

**Stanley Grizzle:** Continuation of interview with Joe Sealy. There were White porters that you encountered on the job of sleeping car porters, uh, what was their attitude towards this Black union? So Black-led union, 'cause all the members were all the leadership was-was Black across the country. Was there any antipathy towards the union you think?

**Joseph Sealy [Joseph hereafter]:** Well, some of the White, uh, porters filled in very nicely because it's- it was just a case of bread and butter. They had to work someplace and work was just as hard for them to find elsewhere as it was for us. So, but they- there were some who resented the fact that, uh, they had to pay dues to a Black union. They had- they resent the fact that even the Black union represented them.

**Stanley:** But did they, uh, did any of them resist to re-resent or object to paying dues?

**Joseph:** Well, no, because you see that was the condition of working. The, uh, you had to pay your dues, and if you became un-financial and you got into trouble, well then, the union did not represent you. And White porters were no different than the Black porters because they did get in trouble too. It's a new era for them.

**Stanley:** But you're speaking about when- after they ran from the checkoff came in? Can you speak [crosstalk].

**Joseph:** Well, the checkoff came, was there when-when they came.

**Stanley:** Oh, I see. There were no White porters before then?

**Joseph:** No, no, no.

**Stanley:** All right. Um, do you think that the community, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, uh, um, benefited the community beyond the porters' families? In other words, did they provide any inspirational leadership in-in other co- other, uh, community groups in the Black community?

**Joseph:** Well, I have to put it this way.

**Stanley:** Masonically or?

**Joseph:** A lot of the brother- of the Brotherhood Sleeping Car Porters, their children because of the fact the father was working and bringing in the necessary money. Their children benefited because opportunities were opening up. We live in a changing world and those kids were going to school, gettin' education, and fitting into jobs away from the railroad completely. So, I believe that they did benefit the community because of a different class or ambitious young people fittin' in the outside into the outside world. Yeah. They did benefit the community.

**Stanley:** Well, there was a Porters' Union responsible for the organizing of any other community organizations?

**Joseph:** No, they had a hard time surviving amongst themselves.

**Stanley:** You're right. Do you recall any porters, uh, who worked on the railroad who, uh, worked as porters who had degrees or who left the railroad and became famous?

**Joseph:** Well, we had the- we had the some of the leaders who-who started- who this Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, who negotiated the deal, such as Doc Bartholomew. He came here from the West Indies via England. And, uh, he-he had knowledge to be a doctor. Somethin' happened over there and another man name, Dr. Johns, who did not finish. But he left the CPR after a number of years and went back to England, finished his, uh, his degrees or whatever it is, it takes to be a doctor. And he became a doctor.

**Stanley:** And he dropped dead I hear, shortly after?

**Joseph:** And he dropped dead shortly after. Yeah.

**Stanley:** [inaudible 00:03:46] here I hadn't-hadn't heard of him.

**Joseph:** Yeah. His name was Johns. I remember that. And we had two other- two other fellows. He is that guy with a bad leg. What was his name?

**Stanley:** Oh, yes. Yes. Yes.

**Joseph:** He's well-educated man that far.

**Stanley:** Montreal man.

**Joseph:** Yeah.

**Stanley:** Yeah. He used to run to Toronto.

**Joseph:** Yeah. I don't know whether, oh, you might see him. You might see him in that photograph.

**Stanley:** Like I saw him in there. Yeah.

**Joseph:** Yeah. I just can't remember his name right now.

**Stanley:** Yes [crosstalk].

**Joseph:** Oh, he was well, and he was a great worker in the church.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Joseph:** Great worker in the church.

**Stanley:** Well, how come he's in the photograph? He must have been a [unintelligible 00:04:18] He used to be a guest convention.

**Joseph:** Well, he's a brother who's a sleeping car porter. He was there.

**Stanley:** But there weren't many non-delegates in the convention though. [unintelligible 00:04:25]

**Joseph:** But, uh, to me, every man I think in there was a porter, in that picture.

**Stanley:** All right. Okay. Um-

**Joseph:** There was a porters' convention.

**Stanley:** Can the, uh, do you think that the, um, you can't think of any, uh, former porters who became great. For instance, I heard about porters who worked for the CPR 1955, '56, who went on to become the Prime Minister of Saint Vincent.

**Joseph:** I never heard of that.

**Stanley:** His name was Mitchell.

**Joseph:** Mitchell. I never heard about that. Don't-don't say it hasn't been, but I haven't heard of it.

**Stanley:** But you don't know of any other examples like that?

**Joseph:** No. No, no.

**Stanley:** Can- Do you think the Brotherhood they become porters can be faulted for failure of porters being given the right to be promoted to sleeping car conductors?

**Joseph:** Well, I can tell you a story about Sammy Lewis. Sammy Lewis was a well-educated man. I think he was the second president. And he took sick with leukemia and his doctor told him he couldn't do the porter work anymore. So with all his credentials of education, and he had it. He went to the management and he says, "I can't do, uh, porter work, but I had the seniority." So the student- the superintendent manager said, "Well, what can you do?" He says, "I could be a sleeping car conductor." He says, "What? You, a sleeping car conductor?" And he looked down upon this man. And he did not become a sleeping car conductor. He died a little after that.

