my experience my whole adult life. Everything that has come up has taken a drastic change because somebody's thrown that in, either to impede progress or defeat it, or whatever. And this has been my experience, and if it's bad experience, or if it sounds bad, I'm sorry. That's the way that I've gotten it. Whatever comes up in – it would matter that we would show our face in adding doing away with the poll tax. That's the first thing. Course I don't know if you're old enough to remember that the poll tax.

JS: I've heard about it.

MAXEY: Okay, the poll tax deal was for real. And who was able to spend three dollars a year to pay poll tax? What was poll tax for? I've never been able to find out. Have you?

JS: Oh, it was supposed to indicate that you were a person of some means, and that was seen as a qualification for active citizenship. They said if this person's worth something, or anyway. You know, it's another way of looking at it.

MAXEY: Well – okay, then, that was as valid as the thing when you walked in to be registered, they'd ask you if you would lather a bar of soap and tell me how many bubbles was in a bar of soap. To show that you were qualified to register. Can you believe that? Can you believe that was done? If you don't...

JS: I thought you were making it up just now. [Both laugh] I'm serious.

MAXEY: I'll tell you – well, I'll tell you what, if you didn't know it was serious, you way behind.

JS: Yeah. It's, yeah, it's absurd and perverse.

I wanted to ask you something because I've been wondering about it. You had mentioned, and I think it was afterward, in our conversation afterward last time, that at that conference in Salt Lake City, afterward you were invited to the governor's, to dine with the governor. So I thought it would be good to include that as in an aftermath of the of this conference story.

MAXEY: Right now I would like to mention about four or five people that they invited me – in fact, one of his aides came and, and talked with Vivian McMurtry – and at that time Vivian McMurtry was president of the state Republican party. And she came to me and she said, “Charles,” she said, “would you, would you like to go up and visit the governor’s mansion?”

I said, “Sure I would.” I said, “This mean the group is going –.”

She said, “No.” She said, “I might as well as tell you I think why it’s done because the word has gotten out that they wouldn’t allow you to participate in the meeting here.” And believe it or not, at that time I was just young enough to do what I was told. And I knew because something bad could have happened to me. I wasn’t supposed to be in that meeting.

JS: Oh, you weren’t?

MAXEY: No. No. I had been voted as a delegate to that meeting. But when I walked in, the manager of the hotel and also the person who was supposed to have been in charge of whatever it was that gave people franchises to have meetings in the place, told [me] don’t ride on the elevator and don’t dine in the hotel. I wasn’t welcome. And...

JS: Okay. Just being – you weren’t really entitled to be in the hotel at all?

MAXEY: No. No, because when I drove up, I’m the first one in my party that walked up to the desk. And I put my confirmation for my reservation. “Are you registering? Are they with you?”

“Yes, they’re with me.” And he began to write out and register and I said, “But my name goes on there. I have a room.”

He said, “No, it must be a mistake.” And they got everybody who was possible, but the governor, I guess, and chief of police to come in and tell me that I was not registered there.

JS: So you stood your ground...

MAXEY: Yes, I insisted on staying there, and what had happened was that I did. I insisted on when I would eat breakfast I would go and eat outside of the hotel, but anytime there was a group luncheon I would insisted on eating. But I never would take the plate that I got, because if were at a table and they brought food to me, I let it sit there and offered it to somebody else. And I just arbitrarily ask somebody over there, "Would you give me your plate?" Because if nobody was afraid of being poisoned. [Laughs] I just flatly refused to eat what they brought me.

JS: And then that happened at the banquet when they brought you the first plate.

MAXEY: Yes. Yes. That happened at several banquets that they had. And in fact, wherever they were serving food and I saw somebody in line from the Oregon group, I would ask them, would you mind me barging in, without somebody be expecting what plate to fix for me. I'd just barge in and said, "Give me the next plate."

JS: Yes. You were really afraid.

MAXEY: Sure I was! No use me saying I was not. I was. And I participated in the meeting. I went to meetings. They told me don't ride the elevator, but I never did ride the elevator unless I rode it with some delegates from the state of Oregon. And I got some tough looks and all.

But you know, something came out of that. That people from the state of Mississippi, state of Georgia, Alabama, Texas and the like, more of them came to me and talked with me about that, than you can imagine. And during a meeting probably, if I'd get tired maybe or something, I'd probably go out, two or three people would follow me

out you know, and just sit down and talk with me. “Tell me,” said, “Hey, man you bigger than you are. You’re real big to take all this.”

JS: Now, how did they mean it?

MAXEY: Well, they’d tell me, said, “Now I’m from Mississippi where it’s understood that Blacks and whites do not meet together. And here across the Mason-Dixon Line we feel that this is automatic. People meet with whoever they desire. And since I’m here and that’s the rules here, it doesn’t bother me to be here with you, even though I’m from Mississippi. And in Mississippi you couldn’t eat with me.”

JS: They didn’t mean it in a, say, threatening or unfriendly way?

MAXEY: No. No. No, they didn’t. And as I said I got more actual solace from people from the Southern states than I did from people in the bordering states. Like Missouri and a state like Missouri, and people from Tennessee and Carolinas. No, all them stood their ground, as if to say well I better not be so heavy. And I got cards and things from people, you know, out of the Southern states.

JS: Emotionally, what was that like when they came to you?

MAXEY: It was, a thing that made me start thinking when is this a trick? And when they – what is this? And it came to me, you know, it’s a funny thing that these young people have come up under the hammer of their parents and their associates and they have reared and they have found that they are finding that $a^2+b^2=c^2$ and this fellow evidently knows that as well as I do. And I don’t see what this is all about. And I think that put a lot of thinking into a lot of them. I really do. I think it did a lot of thinking. Because I’ve gone to meetings where I had a chance to meet – and that was the only national

meeting that I had a chance to be in. But I went into meetings where I met people from different states. Many of them had heard about the incident.

JS: Oh really?

MAXEY: Oh yeah. And were surprised to find out I was the person, once they found out I was from Oregon. I was in my own home in Texas and I met a young fellow, oh, it must have been, I'd say about five to six years after that. And was right around the time that Brown versus Topeka. That was Topeka, wasn't it?

JS: Brown versus school of – Board of Education?

MAXEY: Board of Education. Topeka.

JS: Kansas.

MAXEY: Yeah.

JS: I guess.

MAXEY: And to find out that I was there and that I told the person that my native home is in Texas and they're surprised. "But I thought you were an Oregonian when we met you in Salt Lake City".

I said, "I was and I still am." I said, "But I'm born and raised in Texas."

"Oh, oh, I see. I see." And I never did get anything different.

And as I say I met several people since then. If I didn't meet people I met people who knew about the incident. Because it was about – it was a heck of a lot of people there. I don't know how many people were there but I figured somewhere between six hundred and a thousand at the convention. And there were only two blacks there. That

was myself and another fellow from Kansas. And as I said you can see that I'd have to be well remembered in the incident, I think. More so with me than the fellow from Kansas, because the fellow from Kansas wouldn't go anywhere without the people from his delegation. And I did. And I didn't necessarily care about working on a committee, because — and at the same time, if I felt like participating, I felt like I should feel free to.

JS: Did you feel elated when this resolution passed? When the conference resolved to accept the resolution from the Oregon...

MAXEY: I can't say that I did. I would have liked to. I think I did. But the thing that hit me: is this being passed just to pacify me, or is this going to help? To me, I told myself, yes. This is good. This is a token. This is a beginning. But as to whether or not that would be used to disenfranchise me further, or somebody else further down, I wasn't too sure.

JS: You mean that somehow it could be used against you?

MAXEY: Yeah. People said, well, you know, "You got a big showing here that people agreed that they voted for the resolution to pass. Then you keep harping about civil rights." You know, this is funny. This is funny. You can tell, you and myself an incident, and that incident happens and then you and I can go for a job that's different to this incident we came up with, "Well we just said back there that we passed a resolution that you have your full civil rights." But I was denied a job along with you. That's what I'm saying. So it didn't automatically happen that everything fell in place because of the resolution. Now I thought the resolution was a big step. It really was.

JS: Well, in looking back on it, what you did, you must have — I don't want to put words in your mouth, but is that one of the great moments of your active career?

MAXEY: Yes, to face that many people at one time and to vent my feelings. Yes, it was.

JS: You did vent your feelings at the time?

MAXEY: Yes. I did. And I think in venting my feelings – this didn't mean that I told people I know good, that I felt if that people were of a different color than me. I didn't do that. But I did vent the feeling that I hope this will be a stepping stone of thinking, of everybody. That you will not react to whatever situation is; that you will act when you see it's necessary to do so. And unless somebody does, it'll never happen. That's type of vent that I gave. And I felt that's the only way to do it. I couldn't tell anybody how angry it made me. There were mixed emotions each time I moved around. Whether it was fear, anger. I had to be a combination of all of that.

JS: When you moved around?

MAXEY: Yes. And I mean the....

JS: Circulated around and talked to people afterward?

MAXEY: Yes. And this was in the groups where we had a picnic where everybody was just open to socialize and we had another open socializing thing. In fact, we'd gone way up in the mountains to have this big barbeque. And it was just a whole afternoon. We went about 10 o'clock, stayed up there until almost dark. And you know, I never was lonesome for a moment because everybody was wanting – and anytime anybody got around me it drew a crowd.

JS: Is that right?

MAXEY: Yes. And we didn't have time to enjoy socializing unless somebody was talking about it. And I did not have too many people. I had several tell me, "Well, I'm just sorry; I was born and raised this way. And, and if I think over it, and see that it's different, I'll be glad to change. But I just do not see it working now." Many of them told me that.

And I told them I said, "Well hey, give me the privilege of being different, and being different, because I think I'm being treated wrong."

"Well maybe I'd feel the same way."

I said, "I'm sure you would, if you'd turn Black and get some kinky hair on your head, I'm sure you would."

JS: [Laughs] That really gave them something to think about, really. That's direct.

MAXEY: Yes. And as I said I have seen things, then or now, becoming angry about it.

JS: Yeah. It opened it up.

MAXEY: Well, I think it opened it up for me because I have been, after that, I mean, it opened the way for me to be real straight down the line with everybody that I met as an associate or a political associate, as such. If anything came up I said, well look, frankly when it's voted you automatically say it voted and the majority voted for it. That means everybody voted for everybody's participation. But now does it mean the same with me? And I had some tell me, "I think you're getting a little touchy now."

I said, "Well, hey, maybe I have a right to be. So, bear with me and don't walk a mile in my shoes. Just walk a few steps. [Laughs] Yeah. And see why I would be asking these questions or suggesting these things." And all in all I think some good came out of it.

JS: What was the governor's dinner like?

MAXEY: It was very good. It was informal. Let's see, there was Bob Elliot, from here. His wife. There was Clay Myers. Clay wasn't married then. There was myself. There was a young lady from Klamath Falls, [Marjorie Bullid?] I remember, that was in the group. I think Sig Unander was with the group, because I used his car the whole time I was in Salt Lake City. He had a brand new Mercury at that time and I had to live away from the hotel, and he let me to use his car.

JS: Oh yeah?

MAXEY: Yeah. I had transportation. In fact I had more than most everybody else had, because I had a brand new car to ride around in. [Laughs]

[End of Tape 9, Side 2]

Tape 10, Side 1**1994 May 3**

MAXEY: Oh, you were questioning me about the dinner which I'd been invited to at the governor's mansion. The first thing they did was, they had invited, I figure, about 25 or 30 people being from the state of Oregon out of our group and along with that a few people with the Northwestern states, and Idaho, Utah, and Nevada. I think those were the ones.

We first took a tour of the mansion and the grounds. And after that it was very informal setting. And they had a long table, oh, stretched across, looked like to me, from here across the streets where everybody just went and helped themselves to the food and brought back and just sit down and just had an informal chat. And there were a few comments made, and – but there was nothing formal, per se, about the meeting. And I met with he and his wife. I don't think they had any children. But it was, it was something to change. It was a change.

It was like being in a – I don't know. I'd figure the change that I had of that wouldn't be quite as bad as I might make mention of, but it'd be like you were in a storm and decided to go walking in cold water. [Laughs] It was different. It wasn't good, because you wondered – I didn't feel guilty, but I wondered how were people feeling that they were going out of their way somewhat to make me feel comfortable. I wish I could have felt comfortable, I really do. But I didn't.

JS: The event was for you?

MAXEY: What you say?

JS: The governor's dinner was set up for you.

MAXEY: Yes. For me and the other young fellow from Kansas. He was a young attorney. He'd just passed the bar.

JS: How openly did they set it up for you and this other guy?

MAXEY: You said what?

JS: How openly did they do that? Did they announce that that's what it was or was it just understood that that was it?

MAXEY: It wasn't announced from the floor. It was made mention of, the night after – let's see, did we have – it was made mention of note later at a public meeting that we had been invited up by the governor. That is the delegate – some of the delegates from Oregon, I don't know how they went about getting them, but some of the delegates from Kansas and some from Oregon, we met.

And it is funny because, here again, you find Kansas being just a border state and they didn't want to discuss it all. Not at all. I guess they'd made it up to be that way, but Oregon was very open about it. Any time it came up any way, I don't know if they did it because of me I'm glad, because I did not get any rebuking from anybody. I got some people who made remarks that I didn't think were exactly right, as if I was the cause of something being. Yes. I was the cause of it and the cause is real silly and that was because I happened to be different than anybody else there. Yes, it was. It was the cause and different.

JS: You – but it was hard to feel comfortable, at the meeting.

MAXEY: Yes. Yes, it was. And I don't see how I could sit here now and tell you that I was comfortable in the whole deal until I left there. I really was not. I was not comfortable eating. And in fact, I changed cafés every time I had a meal, because of that. I didn't want to get too familiar with what café I might go in and eat. [Laughs] And I'd go in usually with some delegation from Oregon.

And Clay Myers was one person that constantly would ask me, “Have you been to dinner?”

I said, “No, I haven’t been to dinner.”

“Would you like me to go with you?”

“Sure.” So knowing Salt Lake City – I had been in Salt Lake City and I knew Salt Lake City was quite indifferent about race mixing, because I’d had worked there for nine months. Yes.

JS: Relatively indifferent about race mixing?

MAXEY: Yes. Sure. Sure, at that time. I don’t know – because I know – the only place that I had eaten there, was the railroad station and the bus station. And other places I’d been refused, while I was working there.

JS: Did Clay know how afraid you were in going around eating?

MAXEY: I don’t think so.

JS: You didn’t talk about it with any of the others.

MAXEY: No. I’ve never told him that. I’ve never told him that because I would want him to believe now what he did was genuine that – he wasn’t doing it probably to just make me feel better because — he did, though. Yeah. It was the thing that if I were to have done over I’d want it and I’d like to see somebody else do the same thing. Nobody like to feel that they’re out there by themselves and...

JS: Yeah, that’s right.

MAXEY: And things are not going good. Yes. But, all in all, that was brought up time and time again. And I had never fallen out with anybody in the Republican Party in the state of Oregon concerning that, that I came back. I remember one woman brought up one night that she felt that we should put it to rest, and that it shouldn't always be brought up an incident what happened in Salt Lake City.

JS: Oh, really?

MAXEY: Yes.

JS: Oh? It didn't sit well with some people.

MAXEY: Yeah. This is true.

JS: What was Johnnie's reaction when you got home?

MAXEY: Oh. When I got home Johnnie told me she was glad that I didn't come back rather than to stay there and get a resolution passed. And, the — she'd been keeping up with it on paper. I called on the phone and I told her to keep up with the paper every day. And she was keeping up with the paper and believe it or not the Oregon delegation did a good job of giving a rundown of the meeting and making some mention of somewhere that I had been involved in something every day. And I thought that was kind of good.

JS: So it was news back home?

MAXEY: Yeah. Sure, sure, sure.

JS: Were your children of any age where they would understand what was going on?

MAXEY: No, no. My kids were too young.

JS: Do the kids nowadays, now, or did they subsequently learn about this?

MAXEY: Yes. I've constantly talked with them about it, and I've told them how I dealt with it, and told them now, "I'm not telling you to deal with it that way but I feel at the time that the way I dealt with it was the best way. And I wouldn't say that that would be the best for you now, but I do feel at the time that that happened. If I had to do again in different time I don't know if I'd react the same way."

JS: Do you know what their response to the story has been? What that has meant to them.

MAXEY: Well I think it's been encouraging to my kids, between me and you. I think all of them have felt that at the time that I did this, that the feelings were much deeper between the races than it is now, and that some good had come out of it and to perpetuate it continuing to get better, you'd have to deal with it in a positive way, rather than to back out of it and say, well if that's the way you want it I'll just do what I'm doing to my group and whatever you want to do, that's fine.

So, yes, I've discussed that with them, time and time again because they all have gotten grown, they've moved away and they've involved themselves – and they have come up with incidents where they have also had to stand up and take a stand.

JS: I wonder if we can talk about that. It would perhaps be a good continuation of this sort of thing.

MAXEY: Sure.

JS: Well, you may have one in mind. I was thinking of that school incident, but it would be good to know of more than one, of cases where these important matters arose in the experience of your children.

MAXEY: Sure. I think the experience that that affected my children more than anything, and I don't know how well I handled the deal, was busing. I was against busing to begin with. I was for integration but I was against busing. And I made it known at the school board meetings at the P.T.A. meetings in our individual schools or wherever. I made it known that I was strictly in for integrated schools, but I was not for busing.

And then if busing was going to be used, I would say, "Bring a load and carry a load." In other words, if you bring a bus load of Black kids to a predominantly white school, okay, then pick up a load of Black kids in the community you're bringing them from and carry them somewhere. Don't just say, well we're going to pick out 14 of the Black kids, which were handpicked (always handpicked).

They were the best students, among the best students, seemed the best behaved. Kids that could almost get along with the devil and were not always fighting and — I'd say the majority of them who were bused with my kids, did not like it as grown-ups today. They felt that they were victims; more victims than they were advanced.

JS: And that was because why?

MAXEY: Because they handpicked the Black kids that they carried these schools, and they never did carry over 12 or 15. And this left room for whatever white kids had heard at home to impose it on those Black kids in their schools. And those that hadn't been taught that were certain to being taught that once they went home and said, "Oh we got some Black kids in our school today."

And you'd be surprised to know the schools in Portland at that time did not have any Black kids or had never had Black kids in the school. And this gave rise to the idea of — I feel had a lot to do with Blacks being comfortable with Black gangs. I really do.

Because Blacks had to ride together; they had to sit together; they had to, more or less, take up for each other, because the white kids who –and this is no indictment on white kids or bullies. All kids of a certain age grows to be, would like to be a bully, whether you have the nerve enough to do it or not. If they find somebody they can push around they will start being a bully. And this started and a lot of the white kids where my kids went to school. And as I said, if I had to do it again I'd never bus a kid of mine. Integrated? Sure. Yes.

JS: Were there many other people who supported your attitude?

MAXEY: No, no. There weren't too many people – other than, that I remember. It's the fellow here now. He's a dentist. Doctor Lewis. They got him, myself, and about four others. We went to a broadcast in the station, one of the administration person – I can't think of his name now, he's still working with the administration. We went and we had about an hour or two discussion on the radio of our feelings and they got us pro and con. And I happened to be a person that was not in favor of busing. And there were some Blacks who weren't in favor of integration because of that. And there were some Blacks who was just loose.

So, what, what I'm saying is we went to discussion and then we had, out of that group, I think Doctor Lewis and myself were picked out, because he was in favor of integration, and he was one of the ones, along with myself, that disagreed with the busing. And then they got several whites and several Blacks that we had our discussion one other time. And they finally dropped that format because they saw that this is going to put – do a lot of serious thinking in people, you know.

Especially once you hear one Black saying that it is had an effect on my kids in a negative way in that they've had to take junk off of white kids that they wouldn't have to take of off some other kid; because they go to the teacher, first thing the teacher says, "Well, that is a Black kid. Well, if you hadn't a been doing something he wouldn't of hit you." You know, and stuff like that.

You get some funny stories that – the side that teachers take with kids. Because they knew Dr. Jones' son or the congressman's daughter or whatever, and naturally they had to show well, yeah they got into a deal with the Black kid, but there's a reason. The Black kid is touchy. Sure he's touchy! People make you touchy! People make you reactionary, you know, whether you wanted to be or not.

So, you can't be – it's a tough role to walk in, and that is the role of being Black and expect to know the social graces of other groups and you've never been able to get it because the discrimination has kept you away from it. Whether it's off of a job, or whether it was off of a school, or whatever. And just throw you together and they expect, well, it's going to work out. Sure it's going to work out if you put down rules and let children know that these are rules.

What it was – when integration started, it threw us together in order to prove that it wouldn't work. And nobody has said, "Hey. This is going to work, because if this child is given a seat, that is his seat. Now it's not for somebody that's come in and turned his chair over his desk because that used to be where he sat." The teacher had appointed that person to have that seat. I'm just giving you an example. A person had appointed a certain kid to raise the flag today, and some other kid come up and snatched it away from him, the other kid naturally would resent it. And if they fight, that's no more than natural.

So what I'm saying is that, you throw people into a situation and don't say, now, here are rules that everybody's got to follow. Now since these are rules, this means you, Cindy, you, Lucy, you, Mary, you, Hannah, or whoever. The rules go for everybody. The Black kids, white kids, Chicano, Indian, everybody. These rules are just rules. And I think that's the way that it was done in order to hold off as long as they did, that there would be no good getting along in the school...

JS: Because they didn't really set up, carefully set up rules to follow to make sure that things were on an equal basis?

MAXEY: If I had been appointed at that time to be a teacher, say in a fifth grade room, every morning for a long time, I'd almost have a reciting of a creed that we had made in getting along with each other. And this would have been in the form of Black, white, Indian, chief or whatever. I think rather than just say, well, yes, Mrs. Jones we have your son, and Mrs. Smith, you have a white boy and you have a Black boy, we're going to put them in here and they're going to learn to get along.

How are they going to learn to get along when in their home, everybody tell them, well what happened to your pencil? "I don't know. That Black kid stole my pen." That could have been told 9,000 times over because the kid's afraid if he told his mother he lost his pencil or lost whatever, she's going to get on his case. The easiest way I hear them talk about Blacks, we don't like Blacks at home anyway. "Well, the Black kid did it."

"How did you tear your jacket?"

"That Black kid tore it."

So what I'm saying is, I think we threw it together to prove that it wouldn't work. Prove that it would not work. And that was a point back to Eisenhower that you were mentioning to me. I don't know if I should bring him in now as to why I felt that he was a man that took a stand and I don't know anybody that could have been the president at that time who ordered out the forces. Why shouldn't he have been the man doing it? He had done it in the world war. And I don't think anybody else would have felt comfortable doing that. When he put those soldiers in central high school in Arkansas, and [Governor Orval] Faubus said that it wouldn't be. When he deputized state troopers in Little Rock and in Arkansas. I don't think anybody would have been – felt comfortable doing that but a man like Eisenhower. He's used to bossing folk. [Laughs]

JS: He knows how to use the Army.

MAXEY: Yeah, right. And I think when he said, "Hey, this is what you do." And I think the commander of that group that he told that, he told them he said, "Now, you tell those soldiers now, the other day they walked on the sidewalk and hit this girl or hit that boy

that were walking on the sidewalk. I want you to keep them off of that sidewalk when those Black kids are on that sidewalk going into the room.”

And when – I don’t know whether you remember an incident or not. It was an incident this soldier ordered this fellow had something going to hit one of the Black kids. “You’re not walking on the sidewalk with my kid! No nigger going to walk on –” [Laughs] and he told him to get off; he didn’t get on, and he hit him in his behind with his bayonet.

Now, his commander had told him, “Hey, this is your job.” If he’d told him, now I tell you what now, you walk along and try to keep him from hitting the kid. You heard what I said: “try”. But he said, “You are going to protect them to see that nobody harms them when they walk on this sidewalk.” That’s a command, isn’t it?

JS: Yeah, clear words.

MAXEY: And a demand. “I want you to – this is your gun, nobody else is supposed to have it. You’re not to shoot anybody but this to see that orders are carried out. Now, you know whether I mean to shoot it or not is according to how you’re being treated – you and the person that you are protecting.”

So I don’t care who the president would have been at that time, I don’t think they’d have had the feeling to feel that this is what I did, and I felt I was right in doing it and this is it. And I think from this, I think everybody else took off on it. That if I’m the commanding chief of the State. If I’m commanding chief of the school, if I’m commanding chief of the city, I’m that.

JS: In the case of the schools, do we have a situation possibly where actually they just don’t know how to set it up? You were saying that you think that it was set up to fail. Maybe they just botched it. Why don’t you think they just botched it?

MAXEY: If you were superintendent in a school district and you had been the superintendent of that for several years, and you want your job, if you had been the

principal of a school and you had been there several years, they say well – they tell you to let it fail without telling you. Now, okay when you call your faculty meeting you say, “Now, here’s what’s been passed down to us. And this is what’s expected of us.” Instead of saying, “This has been passed down to me and this is what I’m expecting of you. I’m the superintendent.”

JS: I know exactly what you’re saying.

MAXEY: “And since this has been passed down to me I’m passing to you. I’m expecting you to carry this out.” And then you, principal, you go to your faculty meeting, and you tell them, this is what has been handed down to you. And this is what’s expected of you. This is to not let a Black kid jump on a white kid and beat him up because he said the white folks didn’t like Blacks. On the other hand this means that you don’t let the white kid tell a Black kid, you can’t sit in this chair next to me because I’m not going to sit next to a Black.

JS: Well, were there instances of school administrators handling it in that way that you just mentioned? It’s – maybe call it subtle, but it’s not really very subtle – of saying, here’s what they are telling us we have to do, instead of saying what we have to do. Were there instances of, that you got to hear about, of where administrators took that, you know, that really sort of flaky approach; whatever term you’d use for it?

MAXEY: In Portland, yes. I know of incidents, and if it happened in Portland I figured it has happened everywhere, for that matter. And that is – incidents, and then teacher called up and said, well look, I’m not hired to raise – babysit these kids. I’m hired to teach them. And I cannot be responsible for their social getting along with other kids. I mean there were all kinds of things. Yes. There were incidents of passed down, of all natures that they could say, well – yeah. And until the time came that they were breaking federal

law, and was proven to the teacher, you're breaking a federal law if you don't see — if you don't take care of the welfare of these kids.

The playground monitor. When you're out on the playground, you're the monitor out on the playground, you're to see that kids don't knock each other in the head with sticks. You're to see that a 13, 12 or 13 old kid don't go and jump on the back of a seven year old kid. That there are rules and then they're to be handed down in steps. Is handed down to the superintendent.

Superintendent passes it down to the — I mean it is handed down from the federal government. And it was handed down to the schoolboard. The school board passed it down to the principal. The principal passed it down to the teachers. And teachers pass it down to the kids. And also the schoolboard, the superintendent and everybody is to meet with parents and let them know what is expected. And not refuse to have these town hall meetings. You're supposed to have those meetings.

JS: Oh, really?

MAXEY: Yeah. You're supposed to have them with your teachers; you're supposed to have with the school board; you're supposed to have them with everybody.

JS: Oh, and they didn't do that in places?

MAXEY: Not too much so. Teachers' unions stepped in a lot of times and wanted to — said that you were including them babysitting as well as being teachers. See there's every excuse in the world when people don't want to do. And when people find out that it is easier if everybody does what is been passed down, and appeal it. Forget it. And, as I said I don't — it's a miracle as to how the civil rights bill got passed nationally. And by state by state, knowing how deeply entrenched prejudice is. It really is a miracle.

JS: That is remarkable. Well, what else happened to your children in their experiences in school? What are – you know – really important an important part of their development and your family history.

MAXEY: Okay. Then the next was the clubs. The girls clubs in, in Jefferson High School. We had a counselor, head counselor there was Mrs. [Flagel?] She still lives. I see her every once in a while. She got to be way up in her 90s. She passed down an order, herself, that there will be no Black girls given membership in girls' clubs. See they did away with girls' clubs in Portland. I'm sure you're aware of that. They did have girls' clubs in Portland schools.

JS: They were sort of like sororities or something?

MAXEY: Yeah, yeah. It was, it was kind of a stepping them up, you know. Letting them know this type of thing instead of being a sorority is kind of a club and you can go to college and be getting into sororities. It was teaching them the common courtesies of young women coming up, which I thought was good. But it was a handed down rule that Black girls were not members of the clubs. And I understand it, it went around to the other high schools of Portland, the same thing. That it was handed down that Black girls didn't get to be members. And finally, they found out that we fought it so that they just had to give up having clubs in the high schools.

JS: Oh, really?

MAXEY: Now I understand they don't have high school clubs now.

JS: So, just to spite you, they cancelled them out?

MAXEY: Well we fought to cancel them out if they weren't going to admit them.

JS: Oh, is that right?

MAXEY: Yes. Because I mean you can say all day, “You’re supposed to admit them.” They say, “We’re NOT going to admit them.” You can – back and forth, back and forth. So we had to fight to destroy the clubs.

JS: Yeah. Had your — any of your daughters tried to join a club?

MAXEY: Yes. This it. Both of my daughters, my older daughters, they’d given them a charter to, to start their own clubs, Black girls’ clubs. I was against it and many other Blacks were, and we fought it. Because if you teaching something that’s good for young teenage girls, it should be good for young teenage girls; not just white girls. And this was true.

I remember bringing this up on the floor when we had the principal, members of the school board, and some parents; we met at Jefferson High School. I told them I had never seen a more democratic place in my life than on a Friday night when we go to football games. And let a Black boy make a touchdown. Oh, the most joyous thing you’d ever seen. The whole school is united. Everybody’s jumping up and hugging everybody and slapping hands, and saying, “Hey, look what we...”