**Stanley:** My question was, can the Brotherhood of Sleeping Ba- Car Porters be criticized for promotion not being available to the porter?

**Joseph:** Well, no, they can't, because a couple years later they went to Ottawa about this and the doors were open. CNR had Black sleeping car conductors, CPR had to hire Black sleeping car conductors. We have a number of them right here today who have already been, you got another guy named Harold Leakey. He moved to Toronto.

**Stanley:** Yeah. Talked to him.

**Joseph:** He was a sleeping car conductor.

**Stanley:** So you don't think it is porters' union's fault for the, uh, for not pushing the issues, uh, more?

**Joseph:** You can't say fault because look, you-you-you say today something is wrong. It doesn't mean because it's wrong you can correct it today. All these things take time. And the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters was the cause of it changing.

**Stanley:** Even in the CNR, you mean?

**Joseph:** Even during the CNR, but I don't want to give credit for it. They-they were not part of it. But, uh, you see, they belonged to the, uh, non-ops. And when the Brotherhood think they're gonna got something for porters, porters got it all around the board.

**Stanley:** All right. Uh, we've come to the conclusion of this, uh, interview. Thanks very much for your information. Something you said, have been said before. Thanks very much. Um, many things you said, and you say things in your own style, which is- which is why it's important to interview different people, get different perspectives, different slides on things. So in conclusion, now, I'm gonna ask you if you could have an anecdote, something humorous that happened to you on the road.

**Joseph:** Mm-hmm.

**Stanley:** Uh, would you like to relate?

**Joseph:** Something's funny. Mm-hmm.

**Stanley:** 'Cause we want to make-make the book not too heavy to read.

**Joseph:** Yeah. Well.

**Stanley:** Or can you think of, uh, any humorous nicknames that porters were given?

**Joseph:** I can tell you of something that happened and scared me very much, during the war. It was must have been very rough over in Europe. And these- they were picking these young fellows from out West and bringing them in and sending them right over to, they were aviators. So I was sitting in smoking room one night. I had a little pen knife and I was kind of pairing my nails and the air force fellow come in. He looked at me and he says to me, "Can I borrow that knife for a moment?" It was only small. So I said, looked at him, look at first, see what's going on. And he- I gave it to him. He took the knife and he stood up where- where he was. And like I'm sitting there and he did this. Now, I thought he was throwing it at me, but what he done, he cut a vein back here, eh.

**Stanley:** In the right leg?

**Joseph:** Yeah. So I took the knife. Didn't hit me, but I-I made a noise because I didn't like this that-that happened. I didn't know what it was all about. So when we got to Sudbury, we're coming to Sudbury, the-the military police got on there and says, he's just trying not to go over the seas. See that he's doesn't cut himself there. But we are going patch him up and send him over just the same [chuckles] But I was really scared that night. [chuckles] I thought sure who was getting ready to-to throw that knife at me.

**Stanley:** Yeah. I see. All righty. Conclusion, perhaps you'd like to make a comment about the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, the book, which this interview is all about. Uh, any comments about making before we conclude?

**Joseph:** Well, I would say that the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters coming into Canada was the best thing that could ever happen to Canadian porters. And, uh, we were working for nothing. The red caps were working for nothing. And-and since that union took over for porters, all porters were able to enjoy a better way of life. I have been in, retired for the last 12 years, and I'm better off today because of that union than I were when I was working.

**Stanley:** That's never been said before. That's interesting. Yeah. Well, truth though, yeah. Mm-hmm.

**Joseph:** It is a fact.

**Stanley:** Okay. Thanks very much, Joe.

**Joseph:** My pleasure.

**Stanley:** End of interview with Joe Sealy at 2:15 PM. Interview of, uh, Evelyn Braxton at her home on the 24th of November, 1987.

**Evelyn Braxton:** Mm-hmm.

**Stanley:** Just for the record, please give me your full name.

**Evelyn:** Evelyn Marshall Braxton.

**Stanley:** Right. And, uh, you were a?

**Evelyn:** I was the president of the La.

**Stanley:** Well, you were born where?

**Evelyn:** St. Kitts.

**Stanley:** Right. And, uh, I don't suppose you wanna tell me when?

**Evelyn:** Hmm, it doesn't matter. Yeah. Um-

**Stanley:** Just-just for the record to show the-the interview.

**Evelyn:** Oh yeah. I was born say, uh, oh, October 7th, 1913.

**Stanley:** Right. And you came to Canada?

**Evelyn:** I came to Canada-

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Evelyn:** -in 1950, uh, 1929.