[End of Tape 10, Side 1]

Tape 10, Side 2

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MAXEY: To be the largest Black population in any high school here, for a long time. And they dominated sports for a long time. I don't know if you're aware of that.

JS: No, that was before my time, a little bit

MAXEY: Yeah. Okay. Do you remember [de Silvia?] that was coach at Jefferson High School?

JS: No.

MAXEY: Okay. [Waldorf?] who is – a long time I understand he'd been, he coached Pacific University for years after he left Jefferson High School; and then after him came – then people getting to say, "Well hey, something's happening here." And they began to figure out, to let some professional Blacks who were teachers or who were doctors or whatnot, this'd be nice if you bought a home in our neighborhood, because at that time even Black doctors were not welcome to live in certain neighborhoods. So they began to say, "Well, we're going to integrate a few, but letting, seemed like pretty nice Black parents. Let some Black kids come home and we'll get some football players and get some basketball players, get some good track people."

See when I came to Oregon – I never shall forget, who is now Dr. Reynolds – you know Dr. Reynolds here?

JS: Yes. I've heard of him.

MAXEY: Okay. Him and his brother, I think, might have been two other Blacks on the football team, or any sport, those are the only four or five Blacks that I know that participated on anything. And as I said, the Black housing situation was to encourage

most Blacks to move within the neighborhood where they'd be going to Jefferson High School. And that was down where the Coliseum is, and down around Russell, and over in North Portland here, and probably over as far as Boise Elementary School. And some over as far as Union Avenue at that time. And where most Black kids go to school is where most Black kids wanted to go to school because it's kind of comforting in groups, when you find out you're not wanted. And as I said again, I think this was a pretty easy way that Blacks were forced to associate together and believe that being in gangs was a little more comfort than otherwise.

JS: Oh yes. There's a natural aspect to it.

MAXEY: Sure. Colored, we look alike. Hair, we're somewhat the same. And having the same thing against us is the same. So I am saying, I'd like for you to talk with somebody else, too, about Jefferson being dubbed as the School of Champions. I'm sure you've heard that.

JS: Oh, I haven't. No, that's new to me.

MAXEY: School of Champions. Yeah. You had the [Renfros?]; you had the — what is it? Left handed, he's an attorney now, that was quarterback. He was a white boy. But anyway, you had your best athletes from the middle 1940s on up to 1960. Jefferson High School dominated. Sure. But as I said, and right now, the boy that went back to national N.C.A.A. [National Collegiate Athletic Association] playoffs with Arizona? Was that — Arizona State, I guess it was. The basketball player? What is his name? The Black kid?

JS: I'm not very good at this.

MAXEY: He was so good. But anyway, go now to Wilson High School. Go now to most of your high schools that are in the outskirts of Portland and 50% of the Black athletes don't live in the area.

JS: They're imported?

MAXEY: Yes. And they open up – I don't know if you knew this or not. There were boundaries, that if you finished a certain elementary school, you were appointed to a certain high school. They fought that and got that out, because the fact that nobody else was – had any, any, any chance to get any state recognition, because of the fact that all your Black athletes were going to Jefferson High School. And after that the next were Benson. The next were Washington High School. Those three high schools dominated. Ask anybody and they'll tell you that.

JS: Were – eventually, there's a reaction in the 1970s against integration and there's a reaction to it. And a group of Black leaders begin to call for the opposite; for Black schools in – you know, that are equal and – there is a really turn-around and I heard this from, in particular Jonathan Newman, and after he had – he was one of the people who strove the hardest to get integration going and a plan for integration in Portland. And then after that, they had succeeded to a certain extent, then there's this reaction of wanting it to turn it around and go to Black schools again.

MAXEY: This is true.

JS: Were you watching this go on? What was your perspective on that?

MAXEY: Yes, and it's still going on. Would you believe now it's still going on...

JS: Well, I'm not surprised.

MAXEY: As far as colleges are concerned? Did you see that...

JS: I've been noticing that.

MAXEY: Do you know about the two schools in Mississippi? Jackson State and some other school there. And the reason being — it's easy to say, now that you have integration, why would you want to continue to maintain the Black schools? You got to remember you are turning out some — you're sending to college some immature young women and men, both Black and white. And socially they are just not being adjusted going to majority of the white universities. And they are not building a social pattern for themselves in the college community.

But you can go, and you should do this sometime — just go uninvited, probably take me with you. I'll take the trip with you. We'll go in the South and we'll visit a Black campus and let it be known that that's what we're doing; we're making a survey. And also then go from there to the big state universities, or some of the big universities in the state, whether it be S.M.U. [Southern Methodist University] or Baylor or some of the big schools in the state of Texas. And see what you have in that college community. And you'll find out the social life is almost demanding different.

And you're seeing that here you're hoping to turn out some of your leaders for your nation. You're hoping to get them out of your big university. And the biggest university would be your white university. Then and compare them with what you see in the Black university and see the leadership that Black kids are automatically taking over in the Black universities and the ease of which seemed like things are going on in the Black university. And watch the same thing in, in the white. And see, don't you think there's something lacking there?

JS: Well, for me, I mean, my own attitude is that I really like to see a mix of all of these things happen.

MAXEY: I do too. I do too.

JS: But getting back to – I guess I haven't really set up a problem, partly because I don't know what the problem is. I don't know how to really make a question out of it. I just know that I'm supposing that this is quite an experience for many people or this is a turning point, or something, after some people have really striven to, to really, create an integration and then it just falls apart and it just turns against them...

MAXEY: Seems like you're tearing down what you built.

JS: Yeah.

MAXEY: I agree.

JS: And for some people that's big crisis and a big experience.

MAXEY: It's a slap in the face for people who fought for it.

JS: I think that that's what — the way he felt about it. From certain people. And he identified the people, and I don't remember who he was saying – Ron Herndon – I don't know who is said but, and I don't really remember the names, but...

MAXEY: I think Ron Herndon would probably be one.

JS: It's something that I think we need some understanding of, and I think you're starting to give us some understanding of it, by talking about what was not working in it.

MAXEY: Okay. And a good person would be, would — I think probably Ron Herndon would be a person you would probably be expecting to do this, but to talk with me, a person who had done all their formal education in a totally Black school, I don't think you'd be expecting it. And I think you're getting the same thing from me that you'd get from Ron Herndon and I think for the same reason. And that is that the — okay, let's go with eligibility.

Let's say that the G.P.A. [Grade Point Average], which started off with being a C+ for entrance into a university. Okay, let's say that we found 10 white kids with G.P.A.s C+ and above. Okay, let's go over here to the Black university. Let's say that we found that we brought 10 kids here out of high school that, to come up to the C+ G.P.A. in order to be eligible to play football or stay in the university, you'd probably have to turn off about eight of them. And the reason being that culture is the difference.

No use of you telling me that a boy who finished S.M.U., or finished Baylor shouldn't be all around higher in his learning than me, who finished Texas College with a Bachelor of Arts degree. And culturally — okay, we never did have a daily newspaper in the home. Over here where this kid was C+ and up, had newspapers, magazines, periodicals, radios, T.V.s, cars. It's something, and I cease to make mention of this, I am saying there should be an adjustment made here tutoring.

If you don't want to do it for the ordinary student, you say I like the Black athletes. If you find a Black athlete here who barely carries a C at the best, and to round him out with a C in all of his studies you got to give him some tutoring. You're going to have to give him some extra work. You're going to have to teach him a study habit. And the reason why probably doesn't know the study habit, he didn't have all these things I said over here that, that, that the white kid has at home; he has newspapers, he has periodicals, he has — his father's a doctor, his father's associating with lawyers or politicians. And there should be some special tutoring over here.

Who's responsible for this? I don't know. I don't know. I have in my mind but I don't want to say this, because people say well, you just want me take money out of my pocket and spend to bring you up. Well, I've been here for how many years? All the 77 years that

I am old, and I've had to live out of whatever I've made and with the starting being staggered. Okay. I was put in the outside lane in track, in that I – and the rule was I couldn't get out of my lane. The white kid was put in the inside lane and they say, I'm running the full 40. Well what is he running in the inside lane? If you've got seven lanes, or 10 lanes they're longer than mine. Instead of giving me a staggering start up this way, you gave me a staggering start back here. You say, well now, since you're Black, you've got to be 50 yards behind him, but you can't get out of this lane. My analogy is stupid sounding to you. I know it is. [Laughs] Because...

JS: No.

MAXEY: Actually that has been my life, you see. And to tell me that my kids should be the same –.

I think the Black community missed something and the white community is still missing it. And that is the parents need to be worked with. I have never gone to a white school. All my formal education was Black. And yet every job I had, I had to come up and match with whatever the job required. "Well, you don't come up to the requirement."

So when it came that we were losing the war in Northern Africa, Roosevelt came up with an idea along with top man in his group, I don't know if you knew this or not, was Henry Kaiser. Of Kaiser who had the shipyards.

JS: Yeah.

MAXEY: And his encouragement to him was his war cabinet deal that he had citizens to be on. And his word was, I can get as much work out of a Black dude who cannot sign his name, or a white dude who can't write his name because he's from the backwoods of Georgia, Alabama. I can put them on a job and get the same deal. But now here's how – well tell me how you're going to do it? Kaiser said this: in all war industries, who were doing federal jobs, went to this mass production.

Okay. Maxey your job would be every day you will thread these bolts. Thread these bolts. In other word the machine won't go any further than five threads. Jim you, you can't read and write either. Now you going to work on this machine. You're a poor white man. I'm a poor Black dude who doesn't know how to read or write. The both of us did the same job if you'd a put a Ph.D. one each one of these jobs.

Mass production. What did you do to do that? You recognized the physical equal that each one of us had. And you also recognized the brain thought difference, or the reasoning difference between us. In that, maybe I could not reason as much as the machinist or the mechanic who is going to fix my machine if it breaks. We got to get a different man with a different learning. Here's a man who went to college. Here's a man who studied machinery. So when that machine breaks down on Jim and Charles, don't let them fix those machines because they haven't been trained to do it. We got them on mass production. And they know exactly what they're going to do. So on up the line.

Here's a man — don't put him on this job lessen he can read and write. Their labor's got to go on these things. You can read and write and I can read and write. If we'd've been brought up like that, like what we did to win World War II, we'd be way ahead. Now I don't know if that analogy makes sense to you.

JS: Well, I've thought a lot about those things, and exactly those kinds of things. And, you know, I really have, I really share a lot of your ideas. I think that actually intelligences — there are different ways of measuring intelligence and if you take a person who doesn't have very much experience and a person who has had a very, what you call sophisticated kind of experience, that does not mean that faced with, in decision making and so forth, that this is a lesser intelligence over here.

MAXEY: No. Given a chance.

JS: It is a different culture. And, well, I've always felt that culture has to be taken into account, if you're going to be realistic about it.

MAXEY: And if you don't, then – okay. Now you say well, Maxey, what do you think? I am saying, okay, Maxey has a Bachelor of Arts degree. I think Maxey would be a fellow who would be nice to elevate into another plateau. In other words, he has associated with, been forced to associate, and those who can't read and write have been forced to associate with him because they got all live on the same street; they live in same economic plateau, whether you like it or not. They've been forced to because of, they're the same race.

The doctor's Black. Sure. He's supposed to buy a home where the other Blacks live. That's Dr. Unthank. Did you ever hear about him being invited out of the neighborhood where his home was?

JS: Yeah.

MAXEY: Sure. It's true. Now, don't you think that his kids – intelligently, this kid here who can't read and write has a chance of being just as intelligent if he had a chance, as Dr. Unthank's kids would be. But you don't measure Dr. Unthank's kids. "Well, he's a doctor. His kids should be pretty intelligent." And they might not be. [Laughs]

So, I am saying, I feel that we have been caught in a dilemma that is getting better and the reason it's getting better I think people are recognizing the fact that it means more to the businessman to train people to do a certain job that they're qualified in doing and train them to do that when they come to work. "Well, okay, I see here where you filled this out. You don't read too well and your figuring ain't too good." Well, don't put that man on that kind of job unless you're going to train him further.

So now, who's going to pay for this? I don't know, but we got a condition here that we got to correct. And where we going to start?

JS: Well, if you take people like Kaiser, they thought they used their rationality to its maximum. And they just operated in a more practical way. And...

MAXEY: For an instance, when you mentioned Kaiser – I didn't mean to cut you off.

JS: Yeah, that's alright.

MAXEY: Let me show what they did. Okay. When they had me to fill out a blank when I was hiring out for the shipyard, they asked me what department did I wanted to work in. I filled out I wanted to be an electrician. Then they wanted my qualification. When they found out that I had been to college, they put me on jobs that they figured that I could learn more than many others, that – white and Black. And consequently when – the reason why I maybe quit the shipyard –

Okay. But you got to deal with the human mind. I mean, Kaiser could put all those programs there, but when he had his lead men, he had his foremen, he had his superintendents those people are still human beings. Okay. Now, when it came time, we were hired with, "When you get advanced, you're going to get advanced on the type of work you do and your seniority." Now that sounds reason enough for anybody. But it wasn't. It really wasn't.

Because when it came to me, they came to me and they told me, they said, "I wanted to tell you the foreman leaving out, that I'm leaving, I'm going to be superintendent. And this boy that I'm putting in my place here, he's going to be lead man. And he's the lead man because — Maxey got to understand we have some whites here wouldn't work with you. You got to understand that your age, too. You're a little young for people to take orders from you." [Laughs]

You know, there's little hidden things that they can bring out that try to reason with me, that "This is why we're going to put this fellow, Penny — of whom we gave to you over two years ago to train when he came here from Peachtree, Georgia; you trained him. We had you train him, teach him tools. You taught him how to go check out tools. You taught him what to do when he got through with them, he'd clean them, he carried them back put them in toolshed. You checked them back in." But now, I had — at that

time I think I was 24 or 25, but they told me, they said, "The whites ain't going to work with you." They said, "You're too young. And your mannerism is not as such." [JS laughs] Well, you know, this is what I'm saying.

JS: Yeah. The interesting...

MAXEY: Now, if they realized this...

JS: Go ahead.

MAXEY: And they saw where I filled out a form that I did have more education than they had, so when I got up and said, "Well look, I'm not going any further. You can give me my pink slip." And they had kangaroo court of me and tell me about, brought me in with subordination and that I was hindering the war effort and all this stuff. Well, I am saying...

JS: They did?

MAXEY: Yeah. Oh yeah, oh yeah. "Then why then can't you give me a job to train on like you did everybody else?"

"Well you haven't had the training. We found that after Penny had learned the rules here of tools and all, that he was able to – we found out he had a very good aptitude." Which is possibly true, you know. But, at the same time, he just worked right along with me and behind me until he learned from me. And they advanced him.

And when they found out I was going to quit rather than do it, they offered me then to go on another job and train on the job. Why didn't you do this at first? If you found out, with the education, you don't kill this dummy here, you made Maxey a dummy, because for two years you've worked him here and he had possibly could have learned

something that he'd been more important. So, what I'm saying is, I don't know. I really don't know.

JS: There're the other rules. They knew a couple of the rules; they didn't know them all. There's another rule: it's that you don't get to keep your good labor if you mistreat them and humiliate them, and that sort of thing.

MAXEY: That's right. Somebody should have been forward thinking. "Here, how we discriminate against that sucker? Just continue to discriminate against Maxey right here, but at the same time once we find out that he does have a little – has an aptitude that he can be trained for something better, let's ease him out of here and put him someplace else." [Laughs] "So you can bring these fellows along here say, well, and each time we get one, if he has the aptitude, this fellow, yes, we can teach him like we had Maxey do this fellow. Just bring him say, 'Hey now, here, this is a chisel.' 'Oh yes, I know what chisel is.' 'But here's a chisel you use for certain jobs. And here is the punch. This is the hard steel punch and this is the white steel punch, this is the iron punch, or whatever.' And teach all that stuff and say, 'Well, okay, Maxey, I'll tell you what. We'll give you a chance to, if you like, we have some more jobs open if you'd like to sign on, and you can – this will be an advancement.'" And it was. Advancement in pay, I think about 15 to 25 cents advanced. Sure I would have taken it!

So what I'm saying is, I think we have used our labor to be our biggest police. Labor is that a white refused to work with a Black. A company is that the whites saying they ain't going to work if you hire this Black kid to work along with us. It's something that somebody could've done, or somebody should gradually do. I don't understand it. I mean, that's not my field. I don't have education to that effect to be a psychologist or a sociologist or what...

JS: Yeah. Part of it is historical reality. It was too new for them. They were finding their way sometimes too slowly. You'd just like to see, in situations like that where somebody

has the nerve and the initiative to take a chance and do something new, like promoting a Black in that situation without this, the unfairness and the fishing around.

MAXEY: Yeah. Or making a fanfare one way or the other. Yeah. I agree with that. And I'll tell you something else, if you have noticed if management will take you, I can't read and write, you can't read and write, and they put us together and demand a certain decorum of the two of us. We would start getting along, drawing our pay, thinking nothing of it. And when there's the job done, "Hey will one of you fellow come here and do so and so?" And I don't think it's the – you'd have to look up and say, "Hey, the Black fellow, you come over here. Hey, one of you fellows come here and do this for me."

I think you could do that in the expectation where they are fitting in because their payday comes from somebody that wants them to fit in and produce. And since we're producing, you and I will have more in common than you'll ever think. And once we get that something in common, our colors won't fade, but our animosity will, toward each other.

JS: Yeah. There was something that you had talked about before that I would like to get into the history, before we finish. That is the very interesting experience to hear about of the – of what is distinctive about the discrimination that you encountered that you came to recognize here, in the Northwest, in Oregon, and so forth. What was different about the prejudice and discrimination? The prejudice that you ran into.

MAXEY: Subtle. Subtle-ism. Instead of signs. Never shall forget, I went into a café and the young fellow that used to work for me, he and I had been barbering for about two or three years, so we decided we were going up in Umatilla. They were supposed to have been...

[End of Tape 10, Side 2]

Tape 11, Side 1**1994 May 3**

MAXEY: And we left early that morning, and we decided we wanted to stop and eat, and we stopped at a place to eat. And nobody said, no sign in there saying we reserve the right to serve anybody we want. Didn't say, we don't serve Blacks. We went in; we ordered; after a while – there was a whole lot people, seemed like people were going fishing or going hunting, because it was early in the morning. And it seemed like they were a little slow getting to us. We paid not too much attention to that.

But when the young lady came, she brought us some water, and she took mine and kind of slashed it on the table and did the same thing to this fellow. And I asked her, I said, "Would you give me a napkin or something, I wipe –."

"Oh, I'm in a hurry; I'll get to it later."

Now, no doubt there's been some discussion on that or something. So by the time she brought our food it still wasn't moved. So when she brought my food, I asked them to bring me eggs scrambled very soft. I said, very soft, I said, in fact if they pour, I'd rather have them that way. My eggs came and I put a fork in them and they all would come up with it. And the other fellow had a chicken feather in his eggs.

JS: Oh really. Now what year, about what year was this?

MAXEY: This was in – back 1952, 1953. But I brought that to say subtle discrimination I think is the thing that most of us haven't taken under consideration. And I think it is the deepest and hardest kind. For me to say, "Well, Jim, we're going to have dinner but I'm just not used to eating white folks out. I would invite you to eat with me but, really I just couldn't enjoy myself." Now that's direct, and that's as harder discrimination as a person should – and is deeper insult as a person should put.

But to say, "Jim, I'm going to have a bit to eat and I don't think you like what I'm going to eat, and for that reason I'd rather not eat with a white person since you might make fun of what I'm eating and something." But I'd find a way to give a subtle, get

around it. Rather than to say, “Well, I don’t have much to eat today. I probably would be kind of ashamed for you to see what I’m eating of whatever.” I think it’s the things that we use that we just don’t tell ourselves truth about.

That this young lady bringing that glass and dashing it down where the water spilled on the – was a little hidden stick that I was hit with. And I think his food – who and though he made mentioned it he said, “Young lady, would you do me a favor? Would you carry this back, says, that’d be a feather here,” he said. Came from someplace.

And I told him, I said, when she went back, I told him, “If you eat that food you’re going to do more than me, because I will not eat food where I believe that I’ve been insulted.” And I didn’t eat mine. I really didn’t. And we left with that. And we paid for that food, rather than to get a humbug.

JS: I don’t think of that as very subtle discrimination.

MAXEY: Well, I think...

JS: That’s a degree of crude discrimination.

MAXEY: It is; it’s crude but it is subtle to the place to where anybody could spill a little water. You know.

JS: Yeah. Not really, but anyway. [Both laugh]

MAXEY: Oh yeah, but I mean, you know. And probably accidentally spilled the other. But, to say, well look, if she’d have walked up and said, “Well, my manager told me not to serve you fellows because we don’t serve Black folks here.” Now that’d have been direct. And rather than to say something – well now, maybe we can do this and they’ll tell somebody else and sooner or later they’ll tell Blacks, well don’t go to there to eat

because they ain't – they going to slash water or put feathers in it or something of that stuff.

So I think people, I think people tend to do the least resistant, if they don't want to create a scene. And if they don't mind creating a scene, "I wish you Black fellows get out of here because I –" now if they thought they had the backing of the rest of the whites around there, that's probably what would have been said, you see. But to do it this way it's more subtle. And I think it's something more subtle than this, but then you get accused of nitpicking. "Why that's nothing."

JS: Oh, I – It's – yeah.

MAXEY: Well, you mean. "You see that, you see the girl is busy. She had all these people lined up here." And you can get accused of nitpicking. So that's the reason why I said subtle.

JS: Yeah. It's about equally ugly.

MAXEY: Yes, it is.

JS: Maybe it's uglier.

MAXEY: Yeah. So those are some of the things, and as I said, I've gone places – for an instance, I've gone to by a car. And the guy come on out, "Well what kind of car you looking for?"

Said, "I don't know." Said, "I'm just looking and trying to get some prices."

"Well do you have money enough to buy one?"

"I don't know! Is that a good question to ask?" But you see right away I've been hit on so much that I'll take that as an insult. I really will.

JS: That sounds like an insult?

MAXEY: Yeah.

JS: Yeah.

MAXEY: But I tell you, you'll get that. And I'm not to find another white man to go there with me to see if they say the same thing to him. I'm not. But you asked me about some incidents, I was just giving you some. And it's things like this that I wish didn't happen because it causes you to feel — and I believe because I've had the experience and I think it's because I've worked around white people who were as good as any person I've ever been around — to keep me from being any different to what I am. That they know that some people are human being and some of us act like dogs and don't mind acting that way as long as we can insult the next person.

So I'm here to tell you that if there weren't some people who thought it is nice to do this, or it's right to do this, then I'd have a lot of white people I wouldn't think too well of. But I have a lot of them that I think were real nice people and have been real nice people.

JS: What was your experience in how were you handling it in the 1960s? The civil rights movement progresses; the war becomes a factor in everything; and toward the end of the 1960s we're in a period of violence. We have the assassinations...

MAXEY: That's the worst part of it.

JS: And the assassinations and how — what was your experience going through all of this?

MAXEY: That has been the worst part of my life when it comes to thinking of integration. It really has been. Because it was open season on your hurts, or my hurts to you; whether it was Blacks to white, or whites to Blacks. It had gotten to the boiling point to where Blacks were reacting, and this was a thing that a lot of whites really wanted to happen so they could say, "You see. I told you that." Blacks began to fight back physically, and they began to hurt some people; people began to hurt Blacks; there began to be national assassinations. And this was a troubling time with people like me.

And other people, many other Blacks probably said, "Well, this is just one of those times." It was troubling to me because of the fact that I had gone through this with, as a youngster just getting out of school trying to make a life for myself in my young married life and getting my family going pretty good, and up until the 1960s my kids began to get out of school. And here I'm turning them loose into a world as bad or worse than the one I came out of; came into a world of hatred.

And where I'd come up into a brazen society of saying, "You don't do it because you're Black." Mine was, my kids are coming out of school now; they are getting jobs, they are asked to get jobs, and they are being refused those jobs on subtle turndowns. On, "I could hire you but you wear a ribbon in your hair and we don't hire people that — we would hire you but if we hire you, and you decide to wear your ribbon you might come back on us and say we discriminate; we'd lose." You see it's all of this.

If I'd turned out five lawyers instead of just ordinary kids out of school, they still would have been confronted with everything it had to be legal.

JS: But what were some of the — a couple of the cases, or some of the cases of the kids being turned down?

MAXEY: My oldest daughter, I remember talking with Bob Hazen, with my oldest daughter, my second daughter, both of them came out of high school and my oldest daughter didn't particularly care to go to college. She wanted to go to business school. And she had gone to Northwest Business School, she and my second — well, my second

daughter had to also, she started to college and had to come out because she had asthmatic hay fever and, and first one thing and another, and she found out that she just wasn't going to be able to do it.

And I talked with Bob Hazen about – I remember meeting him, through, you know, Republican Party, and asking him about hiring some young people – yeah, let's think about that. So I was asking I said, "Well I have a couple daughters. I was wondering –."

"Well," he told me first, "Charles I think we're going to start off by hiring some Black fellows now. We'll hire some Black girls later. But what we wanted to do is, probably, it's going to be harder to place Black fellows on jobs, than it would be to hire Black girls." And it turned out to be the opposite. Because in the first place, the moment you hire Black fellows and the white girls get friendly with them, then they're getting ready to date these Black guys. So you got that to deal with. And this was the thing that I was dealing with. And I thought Benjamin Franklin would've been the only person, would have been like that, but my daughters had that problem.

One of them got a job with Mobil Oil Company down here right below St. Johns where they got their tank farm down there. And it was a very good job. But it got to be kind of a nagging type of thing. The white girls of accused my daughter of being over friendly with the white boys [Laughs] and stuff and it was just always, just something. You know.

And I don't know, as I said again, this probably would, would happen again if you tried it over, but most of it turned to be false. That if people had something in common, probably they would socialize. If they didn't have things in common they were bad, good, and indifferent just like anybody else. Because there were some white fellows that Black – white girls didn't want to date. And there were some Black fellows, I'm sure white girls didn't want to date. So they wouldn't need to date them, I'm sure. So these, these were the things. These types of things.

JS: Well, now so your kids are — this is actually the 1960s. Your kids are really starting to grow up and that's when things are getting very, very rough.

MAXEY: This is right.

JS: And did you have discussions with them? How is the family taking all this?

MAXEY: Yes. I did. And I was talking with my son. See my son was the third kid to get out of high school. He got out of high school let's see, around 1962 or 1963. And my oldest daughter got out in 1959 and the second daughter got out about 1961. And I told him, I said, you know, "I would like for you to go to college, but you have not been as studious as I thought you should've been. You haven't learned that kind of thing, and I think you should now first go into the service before you go to college. And before I spend any money, wasting the money on you, I almost insist that you go in the service." And I did.

And he went in the service and he resented it. And resented it to the fact, that he never did do anything right in service. He wasn't discharged; well, he was discharged because he got hurt; he broke an ankle and got honorable discharge. But he never did try to get no advancement and things just a matter of being in service because I told him he had to be. And it was my thinking that he would go in there and find out not only was I a person demand that he had some kind of order to his life, he go in the service; they demand the same thing. And once he got out of there and got into college he figured that they were there for business also. He'd go in there and do something. My son came out and he went to Portland State. He went to broadcasting school. Was a natural in anything he wanted to do. But he just determined that he just wasn't going to particular try to do anything, because we insisted on him doing something. And, so, yes, it has been a problem. Been a problem.

And my kids now accuse me, and I don't mind it, as setting myself up as a morning star for them to work toward. And that because they'd, none of them saw fit to follow my way of thinking, my way of getting around inequities, that were imposed on me, that they weren't going to do it. Because ordinarily I did not choose to – if I don't go to school and

get an education to do something else, the education I got just won't do nothing. So I refuse to do nothing. I took the education I had and felt that I had a chance to take it and do something else.

For an instance, barbering. I figured barbering would make independent. I knew I was a little bit more forward than most Blacks that people had come in contact with and that'd probably be strikes against me. I probably could work with it now, but at that time I doubt if I could. Also I felt that if I barbered then I could start there and go from there.

Did I ever tell you about the – I put an application with General Motors?

JS: Yes.

MAXEY: Those were things that I think if I had been as weak as my kids, I think it would've thrown me off to say well it doesn't matter to me, if I don't do anything. I'll just go out and just do, do whatever I can. Make it the worst.

But I have found that I had to work harder. I had to do it in different ways than I thought because I started to sell real estate. I said, no, that wouldn't be it. What I'll do I'll accumulate real estate. And, I'll barber; I'll have a store. I'll — far as I get money, I'll buy property. Might not make no money, but whatever I make I'll buy it up in property. It's the best thing I ever did – going to help me in retirement.

JS: Oh, so you did buy some property in addition the property across the street and some others too?

MAXEY: Yes. Yes, I had, I had five other houses.

JS: Oh really? Did you have to maintain them and, and rent them out or anything like that?

MAXEY: Yes. Sure, sure. But I found that — in doing that — I've always been a kind of a cash it as you go type of thing. I knew he'd buy houses that I had to take the monthly rent and pay the payment. Yes, I need to do that, if it's three or four payments coming that I didn't have the place rented, I'd have had to lose it, you know. But what I did, I tried — if I bought a house — I didn't try to buy nothing on top of it lessen I got a real good buy and I'd get a mortgage on something and pay cash for it. And just different ways that I did that I wouldn't have done, if I'd had other ways to do it. But that's the way I had to do it and that's the way I did it.

JS: Now your kids — I think we should really sort of give a sort of a sketch of what your kids have done, where they are today.