**Stanley:** Uh, from your birthplace St. Kitts?

**Evelyn:** Yes.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm. And you came to Montreal?

**Evelyn:** Yeah, to my mother.

**Stanley:** Oh, I see. And, uh,

**Evelyn:** And I went to school here.

**Stanley:** Oh, you went to school here. I see. Have you any idea- were your mother and father or just your mother?

**Evelyn:** My mother.

**Stanley:** Oh, I see.

**Evelyn:** Yeah.

**Stanley:** Why did you-

**Evelyn:** And my stepfather was a railroad porter and he lived in Ottawa at the time.

**Stanley:** Oh, I see. What was his name?

**Evelyn:** Marden Borough John.

**Stanley:** B-O?

**Evelyn:** M-A-R-D-E-N B-O-R-O-U-G-H.

**Stanley:** Oh, I see. And, uh, he was a CP car porter on the CPR?

**Evelyn:** Right.

**Stanley:** Canadian Pacific Railway Company, right?

**Evelyn:** Yes.

**Stanley:** Uh-huh. And um, so that was your first- your family's first touch with the, uh, sleeping car business then?

**Evelyn:** Right.

**Stanley:** Canadian railroad. Right. Mm-hmm. Um, now did you ever have- did you have any other contacts with sleeping car porters there?

**Evelyn:** Oh, yes. My-my first husband Norman Marshall.

**Stanley:** Oh, yes.

**Evelyn:** Mm. We got married in 1937.

**Stanley:** And he was a?

**Evelyn:** And he was a Pullman porter.

**Stanley:** Oh, I see. Where was he born?

**Evelyn:** He was born in Toronto, 15 Nassau Street in Toronto.

**Stanley:** Right near where I was born. Is that so?

**Evelyn:** Yes.

**Stanley:** I didn't know that. Oh, and, um, uh-huh. And he was a porter of the Pullman Company, right?

**Evelyn:** Yes.

**Stanley:** And he-he passed on?

**Evelyn:** Yeah, he passed on in 1958.

**Stanley:** Oh yes, I remember him well. And, uh, you married, uh-

**Evelyn:** George Braxton.

**Stanley:** George Braxton-Braxton and who was a CPR [crosstalk].

**Evelyn:** CPR, yes.

**Stanley:** Right. Mm-hmm.

**Evelyn:** George was very active in the Brotherhood. He was a President of Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porter.

**Stanley:** The CPR division?

**Evelyn:** CPR division.

**Stanley:** All right. Mm-hmm. And how long was he president? Do you know the dates which he?

**Evelyn:** No. No, I really don't know. That was before we got married.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm. You became, uh, a member of the Ladies' Auxiliary in what year?

**Evelyn:** And let me see, about, um, in the end of, um, let me see about of '46.

**Stanley:** 1946?

**Evelyn:** Yeah.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Evelyn:** And, uh, did you hold office?

**Stanley:** Yes.

**Evelyn:** What office did you hold?

**Stanley:** President.

**Evelyn:** Mm-hmm. Do you know what year you became President?

**Stanley:** Uh, I became, I think when we had that convention in St. Louis.

**Stanley:** Oh, I see.

**Evelyn:** What year was that now?

**Stanley:** Well, I can check that I have [unintelligible].

**Evelyn:** You can check it. Yeah. Uh-huh.

**Stanley:** Yeah. Who was the president immediately before you?

**Evelyn:** Velma King.

**Stanley:** Nice.

**Evelyn:** Mm-hmm.

**Stanley:** And who followed you as President?

**Evelyn:** I remained the President until the end.

**Stanley:** Oh, you did?

**Evelyn:** Yeah.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Evelyn:** Over 16 years I believe that I served as a President.

**Stanley:** And who were the other officers in the Auxiliary at the time you were President?

**Evelyn:** Um, Yvonne Blanchette.

**Stanley:** What was her position?



**Evelyn:** She was recording secretary.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Evelyn:** And, uh, Lucille Coward, I think was the treasurer-

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Evelyn:** -and Mrs. Cooper. Mrs. Cooper was the treasurer, Theresa Cooper.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Evelyn:** And um, let me see-

**Stanley:** W-what was Coward?

**Evelyn:** Tab. Mrs. Elsie Tab was the Vice President.

**Stanley:** You said Lucille Coward was?

**Evelyn:** She was- she took over as the treasurer.

**Stanley:** After?

**Evelyn:** Mrs. Cooper got ill and she took over at the end.

**Stanley:** Oh, I see, Oh, I see.

**Evelyn:** Mm-hmm.

**Stanley:** Right. Um, why did you decide to join the Ladies' Auxiliary?

**Evelyn:** Well, I decided to join the La-Ladies' Auxiliary because, um, my husband, he-he was a member of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters.

**Stanley:** Which is Mister?

**Evelyn:** Uh, that's uh, Norman.

**Stanley:** Norman. Oh, yes. Right.

**Evelyn:** Norman Marshall.

**Stanley:** Right. Mm-hmm. Oh, I see. And, uh, I mean, did you have any strong convictions about joining or just joined because your husband was a member?