MAXEY: Oh, sure. Sure. I don't think your kids completely failed. My oldest daughter, I'll give you a rundown on her and her position. My oldest daughter finished high school and she went to Northwest Business School and finished. And she worked for the oil company and she worked also with the police department for about five or six years.

JS: Doing what for them?

MAXEY: She was working in the office, keeping records and stuff like that. I always tried to get her to get her own police department but at that time they had they hadn't hired any Black women. They'd hired some Black men.

JS: And what — her name is?

MAXEY: Carol.

JS: Oh, Carol. Okay. Oh, Carol D.

MAXEY: She's the oldest.

JS: Yeah. Okay.

MAXEY: And then the second daughter finished high school and went to business college. She had enrolled in the University of Oregon but she found she's allergic to so many things she wasn't going to be able to do nothing in school. And, there was a whole lot of things; pressure would cause her to break out. And cause her to come down with asthmatic hay fever and stuff like that. And we found if you let her work at her rate at things, that nothing bothered her. And she through business school in nothing flat. And very good grades both of them. And she came out and she worked for Crown Zellerbach, the paper company. She worked for them until she married. Had a good job and was advancing right along. Would have done very good. And she married, let's see, after three years. She advanced and made a couple advancements. Been promoted with Crown Zellerbach, was doing fine, and she got married and she gave her time to raising her family. And she's working now. She's working for K-Mart now. Doing very good for herself. After her kids grew up. She didn't start to work until both of them finished high school.

JS: That's Donna?

MAXEY: No, that's Virginia.

JS: No, I'm sorry. That's Virginia. Okay.

MAXEY: The second daughter. And she's still married, and in fact we're going back to Virginia. Her daughter, her youngest daughter's finishing University of Virginia, 21st of this month. And we're going back to her graduation exercise.

And my third child was Charles William. He's the one that I tell you that I encourage to go into the service. He went into the service, was honorably discharged because he broke his ankle. And I tried to get him to make them put him into some other kind of program. He was so glad to get out; it didn't matter.

JS: Didn't like it at all.

MAXEY: No. No. And he, as I said, went to broadcasting school, and went to college for a year or so, and he's finally got out and decided he's going to do something else. I tried to get him to learn at least what I learned, what I knew how to do, and see couldn't he get out for himself? I told him, I said, you go to barber school; learn to barber. If you just don't want to get out any further. Get you a grocery store like I got. Buy some property like I'm doing. But he didn't want to do that.

JS: Probably the last thing he wanted to do! [Laughs]

MAXEY: Is do what their daddy do.

JS: Yeah. Right.

MAXEY: So, but anyway now, he's working for Kaiser Security. And he's married and got two daughters. And they're doing fine.

And my fourth child is Donna. That's Donna Dolores. She went – she finished high school, went to college. I wanted her to go to law school. Told her I would pay her way in law school. She didn't want to go. She just wanted to go to college and she wanted to be a teacher. I told her that's fine. And that's what she did and she – she left here; married and went to California. And while there she went into administration, in the education field of administration. And she found out it's too much politics in it, so she went back to the classroom. She's still in classroom. She teaches in Berkeley now.

JS: Oh really?

MAXEY: Berkeley, California.

And my youngest son, that's Jonathan. He went in the service. I encouraged him to do the same thing about Bill.

I recognize something that the insistence that I put on my kids to be involved in things in the community, made them different to the average Black kid of whom they associated with. And it was kind of a parental resentment to them, because I wanted them to get out and get more education. I wanted them to go into something, but I told them this: I am not putting you into college to go hit the streets at night. I will help you; and you enroll in college and I will put some money up for you; I put your interests up there. But get a job. Might have to do part-time or if not you're going to – and Portland State was pretty cheap then. They could go to Portland State pretty cheap. And I didn't mind helping them. But that wasn't what they wanted to do.

And my youngest son, I told him, I said, well you're not going to hit the streets. Me and his mother – well, she did more than I did. She forced him to go into the Navy. And he went in the Navy. And six years and he volunteered for the nuclear program of the Navy.

JS: Oh really?

MAXEY: Yes. And...

JS: Six years?

MAXEY: Yeah. Six years.

JS: Such a long stay. Wow.

MAXEY: And he, with his stupid self he gave it up. They wanted him to finish time. He was on a nuclear sub. Put him on a nuclear sub. They sent him over in over in Idaho at the nuclear school. Everything. Didn't care. They still want him! They kept after him after he got out. Kept on him.

He wanted to go to – now that's a reverse on – to me and his mother about we going to Black schools. We talked all the time how nice it was to go to a Black school and how much advantage they would get out of Black school, if you wanted to go to a Black school. Fine. He went to a Black school, went down there. Instead of going to college he went down with social crazy. Had never seen that many Black folks before. [Laughs]. And it worked in a reverse with him. He went three years and did not finish. And for what reason I don't know. And right now he's still 17 going on 35.

JS: What school did he go to?

MAXEY: Talladega.

JS: Where's that?

MAXEY: That's in Alabama. That's – you should remember where Talladega is by Talladega 500. The racetrack?

JS: Oh!

MAXEY: It's the oldest racetrack, I understand, in the world.

JS: Oh really?

MAXEY: Yeah. Yeah. Talladega.

And that's a rundown on the education of my kids. Now my son now, I kept on him, and I told him, I said, you know one thing. I think you have too much education to be a bum. And every job you work on, you work on a job that no advancement, or whatever. And he worked for Fred Meyer. Was not getting no advancement. I said, hey man, if you can't get, if you going to just work on a job you ought to quit it. If you're not going to advance on it.

JS: Yeah. What is the difference? I mean from one generation to the next, there is such a difference.

MAXEY: Yeah. And I'll tell you where it was. The people who came along – I don't know how much older I am than you are.

JS: I'm 58.

MAXEY: Fifty-eight. Okay. Then you, you are, you're in almost same category as my oldest daughter because now she's 53. So it's not too much difference in you and her now, that you're 58 and she's 53. What happened is that parents of both you and my daughter, we came out of the Depression. We Depression kids.

JS: Almost, yeah. Well little bit. Some – I have some of the values of a Depression family.

MAXEY: Yeah, that's what I'm saying. Well your parents, your father and mother would have to be Depression kids.

JS: They were for sure.

MAXEY: That's what I'm saying. That's what I'm saying. Your parents are Depression kids. And we came up doing without. Not being able to have. And not knowing what the good things are like. And once then – okay, we moved directly out of that into World War II, where we were working for – I don't know what part of the country your family were from.

JS: Here.

MAXEY: In Portland?

JS: Eugene.

MAXEY: Okay, Eugene. Okay. The top pay of my generation would have been in Texas if I got out and made \$15 to \$20 a week was a good job. If I made \$150 a month that was a darn good job. And we got out of that into the war that you could get out of high school and work on a job making \$65 and \$70 a week. And what we did was – well, I didn't have these things. I'm not talking about your parents and me. But no doubt you got things much better than your parents had.

JS: Yeah.

MAXEY: You probably got told about you didn't walk away from the grits anymore. If you had grits you ate them all. You didn't waste food. So you got preached to a lot by...

JS: I was told a lot of that.

MAXEY: Yeah. And consequently it was a resentment, whether you admit it or not, and whether you figured that's what it was at the time. You probably didn't admit it as a resentment.

JS: Yeah.

MAXEY: But, "Mom and Dad got better than this, why should they tell me I should chew the bone more because it still has some meat on it?" [Laughs]

[End of Tape 11, Side 1]

Tape 11, Side 2**1994 May 3**

MAXEY: The retirement, which I have now, is not as good a retirement [as] if I had been on somebody else's job and retired, because I'd have better benefits. And benefits is much more than if you had some money. If I'd've retired with quite a few thousand of dollars, it wouldn't mean too much if I retired and still wouldn't have the other benefits to go with it. Medical. Because medical is a gold mine once you pass 50 years old, because you start having to use doctors and medication and the like. And I am saying that the last five years of my working was the only thing that helped me in my retirement, even though I was able to accumulate property. It's not as good as benefits. And when I got the liquor store I went to the state and had them to make a better, take out more for me for retirement. And I worked out that deal with them, which has worked pretty good.

I don't know if I've answered your question about the parenting differences.

JS: Yeah. It's just a, you know — it does really offer some insights into this transfer from generation to generation. And they have a different experience and it's good to think about that.

MAXEY: It's true. And my grandkids, for an instance. I have a grandson that's a brilliant kid. He's my oldest daughter's son. Went over in to — oh, yes, my oldest daughter's in Israel now. I don't know if I told you that.

JS: Oh that's right. No.

MAXEY: Yes. She's...

JS: Yes, I heard that she did, but we didn't include that.

MAXEY: Let's see, she's been gone now – let's see, she went in 1981, about 13 [or] 14 years. And her son, she carried him over when he was about eight years old. And he stayed until he was 16; he came back able to speak three languages. And didn't have the get up of – well, he thought it was just because he had, you know, associated with these kids and picked up their language. Didn't pick it up in school; he just picked it up by being with the kids and he didn't think it was important. When I told him that, I'm an old fogey.

Do you know now, he can't speak enough Hebrew hardly to tell you he's hungry. [Laughs] I mean, I don't mean it's that bad, but he, he still can say some words in Hebrew. But he can't hold a conversation. And I remember when he came back I'd tell people that he's from Israel and if there's Jewish people they'd say things to him in Hebrew, you know, and he'd say, could say sentences to them in Hebrew. And I told him, I said, "Man, you got a fortune. All you have to do is going to school and continue to learn Hebrew and Swahili."

JS: Oh, for heaven's sake. Oh, my God.

MAXEY: Yeah. Can you believe that?

JS: That's amazing. Seems amazing, anyway.

MAXEY: Yeah. Now, he's been, he's back here, he's 22 years old now, and he hasn't spoken it, and hasn't had the association with those kids. Show you how much he got from association.

See, what I was telling you a moment ago, people don't understand the lack of association and association with whites and Blacks is, is much larger than you might think. And him associating with Jewish kids, African kids, and picking up their culture.

JS: Yeah. That is amazing.

MAXEY: He just started to – he just starting eating American food here about a year – Jane!

JANE: [In background] Yeah?

MAXEY: Oh excuse me. I didn't mean to put that on that deal.

JS: [Laughs] Oh, that's alright.

MAXEY: [To JANE] How long has Britt started eating American food since he came back from Israel?

Not over a year ago, eating fully like American people eat again. He was vegetarian, and now he eat meat enough to live on. [Laughs] Before then, he wouldn't.

So, the cultures in association means a heck of a lot. And so this whole thing is embedded much deeper than most of us seem to think.

JS: Yeah, I think so. Well I thought I would give you an opportunity to include whatever else we need to include for the history. Have you something else? Rather than my ask you a question, that you'd...

MAXEY: Well, I think you've been very generous in that, you see I'm not a historian and you see that I don't stick with subjects very carefully. You've been very generous in that you let me jump around and talk about things as they come to me.

JS: Yeah. I see a lot of value in that. I see a lot of value in that. You may be not an historian, but you're a very observant person and have done a lot of thinking about things which I think is very valuable.

MAXEY: I hope I have left with you, I hope I have with you, that I have tried to use the inequities of which I've faced to figure out a better way, rather than to figure out a way to fight it. And I think I've been for the richer by doing that. I think I was able to bring up my children – I think my children would have been bitter had I have told them all the nasty things, and nasty things only, that I've encountered. And I think this has also given them a chance for a better choice than I've had.

JS: Well, want to thank you for you know, putting so much into this history and I have greatly enjoyed doing it.

MAXEY: I think I've discussed probably everything with you. Probably the part you haven't asked me and that is religion also.

JS: Oh.

MAXEY: I don't think we've discussed any...

JS: We should include a word about religion.

MAXEY: I don't know how far you'd like for me to go on religion.

JS: Well, tell me what's important to really, to make the history complete in that area.

MAXEY: Well, I think in order to make the history complete of one person in one person's family like you have with me, I think that the part of religion, or the lack of religion has played and will play and has played on me or anybody else. And when I speak religion, I think probably the cultural religion that I've had also. I think it would be important to include this religion, of which I had coming up would have to be a cultural religion, because of I did go to Black churches.

And I think having a mother who was deeply religious in more ways than I ever thought until I got to be grown myself. That the confidence that she had in prayer and religion, and I think those are things are very important to have helped me to have gotten as far as I've gotten. I know in coming up, that in our home, Sunday school was a must every Sunday. This was for the kids. And of course after you got to be 11 or 12 years old they insisted that you go to church. And I think without this I never would have believed that people themselves believed in some of the things they believe, even though I think a lot of prayers were often much different than the ways that you'd been taught.

JS: How's that?

MAXEY: My mother prayed every day for everything. Whether it was food or whether it was finding a way to mend the house that was needed work, or whatever. And I remember discussing this some with her after I got to be grown and even after I married. "Don't you think the biggest part of your prayer was answered when you asked for good health, and you were able to somehow or another get ahold of whatever it was you got ahold to, and forgiveness for the things you'd done wrong?"

Oh, we had some nice conversations that were – my mother always told me well, "Regardless of how you saw it, it was the prayer that did it. It was the prayer that helped me to find the job to get the money to do the work on the house," which I never did dispute, and I still don't dispute too much today.

But I think it's the difference in, as I said, the way you were brought up with the cultural religion that you had. Whether it was the Baptist or a Methodist, which is predominately, at that time for most Blacks. There were quite a few Blacks in my part of the country that were Catholic. People have got to understand that too.

JS: There were Catholics?

MAXEY: Oh! Louisiana is heavily Catholic and has been all my life. Let's see, as I understand it, let's see, Louisiana first had the blessing of France. And the French and the Spaniards were mostly Catholic.

JS: So it extended into east Texas too?

MAXEY: Sure. East Texas, Louisiana, the eastern Mississippi, Arkansas. Sure. That's heavily Catholic. I mean back in those days. It's not as much now as it was then. And it's more now than it was then, so to speak, in that it was — there are more Catholics in that part of the country. And there were more of certain Catholics at that time because of being creoles. Of course any Blacks who were the lighter skin blacks were creoles. Most of them were Catholic.

JS: But your church was — did you say Methodist?

MAXEY: Methodist. Yes.

JS: Oh really? What's the difference between Methodist and Baptist for a Black.

MAXEY: I don't think too much difference with the exception of the Methodist Church is more organized. You see, if you want to be an independent Baptist, you can go out and start you a church with a hymn book and a Bible, and get ordained by somebody. See, but the Methodist Church won't ordain you unless you have been sanctioned by the organization of the Methodist Church, which is patterned after the white Methodist.

See we have the Black Methodist which I'm a member of now, which never would have been, if the Methodist Church had accepted Blacks as being a part of their Methodist Church. And they made us a part of the Church, but a separate part. And we were taught to do our church different to that of the whites. Which is singing and the

mannerism and things of that sort is – was much different. It's not as different today as it once was. A lot of shouting, spontaneous singing, spontaneous testifying.

But religion has certainly played a great part in my life and many Blacks who are my age. And said the Black church which is the A.M.E. [African Methodist Episcopal] Church – I don't know if you're familiar with the different Methodist Black churches.

JS: Oh no, I don't, no.

MAXEY: You have two A.M.E. churches: A.M.E. Zion and A.M.E. Bethel. And those churches were founded because Blacks were not permitted to practice their religion with whites. And the Blacks founded their own Methodist church. See the Methodist Church what we were permitted to be a part of, but just to be a part of a Methodist Church, Black Methodist Church without any organizational guidelines, only after we founded the two black Methodist, A.M.E. Methodist. Then the C.M.E. [Christian Methodist Episcopal], or the other Methodist, began to then admit us to practice with them.

JS: Oh really? Okay. So one is much older, essentially?

MAXEY: Yes. The Black Methodist A.M.E., Methodist A.M.E. Bethel and A.M.E. Zion are the two different Blacks. And you have quite a few – what do you call these extemporaneous churches just jump up.

JS: Separatist?

MAXEY: Yeah. What do they call those? Both Black and white. They do a lot of shouting and singing.

JS: Oh! Evangelical.

MAXEY: Yeah. Evangelical. You have a lot of those in Blacks and whites. And with not much organization with the exception of the head. The head is great and they pass down these degrees for ministers and stuff like that.

JS: So that's a sort of an impression that you've given of what religion meant to your mother and, and to you.

MAXEY: Yes.

JS: Is there more to say about what it means specifically to you?

MAXEY: Yes. It means that it has the millions of Blacks, whatever education they have, they got it because the A.M.E. Church was not only organized to serve the spiritual needs of the Blacks but it was also advocated it — when they organized it, they organized the educational part also. And we have, the Black churches, the only college we have that are not run by the Black churches, are the ones who were put up one college for each state, for Blacks.

JS: Oh, have they done that?

MAXEY: Yes. These were the only colleges we have ever had for Black people. Well, one college in each state.

JS: Oh, I didn't know that they had that.

MAXEY: Sure. Sure. And this was Southern states where this happened. For an instance, Texas A & M had a school known as Prairie View. I don't know if that name rings a bell with you or not. That is one of the oldest and the best organized Black schools in the country now. And that was an agricultural school, to teach Blacks to be

carpenters, farmers, and things of that sort. And so was A & M College, in Texas. Texas A & M. I guess you've heard of Texas A & M.

JS: Yeah.

MAXEY: Well that Texas A & M is the sister school of Prairie View A & M.

JS: Oh, I see.

MAXEY: See Prairie View A & M and Texas A & M. So it's two, one and the same. And the Prairie View still exists. It's not a Black school now and a lot of white kids – and here's another thing people have not understood. You have your Black schools and you have a few white kids going to them. And more and more are going to them. Why?

It's a question as to why you get a Ph.D. [Doctor of Philosophy] and I get a Ph.D., where neither one of us went to a Black school. But then you find you have Blacks who get Ph.D.'s who went to Black schools. Then the white kid get a Ph.D. going to a white school. Then I want to go over here and get a Ph.D. in sociology. It's from a Black school. I want to know what's happening in the Black race. And they are getting...

JS: Oh, that is happening.

MAXEY: Yes. And most of them are specializing, or going in – kids going to be doctors, going to a Black medical school. Because what about all the idiosyncrasies of medicine? The idea of – what is the disease called that Blacks have in the blood?

JS: Oh, I know what you mean. Sickle Cell Anemia.

MAXEY: Sickle Cell Anemia. Okay. White kids – this the thing. Why? I want to study medicine. I want to study this thing. Then I want to study that Blacks are more subject to

other type things. For an instance, to have an operation for — what do you call the operation where Blacks have more than whites? Prostate operation. Okay, they said Blacks are more subject to prostate operation than whites. They have it younger simply because it's hypertension. Blacks are more hypertensive than whites. And this is — so for a man going to study medicine, he'll get more of this once he goes to a Black medical school. And a lot of them are interested from this stand point.

JS: Now, religion has meant a lot in the community, too. The churches are important, say, in the Albina community. There's the Albina Ministerial Alliance.

MAXEY: Right. That's right.

JS: Have you been connected with any group like that?

MAXEY: I would say yes, I've been connected to that because my pastor is a member of it.

JS: What church is that?

MAXEY: Bethel A.M.E.

JS: Oh. Okay. What is his name, I wonder?

MAXEY: His name is Robert McCullough. And one thing about the Methodist Church of Blacks, which gives us a little different than just the Pentecostal churches of Black, is the fact that Black ministers get moved around more and they get involved in more different cultures than the other Black churches.

JS: Oh, they do?

MAXEY: Yes. Pentecostal – you see Pentecostal...

JS: The system moves them around more?

MAXEY: Yeah, right. They system moves them. And you can see now if you want to be a Pentecostal minister, there are certain congregations you can involve yourself with. You can pay for your being a minister. And you can pay for your association with that association. So your association...

JS: You buy into it?

MAXEY: You buy into it. Yes. This is Black and white. The Pentecostal – there is some Pentecostals do that. I don't know if you knew that. You know the fellow Pat Robertson that ran for president?

JS: Sure.

MAXEY: You know that he is a real big man in — he's a multi-millionaire. Possibly billionaire.

JS: [Yes].

MAXEY: Okay, but his association – you have to – most of these Pentecostal churches had to come in under him and – plus the, the one who got the college back in Tennessee, or the Carolina?

JS: No, that one I don't know.

MAXEY: The one that, that involved after the Bakers had their letdown. Remember Jim Bakker.

JS: Swaggert?

MAXEY: Swaggert? Not Swaggert. He was the one that associated with them in Louisiana.

JS: Yeah , he's the...

MAXEY: What is the fellow got the college?

JS: Yeah, I'm probably, don't know — I know there's an Ambassador College and that sort of thing.

MAXEY: That's it. That's the one that I'm talking about.

JS: Oh. Ambassador College. Okay. I thought I thought it was down in California.

MAXEY: Oh. You're talking about — no, no, no, no. Ambassador is the one that's down in California. But they got their, see, they got their big spread in Texas now. Armstrong. Ted Armstrong.

JS: Herb and Ted Armstrong. Yes, right.

MAXEY: Yeah. Right, right. So the one that I'm talking about now, okay, now, the one that I'm talking about has a school like Oral Roberts in Oklahoma.

JS: Right.

MAXEY: Who is the fellow got the deal back on the southeast course?

JS: I don't...

MAXEY: He's a little short fellow. And he's so immaculate speaking. You know...

JS: [Laughs] Yeah, I know who you mean, too. But I can't quite get it.

MAXEY: He wants you to think he's God Almighty Himself. He was the one that took over when Swaggart...

JS: Oh, sure. Of course. Yeah, I know who you mean.

MAXEY: Okay. He's the fellow. Now all of them are into an association type of thing. They are not – they are not – let me put it this way, the reason why they're so rich, they are not the same type of people, of the Baptist and Methodist of the white race. And the reason being, each one of them in his association probably got a college but he doesn't belong to the same thing that the – for an instance most of the Black churches have established a Black college. And this is what has funded the education of Black people up until this point.

JS: Well bringing the subject of religion back here, how did your children take to the religious part of your culture? How is that working?

MAXEY: Not very well. They have found, and rightfully so in a lot of instances, where the Black congregation has used the Black church as a kind of association to deal with in groups. In other words, it has been apparent to my kids' groups that it has taken on a big social connotation in Black group also; that you have a plateau of Blacks. You have those

in the religious group have elevated themselves, because they do belong to a church association like the A.M.E. Zion, or A.M.E. Bethel, or the C.M.E. Blacks, and the M.E. [Methodist Episcopal] Blacks –.

See, there are two of those churches, the M.E.s and the C.M.E.s are off-springs of the white Methodist Church. I don't know if you knew that or not.

JS: No. That's – I'm learning that for the first time.

MAXEY: When you said Methodist, that's just not the Methodist that Blacks belong to and that belong to the same association that the whites do. And the whites, now, have voted, and just a few years ago, that Blacks can be a part of their association. That's been since, and not before...

JS: That's recent.

MAXEY: Way recent of the civil rights group. So consequently you can see that the church and religion and believing they're on the church on high, and great beyond, and the God of almighty, is still the God of indifference. And this is where my children come in.

They're telling me that my faith and my religion is not exactly touchable, because it still carries with it: somebody's a little better than you, even though all of you call yourselves Christians. You're still some white and Black Christians. And you're still some – and you know this is a funny thing because, let's face it. In this point in time, who'd have thought the Muslim would've been people to be reckoned with all over the world. And they don't seem to be of Black and white. And different countries over there are white Muslim. And there all in the African countries, those are black Muslims. So I don't know. It's whatever you take and whatever you like, whatever you live with.

JS: Well, I think, it's an important part of your culture. The private culture and the general culture.

MAXEY: It is.

JS: So, well I think it's getting late and I think we'd better probably close. But I did want to very warmly thank you for this, because, as I say, it has meant a lot to me too, to hear your story. And I think it will mean a lot to other people too, to have it recorded.

MAXEY: I might have should have done this a long time ago in wish to get a tape and find out how much I missed. [Laughs]

JS: Well I will send you tapes.

[Tape stops]

JS: So, you're saying that there are three differences that you feel that you've made.

MAXEY: Well, yes, I mean, there were three ways that I think I have made a difference and one has been, since I didn't – wasn't able to pursue what I figured I should have been, once I'd gotten out of college, I think I would like to be remembered as a person to not accept defeat. Because you are able, educationally, to have done something else and didn't have the chance to do it, that you were able to use it to go another way and make it work out. And I can't say everybody can do that though. I wouldn't advocate that for everybody. But I'm saying it's a good thing if I can be remembered – I'd like to be remembered as a person not accepting defeat. That I've taken that and tried to do with it, and I think I've done fair. I don't think I've done extraordinary, but I think I've done good.

And another is I think I've made a difference in the community of which I live, because I have insisted of being a part of the community of which I live. And that's the schools, the political, and the wellbeing of the community whatever it was. And I think those are the two that I would like to be remembered as.

And as far as being remembered as something great I've done, I think what I've done, I'd like to be remembered, that anybody could have done it, if they would go ahead and do it. I don't know if that makes sense to you or not but...

JS: Yeah, it does.

MAXEY: Those three things I think that...

JS: The last thing doesn't demean you, it elevates everybody else.

MAXEY: Well I think it gives somebody to think about. I think it gives somebody – gives people something to think about, and I'd just say, "Hey I'm defeated and I'll have to accept it."

JS: How is your father doing in your thinking?

MAXEY: How is my...

[End of Tape 11, Side 2]

Tape 12, Side 1
1994 November 18

JS: Darn it, this stupid thing.

MAXEY: If you can find out what it is...

JS: There we go.

This is November the 18th, and this is to continue to work on that story on Salt Lake City. Anyway, what I wanted to ask you was, if we could start at – I would like to do parts of the story again where I don't have a complete understanding of it. And I'd like to start back at the beginning at the reason for going. Where did you first hear about this convention? And did someone come up to you and tell you about it?

MAXEY: No, no. No. I was a member of the Young Republicans and I was active in the Multnomah Young Republicans and I was active also in the state of Oregon Young Republicans. In fact I attended state meetings and regular meetings of the Young Republicans, and quite often I'd attend meetings of the regular Republican group. And I knew quite a few of the people and had gotten in contact with them and I had – nobody had just said, because, you know, the fact that you happen to be Black, you'd be a good delegate. No. It wasn't that. It was some of the things – some of my interests that I had at that time, I think, no doubt made them feel, well maybe he'd like to take part in a national convention and a regional convention. I was interested also in regional conventions.

JS: So everybody was invited. Is that it?

MAXEY: Yes. This was a thing that it looked like to me that in order to tell that I would be a good delegate was certain things that I had an interest in. And it seemed like to me, at that time, employment – you see, we're just coming out of World War II. And also we'd just lost the president that any of us who called ourselves Young Republican

could remember, being first elected, and that is President Roosevelt and coming into the latter part of Truman's administration. And it seemed there was a whole lot of guessing and people's imagination as to what things going to be doing post-war times, and how this was going to affect the poor, and especially Blacks. And how this region was before the war, pertaining to Blacks, and especially as far as employment was concerned. And that was the key thing that I discussed every opportunity I got in meetings, whether it was at the Multnomah Young Republicans meeting, or whether this was State of Oregon group discussion, or whatever. And I remember quite often we'd meet down at Corvallis, and University of Oregon, that way, and give those people a chance to — to get a chance to meet with the Multnomah group. Or we'd meet over in Eastern Oregon.

JS: So those issues would come up?

MAXEY: Yes. Sure.

JS: Without your bringing them up? Would other people bring them up?

MAXEY: Well, a lot of times other people'd bring them up. And very, very surely I would bring them up. Sure. I was very concerned with that, because at the time I had had to change my itinerary as far as my life work would be, that I thought that I would probably be able to go into something, more or less, with the amount of education I have, that I could be trained into a better type of job. And I found that I had gone a different way, that I'd almost taken up a vocation that I learned more or less as a kid, and developed it and made a business out of it..

JS: Yeah. You were frustrated in that first — in your original purposes.

MAXEY: Yeah. Right, right. I'd been frustrated to the point that I found that I'd been denied or been forgotten or whatever. And I don't know if I made – did I make known the fact that I had put in application with General Motors?

JS: Oh yes. Sure. Yeah, we got that story.

MAXEY: Now this is an indication right there as to just how frustrated I'd gotten, because I figured with them, you might say, toying with me for six or eight months, and giving me the feeling that I was going to be able to be hired, by getting correspondence from me as to what my education was, and somewhat and probably drawing out some of my interests were about.

JS: Did anyone at this time, as the convention is coming on, did anyone say to you, "Are you going to go to the convention?" or "Will you go to the convention?"

MAXEY: No. I'll tell you. I think — we had a meeting one night. I'm trying to think exactly where the meeting was. It was downtown and might have been the Heathman Hotel. It was someplace seemed like to me right along there, right around Broadway or somewhere along there. We'd had a meeting and it came up concerning that the convention was coming up, and discussion came up and some of the things that we felt would be good for the delegation of Oregon to be concerned about. And being more or less on the West Coast here, everybody's talking about the advantage that this part of the country is going to have in world shipment and world trade and all this. I was wondering how much of this was going to be beneficial to the minorities and especially Blacks who – since I happened to be Black.

And I wanted to know how much — that I felt this is going to be, and I wanted to get in on the discussion of this. How much was – what about job situation? If you have job situation this is going to mean jobs. And then if we don't have some civil rights in the state, in the city, and, and give help to conditions that I found here, that I could not even

work in the union that I had chosen. I had to go over in Vancouver, Washington in order to work in the electrical union. Then I wanted to know how much – are any of you, or are you aware of the fact that these types of things are hell. Now you tell me how much this is going to bring – how much trade this is going to bring the West Coast, but how beneficial it's going to be for the mass of people?