**Evelyn:** Well, this will tell you the story here.

**Stanley:** I see, would you like to read it to me?

**Evelyn:** The Ladies Auxiliary, uh, this is, um, I gave this address on our anniversary, November 1942: "The Ladies Auxiliaries are happy to extend to the members greeting on our 80- 18th anniversary. The charter and seal of the organization was received on November the 9th, 1943. Brother Benny Smith, second International Vice President, and Zone Supervisor was the guest speaker. And reported on the result of the dominion wide election held to determine whether the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porter, or the former Welfare Committee of the Sleeping Car Porters would be the bargaining agent for the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. The-the Brotherhood had once again planted its flag high up on the hilltop of victory in almost 100% triumph. The Ladies' Auxiliary are happy that we still have some of our chartered members. Sister Elle Cooper, Sister T. Mead and Sister Sheffield, Sister Quadriton, Sister V. King. We have now today, uh, at the close of the Ladies' Auxiliary, we have living today, Sister V. King, Sister Teresa, uh, co- um, Sister Teresa Mead, and Mrs. Sister Sheffield. The Ladies' Auxiliary started with 17 chartered members. Women need the Ladies' Auxiliary because they need the protection of a union home. If the women in the home fail to give their understanding and sympathetic moral support, the-the brothers will crack up, and he will weaken and fail to manifest faith and fortitude necessary to make a sound sane, sensible, and fighting Brotherhood. The Ladies' Auxiliary was founded by Sister Tucker and Sister Wilson in the City of Chicago 1938. The Ladies' Auxiliary aim is to fight for the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porter, and to fight for the struggle of women for independence, expression, and corporation with men, for freedom, equality, and justice. Today, the Ladies' Auxiliary join with people of colour who are fighting for independence and their rightful place among the nations of the world." That's-

**Stanley:** Braxton is gonna continue now with discussing the program of the Ladies' Auxiliary.

**Evelyn:** Yes. One of the- many of the programs that we had was an uplift for the Blacks in the community. It was one of culture. And, uh, one, our program that brought out many of the mothers, we honoured every Mother's Day. We carried on our Mother's Day Tea for a great many years. And we passed it on to the hostesses of Union Church, when we no longer had the amount of members to continue in the way that we would like to have the Mother's Day go on.

And on May the 10th, 1964, where we honoured, the first mother that we honored was Mrs. Medgar Evers in absentia as the most courageous Negro mother of the year. While the darker races around the world are claiming for respect and economic freedom, especially those of African descent in North America. In the fight for equality and justice, we have some outstanding leaders who have had to make the supreme sacrifice for the cause I mentioned. The late Mrs Me- Mr. Medgar Evers, who was the President of the NACP in Miss-Mississippi, who was shot by a sadistic racist on entering his home leaving a young wife and three small children. She has shown great strength and fortitude in her deepest hour of grief, not to give the fight up, but to make her late husband endeavor a reality. Her life service is not enough. Or we acknowledgment we need a positive frog-program for translating principle into reality on every front. Thou shall love thy neighbour as thyself, here with the glorious concept of the Brotherhood that we are members of one human family. And as pilgrims of life highway we must share one with another the joys and burdens of life. Her cheque will be forwarded to Mrs. Edwards Ed-Evers with, um, a cheque will be forwarded to Mrs. Evers to help to promote racial barriers and the Negro, in particular, must be given justice as a child of God. Our second mother of the day will be Mrs. Edna Toit. Mrs.

Toit is a mother of two children and three grandchildren and she has devoted a great many years to the care of providing a lovely home for foster children. Her interests and devotion and cooperation, her love, discipline, and her devotion, she have laid upon the altar of service in the human need. We are all proud and the spirit of loyalty and we presented her with a gift of thanks. Our third mother of the year was a young mother of the community, Mrs. Winifred Clayton, mother of four children. Mrs. Clayton is an active mother in our community. And as the saying goes, she has done her duty. Is that any?

**Stanley:** Can you tell me, uh, who were the key organizers of the Ladies Auxiliary although you were not a member at the outset?

**Evelyn:** Well, it stemmed from, uh, what I could remember from Victor Coward and, uh, he was very active, and I think Mrs. Velma King was very active in the Ladies' Auxiliary.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Evelyn:** And, uh, well, um, I remember the first president now I can't think of her name. Let me see.

**Stanley:** I'm talking-talking about CPR, division.

**Evelyn:** Yeah. I'm talking about CPR division. I'm just thinking about who she was now. I could see her face in front of me, but, um, she was the first winner. Well, of course, we heard about the-the latest, uh, we heard about the Brotherhood and we know that, uh, in order for the homes and the families to be protected we needed a strong union home.

**Stanley:** Right.

**Evelyn:** Because at the time, men were working for very, very low wages and, uh, the porters, uh, did not get the respect on the train that, uh, they were- they were not treated as if they were men with great intelligence. There was many, as I say the CPR had a lot of undergraduates. They had a man who was able, had the-the financial back and would have been able to go on to loftier heights.

**Stanley:** Mm.

**Evelyn:** But to the economic condition, we knew of the crash and the unemployment in those days, and they were forced to turn to the railroad to secure a better way of life for their family and, uh, in doing so, they were forced-

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Evelyn:** - to work for long hours, low salaries, and the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porter was like a saviour for the Black man.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm. We were asking you about the-the, uh--

**Evelyn:** The Ladies' Auxiliary?

**Stanley:** The, uh, organizers, who the key organizers [crosstalk]--

**Evelyn:** The organizers.

**Stanley:** You can- can you can give the answers on that question. If you can't think of any just, uh, just move on.

**Evelyn:** I can see Helen Sheffield, Teresa Mead and, oh, I forget who was the first president. I could see her face in front of me now. Yeah.