You know that the people who – the heads of the state and the city – many have suggested that Blacks go back to where they came from.

Now if this is coming on, how much is this going to mean to me being able to sit here and make a living? Whether I'm a longshoreman — as of now, we had no Black longshoremen. Nobody's shown any reason why there should be any. And one of the major things is, any Black who tries to be, because of Bridges, who at this time is very much involved with the longshoremen, he's automatically a Communist. And if you blackball whites of whom you say are Communist, because they have an interest probably in labor, and how quickly would it be, how easily would it be to do the same thing, and worse, to me?

And this is what brought my interest into being involved. Because I found out and wanted to know what some of the key things would be going on, some of the key discussions would be and how much interest.

JS: Were you already thinking at the time that you might go? To the convention?

MAXEY: I would have gone anyplace that I felt I had a chance to voice some opinions about what I think should go into making this region better in compared to what I had found here and hadn't made too much of it any better, for myself.

JS: But you hadn't made up your mind yet whether you were going to Salt Lake, by the time of this meeting at the Heathman or downtown?

MAXEY: No. Then I made mention of the fact, I remember asking a question. How much help could a delegate get if I'd make it known and put my name into the group and make it known that I'd like to go, and receive enough votes, as a delegate. See I just wasn't appointed.

JS: Oh, you have to be nominated?

MAXEY: This was a suggestion in a group meeting. Who thinks they'd like to go? I said I'd like to go. Then we should vote on the people who said they'd like to go. Because after all, if everybody like to go and then most everybody's going to have to go on their own. But the people we that we can assist, in some of the expense, then we'd like to know how many we have. How many we're going to expect to be here. We're not just going to have people who probably go for the partying or whatever else, but we'd like to know how many can we depend on, as far as working in groups, or working in committees, and things of that sort. If you are going to be on a committee, what can you add to it? What interests?

And mine was employment. Employment. Very much so. And civil rights. Those things were paramount in my mind. Civil rights and jobs.

JS: So did they come through and offer you some – you got chosen as a delegate then?

MAXEY: Yes, I made it known that I would like to go. I said, but for real I just cannot pay my expense there for a week. And I figured at that time if I had a hotel I figured the hotel expense – I don't know how much it was at that time, but it was a lot of money compared to the money that I was making. Eating out at cafés would have been quite a bit of money at that time. And my travel. I wouldn't have known – I'd have had to go on the train, because the car that I had, I didn't care to carry my car, because my car was a family car and that was for my family and my business.

JS: So did you go by train?

MAXEY: No. I went with a group – let's see. In the group we had — we met about two weeks before that and decided how many cars, or how people were going. I think Sig Unander and a few more, Tom McCall, I think they flew. I'm almost sure. And the younger group, I'm thinking most of all of us went in cars. And I think the group that I went with was Bob Elliot and his wife, and there was a young lady that was going to Reed College at that time. Her name was...

JS: [Bullard?]?

MAXEY: [Marjorie Bullard?]. [Bullard?]. [Marjorie Bullard?]. You know her name!

JS: You mentioned her before.

MAXEY: Yeah. Yeah. [Marjorie Bullard?] and Clay was going. But Clay had gotten to go with somebody else. And I was wondering how could I go, and Bob's wife was the person who told me, "So Maxey, how are you coming on with the amount of money for you to go to the convention?" I told her, my money is zero. I just have no money. I'm just not able to go, but I still would like to go and I would be very happy to take part.

I – to be frank with you, I think there were several people that offered to assist me in going, and Sig Unander was one of those people. I don't know who the others were. But I must say this again too. I don't think I fitted the mold of everybody who probably assisted me in going. That was, I disagreed with them in some things. And yet, at the same time, I think they themselves felt that this would be good, you know. A diverse — of having a chance for some Blacks or minorities to go.

And I was very happy at that time and over-exuberant about it, because I thought at that time, since we were fighting quite a bit from the N.A.A.C.P. about getting the civil

rights bill for Oregon and Portland, I was very happy to have the chance. In fact, I felt this is one of my best chances, working with the N.A.A.C.P., to get some information also. I asked the N.A.A.C.P. about some assistance. At the time the N.A.A.C.P. was being exhausted on every hand, as far as money was concerned because of the different fights we were having with the combination from the servicemen and World War II.

JS: Were you uncomfortable about receiving money to assist you in getting there?

MAXEY: No. No. I frankly was not, because the people of whom I had met and worked with in the Republican, Young Republican, let me put it that way, in the Young Republican group, they were used to me agreeing and disagreeing with them. Most time it used to be a friendly comment if something came up and they voted and it passed, or it didn't, that I did not hold it up for a discussion. "Maxey, you don't see anything wrong?" [Laughs] It was just like that, because I mean I tried not to make a nuisance of myself, but I did not – I tried not that any chance pass, that it was something for the benefit of civil rights, or job improvement of things of that sort, education advantages for social type, being shown interest in social programs that would be beneficial to less fortunate people. Those types of things I was interested in, and everybody knew that.

Mine was not being antagonized from my statements as to, "Well you see what they're doing in South Carolina? You see what they're doing in Mississippi?" That was not – everybody knew what was going on. But same time I was very concerned as to what could be done in this group, in the state of Oregon, at that time.

JS: When you got to Salt Lake City, I wonder if you could describe, step by step, what happened as you went to the hotel and registered and things began to happen involving, you know, your problem.

MAXEY: Yes. Well, it might be good that I go back and state to you that I began with the fact that I did receive some money from the Republican Party for my stay there. And I

think the first money that was given to me, I think was \$50, was given to me to secure my room and also have, for the first day or so, eating. And at that time Vivian McMurtry — I don't know if that name's been brought...

JS: You'd mentioned that before.

MAXEY: Vivian McMurtry at that time was chairman of the State Republican Party and she had given me, I think, that amount. And Bob Elliot, who was chairman of the Multnomah Republican group, I'm almost sure, gave me, at that time, \$25. And this was not good-time money; this was money that was — that I would have had to have for lodging and food.

And bringing you — in the beginning there, of us getting there, we got to Salt Lake City, I think about 3:30, four o'clock in the afternoon. And I was driving the car; and in getting the luggage out, the porter there at the hotel, the skycap or redcap or whatever they were, came out and he said, "Hey why don't you assist me in this luggage here." And so we unload the luggage and carry it out. And it just so happened I had some on my shoulder, and so I was first in front for the other people who came in the car with me and I walked to the counter and I said, "Yes, I'd like the reservation for Charles Maxey."

So he said, "Okay, thank you." So, I had this luggage on my shoulder and they looked around and they said, "What group?"

I said, "Oh," I said. "Yes," I said, "I'm a delegate from the state of Oregon".

"Are they with you?"

"Sure, yeah, sure; I'm with them."

So they looked around reservation and he said, "We don't have a reservation for you."

I said, "Yeah, I'm almost sure you do."

So at that time Bob Elliot's wife walked up and she said, "What's happening, Maxey?"

I said, "They said they don't have a reservation for me."

So she said, “Well, look in the Oregon delegation and I’m sure you’ll find it.” So Bob came walked up about that time and he also made known the fact, yes, my was there, so they found it.

So the clerk said, “Well, there’s a problem. And the problem is we do not house any Blacks in this hotel.”

He said, “Well, I’m not concerned about housing any Blacks. It’s a matter of this is Oregon’s delegation and this man happens to be a delegate. He’s not a worker; he’s a delegate.”

“We can’t help you. Can’t do it.”

So argument ensued and all the people from different other places, states, were coming in, and – but we held the whole thing up and wouldn’t let anybody come in until they seen after us. And most of the people just started piling their stuff in the lobby and all. So it was creating a scene like, and tempers began to get a little warm from one group to another. And it got down to the point to where, I think Bill – it was either Bob or Vivian, one made the comment that we should make known that none of the Oregon delegation would register until we get this straight.

And also what had happened at that time, Vivian summoned the convention committee at that time, some of the heads, and got together with them and found out – and so they wanted to know what was it they thought they could do, and they insisted on me being in on the meeting at that time. So we just used a part of the lobby and had a say; and mine was that I would like to stay – no I wouldn’t like to go back. I wouldn’t like to just get a room and stay here and wait until this is over and go back with you. But...

JS: Let’s see. Get a room where? At the...

MAXEY: Get a room out of the city because they said they weren’t going to honor my name, even though they found it on...

JS: Get a room elsewhere.

MAXEY: Yes, get a room elsewhere and just stay there, and then come back. And I insisted on being there and taking part. Each time they got my opinion: “Well how do you feel? Do you — would you still consider staying here even after they said they stood pat on that Oregon would” — and they told me this, and had said this right to my face, that if you can’t receive all types of accommodations, anybody else’ll accommodate you, then Oregon group will go home. We’d rather go home than to be humiliated with the fact that we’ve been part of our — a segment of our group has been turned down for accommodations.

JS: So who was suggesting that? Who suggested that? Did someone suggest that you — one way out would be for you take a room elsewhere? Who was that?

MAXEY: That suggestion came up — I’ll tell you, and let me carry that a little further.

JS: Okay.

MAXEY: It — Mrs. Elliot, at that time, who was Bob Elliot’s wife, she suggested it, “If we have to go through all this, I just think the state of Oregon should go on record as saying that we won’t take part.” And I told them that I didn’t think that would help as much if we stayed there and fight it out with something better than that.

And then at that time Vivian called a meeting with the Western Region group, that would include California, Washington, Oregon, and might have been Idaho, I don’t remember, to go into a caucus that afternoon, and we did and they asked me for a suggestion. “If you got a room now, even with them turning you down, would you stay?”

I said, “Sure, I’d be very happy to stay, but I would be very cautious of eating here.”

JS: Oh, you told them openly that?

MAXEY: Yeah. I told them openly there that I wouldn't feel free to eat there if they felt this way about me staying there. If I felt that I should have my meals there and things like that. And it continues – discussion went on and on and different group said, "Well, we would like to hear a suggestion from Maxey. If it came out that you just could not – if we could make sure that you took part in the meetings, open part, not a closed part, an open part, would you be willing to attend?"

"Sure, I'd be very happy to." I made that known.

And, "Well, then what would be the next alternative then, if you feel about eating in the place?"

I said, "Well, I just wouldn't feel right to just force somebody to let me stay here. And I feel that possibly something could happen like that. But to meet with the group, I'll meet with the group every time they meet. In this place."

JS: So at this time they were saying that you could stay there or...

MAXEY: No.

JS: They were saying that you could get a place elsewhere...

MAXEY: No, no.

JS: And then come to the meetings?

MAXEY: No, no it never did say anything about the meetings. As far as I am concerned, as far as I know, there was nothing ever said about me coming to a meeting.

JS: Oh.

MAXEY: But we had discussed that. If they said, okay, you can't stay here and can't eat here, but okay then what about participating in the group? Now I – in the banquets, I ate at every banquet. I did not have my meals there. I did not. And that was because of my request that I would not eat there. I said I wouldn't eat there. Now I don't know what would have happened if I had said I wanted to eat there with the group. I'm almost sure with the way the delegation had discussed with me they would have said, "Well fine. If you don't eat, we won't eat here."

JS: But my – what I'm not understanding, what I'm not clear on is, this is the meeting of the Western Delegation and at that time are they talking about your staying at the hotel or staying elsewhere?

MAXEY: No. The word didn't come up about staying elsewhere. I was the one that brought that up.

JS: Oh, so they...

MAXEY: I brought that up. I said, "Well what about Maxey, being duly selected to come, and then we will have to say that there is some portion of our group wasn't able to take part in meetings." Said, "Okay, what would be – what would have to happen then? What would we do about that?"

And this time Mrs. Elliot kept saying, "Well, why don't Oregon go home?" Just pull out and go home and let that publicity take care of itself.

JS: And you didn't like that.

MAXEY: No, I didn't like that. I eventually said, I said, "Well look, is there a possibility I could get a room elsewhere? And if I can get a room elsewhere and could get transportation that I can make all the meetings, would that be possible?"

And then this is the time that everybody said, "Well, how did you come?"

I said, "I came in the car — in Sig Unander's car with Bob Elliot and his wife."

They said, "Well, let's see, I think maybe this would be a very good idea to ask Sig Unander." And Sig — I think he was in group — might have been at that time didn't hear the discussion, asked, and somebody asked him outright, would it be possible that his car could be used for transportation? And he went further than that. He said, "Not only that, he can have the car as long as we're here. He can use the car the whole time he's here to go back and forth if that's what he desires."

JS: So where did you then get a place?

MAXEY: Okay, in that discussion somebody in the group, I don't know who it was, went downstairs and asked for — because they had some Blacks working in the hotel and they asked one of the Blacks there something about in a Black home. And one of the fellows who worked there said that he had a room that he'd be very happy if I stayed in his home. And that's where I stayed. But I did not eat in his place. I picked the cafés where I ate. And when I went to eat, I usually went with a delegate — somebody from the Oregon delegation.

JS: What did that guy make of what was going on?

MAXEY: He was afraid to talk about it, and didn't want me to talk about it too much.

JS: Oh, really?

MAXEY: No. Really didn't. No. No. He asked me would I like to have meals with he and his family. And I told him no, I'd rather eat out. And I did. I ate at some very nice cafés in Salt Lake City.

JS: No problem?

MAXEY: No problem. I went with – well each time I went in, I went in [with] no less than two people. Two other people. And I was the only Black. And if there was any discussion, I never knew it. Now, I think maybe what might have been, because within walking...

[End of Tape 12, Side 1]

Tape 12, Side 2
1994 November 18

MAXEY: Where do you think I probably should start on that?

JS: This is the point at which the Western Group had met. You've kind of conferred with them and did you find that room the same day? Are we still there?

MAXEY: Sure. The same evening we found that room, in the afternoon. In fact, when the person – I don't know. Clay probably can tell you who it was that went down and found out about the room, and sent me down to talk with the fellow. And I went down and talked with him. He was a waiter or something in the hotel.

JS: You need not to play with that [the microphone]. It makes some static.

MAXEY: Okay.

JS: And then what happened next? This is the evening, I guess.

MAXEY: Yes. The evening and when Sig Unander agreed that I could carry the car, then I put my stuff in the car and the fellow went with me to his place where he lived; and I put my stuff down. And we had a meeting that evening with the – I don't know if the Western region had a caucus that afternoon or whether they just had a – I know we had a regular get-together meeting with the whole group; a kind of a get acquainted meeting.

JS: Western group.

MAXEY: Well, not only Western group; I think the whole convention.

JS: Oh, right.

MAXEY: I think the whole convention had a kind get acquainted meeting and a slight party where they had drinks and everything. Of course, the conversation went around like wildfire on that. And believe it or not, most of the, the people from Southern states seemed to have been more interested in finding me and talking with me than any of the other people were.