**Stanley:** Well, don't-don't waste time, let's move on to the next. The Ladies' Auxiliary lived up to the expectations, uh, of, uh, giving the brothers the-the maximum support that they, uh, looked forward to?

**Evelyn:** Oh, they certainly did. The Ladies' Auxiliary was the support of the Brotherhood men.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Evelyn:** They backed them up 100%. And, uh--

**Stanley:** Were there any White members in the auxiliary?

**Evelyn:** Oh, yes. We had quite a few White members. We know that many of our brothers was married to White women and their wives became members of the Ladies' Auxiliary. Yeah.

**Stanley:** Were they very supportive?

**Evelyn:** They were very supportive.

**Stanley:** All right.

**Evelyn:** Yes.

**Stanley:** How many White members which, can you recall there being at one time?

**Evelyn:** Um, mm, I remember I just can't say right off the bat but--

**Stanley:** Were there White members when you first joined the Ladies' Auxiliary?

**Evelyn:** Oh, yes. Yes.

**Stanley:** What year was that?

**Evelyn:** Uh, 19- I said, uh, '47 I believe.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm. Right. All right, can you think of any interesting or amusing incidents which took place in the organization?

**Evelyn:** Oh, well, we had many plays depicting the life of the-the porter [laughs], in general. Yes. And the Ladies' Auxiliary, we invited some of the brothers to take part. I remember George Braxton and Michael Stash did a play. And we had Randolph birthday which was

very, very interested. And our Mother's Day Tea, we always had a program and we gave scholarship that, you know, as I told you we gave scholarships and we sent, uh, we visit the sick and sent, uh, you know, funds to the needy. And some of the--

**Stanley:** You can't think of anything humorous or any-

**Evelyn:** Oh.

**Stanley:** - interesting stories other than eh.

**Evelyn:** Well, one thing I remember that Benny [chuckles], he was a humorous man. [laughs]

**Stanley:** Benny Smith?

**Evelyn:** Benny Smith.

**Stanley:** Vice President.

**Evelyn:** And he told, um, when he was, uh, organizing the Brotherhood and he said, "Now boys you've been, now you've been treated like boys in short pants, and I want you to put on your long pants now when you join the Brotherhood." Of course, some of the men they didn't like that at all, but I know just what he meant.

**Stanley:** Of course.

**Evelyn:** He meant, well, you have to grow up and stand up and fight and, uh, talk which was right. I remember my father-in-law told me that, uh, when there was no a union when he was a railroad porter.

**Stanley:** Who was that?

**Evelyn:** Um, Christopher Marshall, but he was born in Barbados, and he said one lady came on the train and she would I was calling him Sam and Sam and Sam. And he says, "My name is not Sam. My name is Christopher," which he was proud of that name. And, however, conductor wrote him up and said he was rude to the- to this, uh, passenger. Of course, there was no union and he went up and the CPR called him, said, "I told him my name was Christopher. I am not Sam never has been Sam."

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Evelyn:** So he said, "Well, you have to write and apologize to her." He said, "I will not. I came from Barbados and I have my trade and here's your keys." He was his own union, he was his own brotherhood man [laughs] and he went on from there and went to his trade. And he continue on and he- and he made a good life for himself. In his trade, he was independent, as he said, he had to show some form of independence. That's the independence that the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters gave to the brothers. Made them stand up and be counted.

**Stanley:** All right. Uh, finally, uh, Evelyn, I'm gonna ask you, um--

**Evelyn:** And, uh, not only for the-

**Stanley:** Sorry.

**Evelyn:** - the protection of-of the, uh, Brotherhood like my husband, well, um, the first one, he died and accidentally, a young man, but because he paid into the plans, if there was no union and there was no Brotherhood. 'Cause he worked for the Pullman Company. His daughter was able, his youngest daughter was able to continue onto school with her security was made for her to the Pullman company.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Evelyn:** To her pension.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Evelyn:** For a child on this age. Mm-hmm.

**Stanley:** Um, do you think that the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters contributed to Canadian society in any way?

**Evelyn:** Oh, su-oh sure it did. Yes.

**Stanley:** You'd like to expand on that.

**Evelyn:** The Brotherhood, certainly, uh, as- it was through the Brotherhood and better wages than men were able to go. The porters started, the children was able to be better educated, and send their children off to the crossroad, more prepared, uh, in life because they were, they had the money to send them to better school, higher form of education. They were able to buy their own homes and the women were able to travel and the children with more security, the- it certainly gave security. And that is a part of our Canadian system.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm. Can you think of any, um, Black professional or business persons who came out of porters' families? Outstanding.

**Evelyn:** Uh, professional, uh, Dr. Borne. Dr. Morris Borne.

**Stanley:** [unintelligible 00:31:06]

**Evelyn:** Yes.

**Stanley:** Oh, yeah.

**Evelyn:** His father was a railroad porter.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Evelyn:** And, um, who else? Richard Lord. His daughter now is principal on the school board.

**Stanley:** Is that so?

**Evelyn:** Yeah, Mr. Lord. What's-what's his name now? Bobby Lord. Bobby.

**Stanley:** Oh, yeah.

**Evelyn:** Must have been Robert Lord and Sandy Lawrence, his daughter became a lawyer.

**Stanley:** A lawyer in Toronto.

**Evelyn:** Yes. And, uh-

**Stanley:** Peterson.

**Evelyn:** Huh?

**Stanley:** Oscar Peterson.

**Evelyn:** Oscar Peterson.

**Stanley:** His father was a railroad?

**Evelyn:** Yeah. And uh, many others, uh.

**Stanley:** I wanna include as many as I can.

**Evelyn:** Uh.

**Stanley:** So, if you think of any, later on, you can let me know.

**Evelyn:** Mm-hmm.

**Stanley:** All right. Uh, and now you have the opportunity now to say anything you want to wind up this interview.

**Evelyn:** Yes.

**Stanley:** I don't think I have any more questions.

**Evelyn:** Well, I'm and certainly, um, Brother Blanchette, he certainly gave a lot because he was in the International of the Brotherhood. We were proud when he was elected to serve on the International of the Brotherhood of- officer of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. And Mrs. Velma King was also an international officer of the Ladies' Auxiliary. Its president.

**Stanley:** Who's that Mrs.?

**Evelyn:** Mrs. Mae Julian was our first president of the Ladies' Auxiliary.

**Stanley:** Uh, Mae Julian?

**Evelyn:** Yeah.

**Stanley:** How do you spell her name?

**Evelyn:** J-U-- M-A-E-J-U-L-I-A-N. She was a pioneer.

**Stanley:** Who is this? Uh, Joe-

**Evelyn:** Uh, Joe Jones.

**Stanley:** Oh, he was the first president of the CPR division?

**Evelyn:** Yeah. Mm-hmm.

**Stanley:** Oh, yes. All right.

**Evelyn:** He-he worked very hard to organize, uh, you know, uh, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porter for the Canadian Pacific.

**Stanley:** Yeah. Mm-hmm.

**Evelyn:** And so was, did Shirley Jackson of Toronto. She came back and forth here.

**Stanley:** Who, she what?

**Evelyn:** Shirley Jackson. No, Shirley.

**Stanley:** Is a she.

**Evelyn:** Mm-hmm. I said Shirley Jackson came. Yeah.

**Stanley:** Did you know the name of-of-of, uh, Charlie Baldwin? That name familiar to you?

**Evelyn:** No.

**Stanley:** All right, or Harry Gairey, those names. Was he an organizer to your knowledge?

**Evelyn:** Who? Gairey?

**Stanley:** Yes.

**Evelyn:** Oh, yes. Oh sure, I know him very well.

**Stanley:** But was he an organizer?

**Evelyn:** Oh yes, yes, yes. He used to come back and forth for the- on the Grievance Committee.

**Stanley:** Oh no, no, he was never on the Grievance Committee? Were you?

**Evelyn:** No? Gairey?

**Stanley:** Gairey. Gairey. No, no.



**Evelyn:** Yeah, but I met him in Toronto several time. He came, then he got fired or something, didn't he? Yeah. Yeah but I know that he came with Bino. He had to come back, and fought here.

**Stanley:** He was a- he was a porter instructor.

**Evelyn:** Yeah.

**Stanley:** Then he got fired.

**Evelyn:** Mm, that's right. That's right.

**Stanley:** But what I'm trying to clarify is if you know if he was an organizer of the union?

**Evelyn:** If I know what? He-

**Stanley:** If he was an organizer of the union.

**Evelyn:** No, I don't know. But he was from the Toronto Division.

**Stanley:** That's right.

**Evelyn:** Yes, but I really don't-

**Stanley:** You recall a Shirley Jackson's name from Toronto that's why I'm asking.

**Evelyn:** Yeah. No, but I really don't know.

**Stanley:** Uh, Velma Iris-

**Velma Coward:** Coward.

**Stanley:** Coward King.

**Velma:** Yeah.

**Stanley:** In Montreal on the 24th of November, commencing at approximately 3:10 PM. Uh, Velma for the record, what is your full name?

**Velma:** Velma Iris Coward King.

**Stanley:** Right. And, uh, you were, uh, born where?

**Velma:** In Montreal Quebec.

**Stanley:** Yes and, uh-

**Velma:** Canada.

**Stanley:** Right and when were you born here?

**Velma:** When was I born?

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Velma:** In 1914.

**Stanley:** Right and, um, your parents?

**Velma:** My parents?

**Stanley:** Were born where?

**Velma:** Were born in the West Indies.

**Stanley:** Yes, where?

**Velma:** Barbados. My father was born in Barbados.

**Stanley:** Oh, yeah and?

**Velma:** It's in West Indies. My mother was born in St. Croix.

**Stanley:** Oh, right. Did either of your parents have any- uh, what'd your father do?

**Velma:** My father when he, uh, came the Montreal, he, uh, my father was a Mounted Police in-in Barbados but when he came to Montreal, he worked on the railroad.

**Stanley:** On the Canadian Pacific Railway?

**Velma:** The Canadian Pacific Railway.

**Stanley:** Oh, I see. And, um, what year was that approximately, if you don't remember the exact year?

**Velma:** Mm-hmm, mm, I don't know what year, huh. I don't know what year was it-  
[inaudible 00:36:15] I couldn't tell you the exact year-

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Velma:** -he started to work there probably-

**Stanley:** But he was a Sleeping Car porter? Was he ever a member of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters?