In fact, I remember very well some people from Mississippi. At that time Mississippi was the least state of delegate I expected to come up and talk with me. And they told me, "Well I feel that it's going to come. Whether we like it or not, integration is going to come completely. And if we are interested in the same thing, I see no reason why there should be any difference in allowing you to be a part of our meeting when you're a part of our organization." I got that – I did not get a negative statement from anybody, concerning that.

JS: Oh, really?

MAXEY: And I stayed busier than anybody at the convention, for people coming to me apologizing, and telling me their feelings and asking my opinions. And along with the press.

JS: Oh, the press were there?

MAXEY: Sure. The press was there. And I never was told by anybody in my group to make statements or not make statements. I made a statement any time anybody came up to me from press.

JS: Did they report any of it in the paper?

MAXEY: Sure. Sure. It was in – my wife saved all the papers. Yes. Sure. Every day there was a...

JS: Maybe we can copy them. Do you think?

MAXEY: They should be...

JS: If...

MAXEY: That – I'm saying my wife saved papers of that day and that we don't have them now.

JS: Oh, alright.

MAXEY: Now I'm wondering whether or not you could still get them from...

JS: We can find them, actually. Yeah. So the evening went pretty well. And when did things heat up again? Become...

MAXEY: The heating – the thing that got heated up, I think about – let's see, after the committee meetings, on the floor one evening, I think it was, we began to get into some pretty heated discussions. This is the whole group on different things that we're going – we felt should go into the plank. You can understand that naturally there's some things of education, integration, and things like that would be coming on at this time. And especially people who – there were –.

Here's another thing, there were a lot of people who were delegates of visitors, who were also running for offices back in some of the states; most of the states. You had governors; you had senators; you had people who were planning on running for some of those offices. So consequently, it just wasn't the delegates from the Republican parties

that were there. You had the place just buzzing with the media and, and people from all over.

JS: Yeah. Well, so you say the next thing was — in a general meeting the discussion renewed. This wasn't the next day, but maybe the next day there...

MAXEY: Probably, probably...

JS: It was sometime when things were cooking.

MAXEY: Yes, it was sometime — right. When it started to — people had had their own state caucuses and own suggestions of things they would like to go into the plank. They were discussing then what, what each group would like to have to go into the plank for the election.

JS: And that was the Oregon delegation, too? Did the Oregon delegation meet right away and begin to discuss this?

MAXEY: Yes, sure. And not only that; I think we had more caucuses, Western Region caucus, than any other group at that time, because of the fact that — I think this spurred more attention toward labor and industry because of this incident, than it would have been had it not been anything said about it. That is my feelings, at least.

JS: So, generally they got into the issue of labor and industry.

MAXEY: Yeah.

JS: Without getting into the racial thing?

MAXEY: I think that was included; it had to. Yes, sure.

JS: Oh. Was the elevator problem happening?

MAXEY: I was told that they'd rather me not ride the elevator. But I rode the elevator.

JS: Oh. When did they tell you that?

MAXEY: They told me that evening, I'm almost sure, that the elevator service would not be welcome. I would not be welcome to elevator service, or the rooms. And different people had made suggestions: Well, well, I'll tell you what, since they don't want – if you – if I accept the room, you go ahead. I didn't want it like that. I'd just rather not because I didn't know what might become of it, and I'd just rather not do it that way.

JS: When did the Oregon delegation – I guess, in caucus; when did they start coming to grips with this? At the second night, or pretty early, that they got into the question of what they were going to do about your situation, your experience? When did that really begin to develop?

MAXEY: That was that night. We...

JS: That first night.

MAXEY: We insisted that night that we would have something the next day to put on the floor, in the open meeting.

JS: Oh, okay. Alright.

MAXEY: Yeah. Next day. Oregon delegation, we carried this the next day. And it was my suggestion that I would stay if the Oregon delegation would stand behind me in saying that I would put a resolution on the floor asking that we do not use the accommodation of any place anymore, if our group, if any segment of the group is not accepted, in front of a group, if any segment of the group is not accepted. And they hashed that over and discussed that quite a bit and they decided that it probably would be better if some other person would introduce that. And I accepted the fact of that, but I did want to do it myself.

JS: Now you have discussed before, a discussion in the general conference where a woman got up, and I think you said she was from South Carolina, and she gave a speech which was a really, well, let's say, reactionary speech, and let's say it was a racist – sounds like it was a real racist speech. What, again, did she actually say in that speech? Do you remember some of the phrases she used and what her message was?

MAXEY: Not only in the speech. I heard in several speeches that people got up and made mention of the fact that they'd rather not be associated with Blacks. "It has worked before and I see no reason why it shouldn't continue to work." I mean those statements were made time and time again. But remembering the exact quotes, I don't remember if I can come up with any.

But as I said, I remember several people coming up and just saying well, "I like Blacks as well as I like anybody else. I've been friends with them. But when it comes to making laws and what we got to do in order to get along with Black people coming up with that kind of stuff." That was done several times. "I'm favor of it. Me, one on one," people would say, "If I feel like befriending him as an individual, I feel like he should have it. But I will not vote, nowhere, that I'm supposed to." It's a human thing, and this is the way they wanted to put it. And I knew what that did. [Laughs]

JS: This woman from South Carolina, her speech, I understood, was right to the whole convention.

MAXEY: Yes.

JS: And it was after that, that Bob Elliot's wife got up from behind her and spoke. And I was wondering if we could get more detail on what the two of those people said.

MAXEY: Bob's wife was very emotional. In fact, she spoke in tears all the way. Because she was saying that she, too, was from Kentucky, and she had been familiar with the segregation and things of that sort. But when it got to the place where it seemed like it was going to be open mistreatment, inviting open mistreatment, that she didn't want to be a part of, and would not be a part of it. And she did not want to be a part of any party that sanctioned that. I remember her making the statement to that effect. That was the statement that she made, in effect. I don't know what exact words that she used, but that was in effect of what she said.

JS: And then there was a vote at some point? Well, I guess I should ask you...

MAXEY: Yes! That was a vote taken – let's see, I'm trying to think, now was that at the open meeting that the vote was taken that that would go into the resolution? I'm almost sure that it was on main floor, that that resolution was put on the main floor and passed. Yes, there were some objections. Yeah. Quite...

JS: A vote was taken. Do you know what the vote turned out to be? Or was it just a mass open vote?

MAXEY: It was a mass open vote. And I think, without calling states, I think the majority answered yes, as far as I remember, because I don't remember states holding

up their hand or, to the extent that — I think it was just a majority vote that they accepted the fact that it did pass. I'm almost sure.

JS: And do you remember Clay Myers' speech? Clay Myers presented the resolution. Do you remember what that was like?

MAXEY: I'm almost sure when that came, Clay Myers introduced himself as being a member of the Oregon Young Republican, and you know, called for the resolution, stating, the meat of it would have been, "I would like to make a resolution stating that the Republican Party will not hold meetings anyplace where any segment of any of their members have been refused accommodation." That was the essence of what the resolution was.

JS: And then did he turn to you and ask you to speak?

MAXEY: As near as I remember I had — I might have seconded that motion without a speech.

JS: Oh, you didn't get up to speak at this time?

MAXEY: I did not give a speech on it. I'm almost sure. I remember — I know in the caucus I made the second to the suggestion. And I think on the main floor, too. I'm almost sure.

JS: When you say the caucus, was it the General Western Caucus?

MAXEY: Right, right.

JS: At any point did – at some point in these caucuses, these meetings, did you get up and speak to the issue?

MAXEY: I continued several times. In fact some members of the group told me that – asked me a question did I think I was being antagonistic because most every time if I got up I made mention something of the fact. I think somebody – I'm almost sure somebody asked me that.

JS: Oh. You were popping up a number of times.

MAXEY: If it wasn't a number of times, I remember, every time that I got a chance I made mention something of the fact that I felt that we should be aware of it, of the fast growth of it, or this might be the beginning of something that you tell me that our organization is not. And we should be careful to accept these resolutions in this meeting; down further, I remember saying several times, that if we are not watchful we're going to be – have some of the same thing put into resolutions, almost saying that we won't do it. And we should be aware of that. I remember.

JS: Okay. I was thinking of earlier you had said that they said let's hear Charles' feelings on it. And what were you referring to then?

MAXEY: Okay. This was in the Western Region caucus, I remember that. And that was when I made mention of the fact – I was saying, well let's get a suggestion from Charles, what he feels about it. And that was when I made the statement that I am not in agreement with nobody staying and taking part in the group when somebody else is being refused. But at the same time, if it means that we can stay and take an active part in the convention, yes, I wouldn't mind using the suggestion that somebody mentioned, to get a room that's not in the hotel, but be included in all the meetings that go on in the hotel.

JS: I see. This was early on.

MAXEY: Yes.

JS: This was right away. Okay.

MAXEY: Right. Right. This is the evening right after I'd been denied. Sure. Yes. That was made mention of then.

JS: How did you feel when the measure passed?

MAXEY: I don't know if I felt that there should have been more discussion or whether it was just passed to get it over with. That's how I felt. [Laughs] And I was wondering would there be a ways used to block it in other things that came up on the floor. Yeah, and that's how I felt. I was wondering whether to feel jubilant about it. A lot of people cheered and went on, but, as I said, again.

JS: You didn't feel jubilant?

MAXEY: No. No, I didn't, because of the fact that I felt deep down somewhere that a lot of people who probably – who had discussed this with me, who had probably felt the same way that, had a chance, they would have said openly. And there was some discussion that I'd had even with some of the Oregon delegation, that – well, for instance, in our regular meetings, "Well, you're always pushing for civil rights. Don't you think that you could get more done if each time you weren't so pushy?" You know I had gotten this from the delegation, and I was wondering at that point in time, wasn't there still some of the same feeling in some of the members of the Oregon delegation.

JS: You were immediately worrying about, this is really going to create this kind of resentment, or...

MAXEY: Or probably open resentment from it even when we get back to Oregon. Or if there were things, even discussing in the different deals in different committees – “Well, Maxey’s not on this committee but I want to say this, off the record of course.” And I was wondering if that would not be a part of it. That people would want to discuss it off of the record, and say – give their true feeling. “And let’s don’t put such-and-such a thing because if so, then it might give Maxey more of a feeling that he’s accomplished more than I personally, or some of us feel, that there should be in at that this time.”

Because I don’t think I’ve withheld too many things when it came to wanting things done. In other words, I did not want to accept the fact, “Well, things are going to get better later.” If we’re going to vote on it, let’s say that we will see that it will be. That was, that was the attitude that I had. And I keep saying “I” because I never was able to get too many Blacks to go with me to a Young Republican meeting. And I carried two or three people with me several times.

JS: Well how many other Blacks – maybe you can name them, who were Young Republicans, who you did succeed in getting into the Oregon Young Republicans group.

MAXEY: One only. [Laughs]

JS: One?

MAXEY: One as I can remember, and he was a young fellow that was going to law school at Northwest Law School at that time. He later became a judge. He left here and went to — in Southern California.

JS: Oh. What was his name?

MAXEY: Mallory Walker.

JS: And there was one other Black delegate at the – from Kansas.

MAXEY: That is right. From Kansas.

JS: And what did he say to you, after – in the midst of all of this?

MAXEY: I talked with him. In fact he was in the meeting when, when this resolution was put on, and he talked with me afterwards, not during that meeting. And he told me that his group treated him fine. He was not excluded from nothing that went on in that group. And that he was not in favor of discussing anything with me to suggest to the group. And he...

JS: He didn't want to get involved.

MAXEY: No. He, he didn't feel comfortable even just if he walked by and he and I stood and talked. He was uncomfortable with that.

JS: Oh, I see. Oh, I see.

MAXEY: No. He figured that this probably would give somebody the feeling that maybe he and I were going to offer something between us, of what we thought was not going on, or what should be going on. He didn't welcome talking to me alone. If – his delegation would stop if he'd pass, and I would start talking with him; and they'd stop, he'd stop and discuss, or sit down and talk with me if his delegation, somebody from his delegation would. But I don't ever remember sitting down with him alone. Or sitting down with him with the Oregon group, and nobody but him.

JS: He sounds afraid.

MAXEY: And he was a young attorney also.

JS: Oh. Is that right?

MAXEY: Yes. He'd just passed the bar And of course then he was thinking about going into politics, and he didn't want to bury – he didn't want to tear down any bridges, possibly.

JS: Yeah. Not unfamiliar. Was anyone else jubilant? You weren't able to be as jubilant as maybe you'd have like to have been.

MAXEY: I think Oregon State group were.

JS: How did they show it?

MAXEY: By applause and screams. Yeah. Of course, it didn't – you couldn't get the echo all over the room like that, no. You didn't get the whole – but you could tell where the Oregon State group was.

JS: Later on did you get some sense of satisfaction?

MAXEY: Yes. When we came back, the first meeting we went to, the first thing was a big cheer for the Young Republican delegate and for their stand on what they felt.

JS: That was a meeting you had when you got back.

MAXEY: Yeah.

JS: Well, those were...

[Tape stops]

Maybe I should look at a couple of expressions, that – Okay, that one wasn't a problem. Well, then, it cleared, I think it cleared everything up.

[Tape stops]

MAXEY: I was included in the Oregon group even after we came back home, to feel free to discuss anything that I wanted to. That it was not considered antagonizing to continue to make known the fact that I was still interested in civil rights, employment, and people's ability to live where they'd like to, and to take part in public lands, in public organizations, and things of that sort. I made that clear, completely.

JS: It sounds like hearing about their behavior when they got back and had their meeting, that they were proud of themselves. Were they proud of you, too?

MAXEY: I don't know about being proud of me. I think they were more proud of themselves. I think they were – I really think this was a shock to the Oregon delegation themselves, to say, "Actually we did that. And without too much fanfare." I think it is much more enjoyment they got out of believing that they themselves, at the spur of the moment it came up they acted instead of a lot of reaction. That, it might have been that if they had time to study it, many of them wouldn't have probably been as vocal as they were about things. Or maybe if they'd had time to discuss it with – after the convention if that had been discussed after convention, probably been different.

But since it was head-on at the beginning of it, I think that was one of the best things ever happened. Because I think if that had been brought to the floor two days after the convention started, I don't think it'd been too much to take them about it. But I think to meet it head-on with here, it hadn't even started, and if we don't do it here, we're not going to get a chance to do anything about it.

Now how that's buried in the history, I don't know. I'd like to see how the report is now.

JS: It's exactly what I'm trying to find out.

MAXEY: I'd like to know. I really would.

JS: Because I'm going to call the Young Republican Headquarters and ask them for some help with their history. So that when I write – I'm going to write a little introduction to it, and so that I can give some straightforward background to it.

Did you want to stay on?

MAXEY: Yeah. I would like, in case you find out, the chairman or the person that you're going to get in contact with — I'd be very happy to be invited or to meet with him or the group and discuss it with them. I really would. I think it'd probably be good.

JS: We – that's the sort of thing that actually, you know, having this published might be a good way of introducing them to this piece of history.

MAXEY: Yeah.

[End of Tape 12, Side 2]

[End of Interview]