**Velma:** I don't think so. I don't think he benefitted from the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters he-

**Stanley:** Did he retire before?

**Velma:** -he-he would've retired before that.

**Stanley:** Oh, I see.

**Velma:** Brotherhood came into a thing, because he worked for many years there, but he would've retired by then.

**Stanley:** Right.

**Velma:** And he was there from 1912, maybe, I don't know exactly which year he- I think he probably was, I don't know exactly when he started, probably 1912, somewhere.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Velma:** I don't really know the exact year. I think around 1912.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm. A-and when did he leave, the rail, the CPR as a porter?

**Velma:** The CPR? No. No. I don't know, I think he was- I think he was there-

**Stanley:** You don't recall? No.

**Velma:** I recall that he was about 69 like that, so-

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm. Or did you have a-

**Velma:** Um, it was just- it was during the war 'cause, you know, they stayed on a little longer because of the war. So I think he was about 69. So, um, I imagine he- I think he left about 1939 myself, oh, man, I don't know the exact year.

**Stanley:** All right. You became a member of the, uh, Ladies' Auxiliary to the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, right?

**Velma:** Mm-hmm. From its inc- from its inception.

**Stanley:** What year was that that you joined?

**Velma:** Um, inception, that would be 1943 whenever-

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Velma:** -the inception 'cause-

**Stanley:** No. And why did you join them? Did you have somebody in your family who was, uh-

**Velma:** My brother.

**Stanley:** Oh, that was-

**Velma:** I was instrumental in doing the work but my brother was the found- was the one, the catalyst for the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porter. He was the one who did all the running around for the, uh, Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. And I acted as the

secretary [unintelligible 00:38:35] for Mr. Randolph and Mr. Benny Smith and whoever else, up to twelve o'clock at night typing and doing all the work. Before, the Brotherhood was actually formed in Montreal. And that's uh-

**Stanley:** Your brother, but you didn't name him? Which brother?

**Velma:** Victor. I only had one brother, Victor.

**Stanley:** Victor.

**Stanley:** Oh, I see.

**Velma:** Victor Coward.

**Stanley:** Uh-huh. Now was this organizing of the Ladies' Auxiliary and the Brotherhood in connection with the Pullman Division or the CPR Division?

**Velma:** The Pullman Division.

**Stanley:** Pullman Division.

**Velma:** The Pullman Division.

**Stanley:** All right.

**Velma:** And the CPR, he did all, the Brotherhood.

**Stanley:** But the Pullman Division was organized-

**Velma:** First.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Velma:** Mm-hmm.

**Stanley:** What year was that?

**Velma:** 1942, '43.

**Stanley:** And then the CPR?

**Velma:** That came in much later. '42. The Brotherhood- The Pullman was certainly organized first.

**Stanley:** I-I can't hear you.

**Velma:** The Pullman Division was organized first.

**Stanley:** Yeah, but the year.

**Velma:** I don't know the exact year.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Velma:** The CPR came later.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm, I see. So, tell me, was the organizing, uh, of both Pullman and CPR porters taking place at-at the same time? Was there-was there-were there over-overlapping?

**Velma:** Pullman started- they were organized as the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and then they went after the-the CPR. Me and my brother worked for the Pullman-

**Stanley:** Yeah.

**Velma:** -Brotherhood.

**Stanley:** Right.

**Velma:** And then they went out to, uh, corral the men in the, uh, uh, CPR. Just subsequently, at a later date, they were attempting to get the men of the CNR.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm. All right. Now you became an officer.

**Velma:** Right.

**Stanley:** Uh, were you an officer of the local auxiliary?

**Velma:** Oh yes. Very much so from the very inception. [chuckles]

**Stanley:** Well, which-which-which-which auxiliary now, there were two auxiliaries, the Pullman Auxiliary, and the CPR Auxiliary?

**Velma:** There was only one auxiliary.

**Stanley:** Only one auxiliary? Oh, is it?

**Velma:** There was only one auxiliary, there was never any other auxiliary, just the auxiliary.

**Stanley:** Oh, I see. Wasn't the-wasn't the case in Toronto, that's why I'm wondering-

**Velma:** Like that. I don't know if they had any other, they only had almost one auxiliary. They never had-

**Stanley:** Yeah.

**Velma:** -they never had two auxiliaries in Toronto either.

**Stanley:** Oh yes. Oh yes. Oh, yes. I know I was there, I know. I attended the meetings.

**Velma:** Well, they never sent them. I was on the international and we never sent- they never sent any down.

**Stanley:** Mrs. Carrington was the President of the Pullman's-

**Velma:** Yeah.

**Stanley:** -division. And, uh, we had the-

**Velma:** Um, who-who was the president of the CPR?

**Stanley:** Um, Mrs., was it the chair, Mrs. Jackson. Oh, yes. Oh, yes, that [crosstalk].

**Velma:** Well, they certainly never sent to the international conventions, and I went to all our conventions in Toronto.

**Stanley:** And if you have the- I think it's- if you have the souvenir-

**Velma:** I have none of the souvenirs. I told you I lost everything.

**Stanley:** No, no, the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Booklet.

**Velma:** I don't have it. I have nothing.

**Stanley:** No, no but I'm just-I'm trying to straighten something out.

**Velma:** Yeah. Yeah but I don't have anything, but I know I went to all the conventions and, um, they we had one, I don't know about the, maybe you're as, um-

**Stanley:** There are two photographs in that aux- anniversary booklet from, uh, the New York Convention.

**Velma:** Mm-hmm.

**Stanley:** One of the Pullman Auxiliary and one of the Toronto Auxiliary.

**Velma:** Yeah.

**Stanley:** Yeah. So anyway, just for your information. Yeah.

**Velma:** Anyway. That's I-I know they certainly never came as two separate groups from Toronto there.

**Stanley:** Yeah.

**Velma:** But, uh-

**Stanley:** All right. Um-

**Velma:** Anyway, that's neither here nor there. I remember Carrington personally well, I have her in the picture and a picture there with the group and she certainly, we would've had to have a representative, which we never did. I was the secretary for a long time. So I-I know the names very well. If you-

**Stanley:** Yeah.

**Velma:** -say them, I might not.

**Stanley:** And then somebody gave me the-the, um-

**Velma:** Mm-hmm. How possible.

**Stanley:** And then a book of the, uh, uh, Pullman Division.

**Velma:** Yeah.

**Stanley:** Auxiliary. Yeah.

**Velma:** Oh. Mm-hmm.

**Stanley:** Yeah, so they had their own minutes.

**Velma:** Oh, really?

**Stanley:** Oh yeah. Mm-hmm. All right, my [crosstalk] you let's go on here.

**Velma:** [unintelligible 00:42:35] is they would not have amalgamated, isn't it?

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Velma:** Mm-hmm.

**Stanley:** Why, uh-

**Velma:** It was always a very small, you know, really, very small thing, so.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm-mm-hmm. You-you- what was your office with the Ladies' Auxiliary then, your position?

**Velma:** Secretary.

**Stanley:** Secretary. And, uh, how long did you, um, hold that office?

**Velma:** Oh, I-I can't remember the years, probably about a year, because the next time I became president, I was president for 15 years.

**Stanley:** Yeah.

**Velma:** So, I mean, I was only asked to take into a secretary to start up, set up the books to do this. Mr. Randolph asked me, that's why I took that. And Mrs. Julian was the first president.

**Stanley:** Oh, yeah, great.

**Velma:** Mrs. Mae Julian-

**Stanley:** Right.

**Velma:** -was the first president, Mrs. Um, Helen Sheffield was the, uh, vice president.

**Stanley:** Right. Mm-hmm. And, um, after you left the- were you president until the disintegration or that?

**Velma:** No.

**Stanley:** No. Who followed you as president, then?

**Velma:** My mind is ha-hazy because I was trying to think whether Mrs. Dash was ever president, she was treasurer. And, uh, I don't know, after I became very active in the, uh, in the national, I didn't have the time, you know, to be so actively involved in the local auxiliary.

**Stanley:** All right. When did you become an int- uh, member of the International Executive Board?

**Velma:** I don't know the year. I don't remember the year, but I think it might have been, uh, it might-might have been the 1948, 40- '48, I guess.

**Stanley:** And how did that come about, uh, you-you becoming a member of the International Executive Board?

**Velma:** Before that.

**Stanley:** Was there agitation for, uh, uh-

**Velma:** No, they, well, I had been, uh, I don't know. I'd always been active, you know, active because I had done all the- all this. I kept working for them all, working all the time. I'd been down. I had, uh, uh, a scholarship. We had scholarships. Um, the Ladies' Auxiliary, we gave, uh, scholarships. We did different things. We had plays. Um, we had a Mother's Day Tea, we started a Mother's Day Tea, we had Mother's Day Tea to raise money. We did different things to, uh, and then we, um, to raise money because we wanted to have scholarships. And we had, the first scholarship was given in 1944. We sent someone to Hutchins [unintelligible 00:45:29] school. And when we came back, we were supposed to go to their convention in '44.

**Stanley:** Here we are, sorry.

**Velma:** Because the recipient could not go to the convention. Um, I went down to the convention and reported on what had transpired, uh.

**Stanley:** Who was the-the recipient? The committee?

**Velma:** The recipient was, oh, yes. Uh, the recipient had our- from our- from our, uh, auxiliary was Mrs. Gertrude Daniels.

**Stanley:** Oh, yes.



**Velma:** And, uh, perhaps because of the way I gave the report, I wouldn't know. You asked me how I [crosstalk]. Uh, that's this is how I made my, uh, introduction at the international, um, convention. The first time I saw them there.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Velma:** And, um, perhaps I made an impression there, where I sat in on the proceedings and, uh-

**Stanley:** So?

**Velma:** -it was after that I think at the next convention. 'Cause conventions were held every two years, and it was at the next convention, I believe that, um, I was elected to serve on the international and uh-

**Stanley:** Oh, I see. You were elected then? Yeah.

**Velma:** Yes, you're elected. Um, you're ele- [sound cut].

**[00:47:00] [END OF AUDIO]**