

Oral History Interview with Roy

Conducted by Suzanne McCarthy

for the DC Oral History Collaborative
as part of the Cleveland & Woodley Park Villagers' Stories Project

November 1, 2023
Forty-nine minutes and fifty-two seconds

Home of Roy
Washington, DC

Summary

Roy discusses the changes he has witnessed in Cleveland Park over the past 50 years, emphasizing the impact of urban development and demographic shifts. Roy shares the turning points in his life, notably his extensive travels across all 50 states, visits to presidential libraries, and global adventures. He recounts the challenges of physical limitations in recent years but expresses gratitude for the support and community he found through Cleveland & Woodley Park Village. Roy delves into his hopes for the future, calling for a more united and compassionate society, with a focus on positive leadership, addressing societal needs, and embracing the spirit of compromise.

Cleveland & Woodley Park Village is a nonprofit membership organization serving residents in Washington, DC's Cleveland Park and Woodley Park neighborhoods. It is part of a national movement to assist older adults as they age at home, with the mission to create opportunities for older adults to be actively engaged, support those who need it with volunteer assistance to help them live independently, and build a welcoming intergenerational community. This oral history interview was conducted under a grant from the Humanities Council of Washington, DC to the Cleveland & Woodley Park Village.

Narrator Bio

Roy was born and raised in New York, and currently resides in Washington, DC, in Cleveland Park. After a career in international banking, he retired at the age of 55. An active member of the community, he has contributed his time to organizations such as Columbia University's Graduate School of Business admissions committee, demonstrating his commitment to education. Roy has been a member of Cleveland & Woodley Park Village since 2021.

Topics Covered: Cleveland Park. Woodley Park. Older Adults. Aging in DC. The Village Movement. Community. Senior Services. DC History. Cleveland & Woodley Park Village Membership. DC Villages. Travel. Disabilities.

DC Neighborhoods and Streets: Wisconsin Ave NW, Cleveland Park, C & O Canal, Rock Creek Park, Taft Bridge, Woodley Park

Suzanne McCarthy: Okay, all set.

Roy: Okay, let's see what gives.

SM: All right. Well, hello. I am Suzanne McCarthy, and today I'm here with Roy. The date is November 1st, 2023, and we're speaking in Roy's home in Washington, DC. And today, I'm honored to speak with Roy about his history within DC, and his neighborhood community recollections, and how the Cleveland and Woodley Park Village has had, or has not had an influence on his process in aging in the neighborhood. So if we could start, Roy, and talk a little bit about where you were born, and your early family life, and where you lived? Maybe you could tell me a little bit about that.

RS: I was born in New York City in Upper Manhattan. And one would never think of New York City as an area where you have wooded trails and caves, and yet the nearest subway line, so that I could go downtown and enjoy what the city has to offer. I had a play street, a very stable community, we didn't have much of a turnover there, and it was in the Inwood section of New York City which was in a valley of about six blocks, surrounded by two hills; one is the Fort George Hill, where they have the high school for half of Manhattan Island. And I used to climb the woods, about 550 feet high, past caves, to get to high school.

SM: Oh, wow. That was your commute.

RS: Yeah, that was my commute, except when we had snow on the ground, or had to walk about a half a mile, take an elevator from the subway stop to get to the top of the hill. So when there was no snow on the ground, I used to trek it up, and there were plenty of caves there to kind of enjoy as I was going on my 13-minute hike up to high school.

SM: Wow.

RS: Across the street I had an elementary school, and on the other hill, it was a very interesting geological formation of a valley with six blocks, two of the highest points of New York City, both over 500 feet high, over three miles of trails, wooded areas, in parks where you never hit a city street. So I had quite a outdoor life, you know, growing up in the city, and then an easy commute to two subway lines, which would get me downtown.

SM: Wow.

RS: My dad worked for the railroad, and he was in charge of passenger service. And if they -- you know, until I was 22, I was able to get free rides on the trains anywhere in the country. And I used to explore and go on my own to Chicago, to Philadelphia, to Washington, DC.

SM: Wow. At what age? At what age did you do that kind of traveling on your own?

RS: When I was a teenager. I started about 14 or 15, I went to Chicago on my own. I slept on one of those --

SM: The Pullman cars?

RS: -- the Pullman cars. And then the company had a hotel, and I'd stay overnight in the hotel, and I'd just explore the streets.

SM: Wow!

RS: And then in the morning, I would go downtown Saturday, I would take the train down to Central Park, and they had an ice skating rink there, and it was a free session. All the museums were free at that time, you know, before they had to start charging. And that's where I went to college. I went to City College, and I went to Columbia University. And City College was free, so I didn't have any bills to pay, which was wonderful.

SM: Yes.

RS: And Columbia University, they had a scholarship program at that time in New York State, where anyone who went to a graduate school in New York State and lived in New York State would get half their tuition automatically paid for.

SM: Wow.

RS: So that made Columbia --

SM: So what did you study there?

RS: I studied finance in the graduate level. And the undergraduate level, I had a dual major, in economics and psychology, both of which were very useful for business and a BA program.

SM: Wow. That sounds exciting.

RS: So, I mean, it makes a very nice kind of unit. The museums were free, I used to spend a lot of time going to the Museum of Natural History, hiking around Central Park -- this was really an outdoor city and an outdoor neighborhood, plenty of culture, the Museum of Natural History, the Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art -- it was a cultural mecca, it was an outdoor mecca, and a good school system.

SM: So with all this experience and education, what was the next step? How did you transition from your higher education experience?

RS: Okay -- well, my dad, working for the railroad, gave me an opportunity to really see parts of the country. And I used to go with him on some of the trips he did with school groups. So he kind of taught me the ropes of how to manage -- because he was the director. He did the timetables, he did the customer service, and he did the tour groups. So he would kind of give me preps on how to manage, and little things to think about when you have groups of people. And he also had access to the ships at that time when they came in, because that was a means of travel to Europe.

SM: Right.

RS: And I used to go on the ships because he had connections through the railroad for that, and customer service, and he was responsible for the accidents. You know, when there were accidents, he had to get up in the middle of the night and go to work, and coordinate. The next step after college and graduate school was the Peace Corps.

SM: Ah. And where did the Peace Corps take you?

RS: Peace Corps took me to -- initially, it took me to Hawaii, where I was for 14 weeks, for training. It didn't work out, you know, in Hawaii. So for six months, I was teaching in Chicago. And then after wards, I joined another Peace Corps group, and I went to Liberia.

SM: Liberia?

RS: And I was in Liberia, West Africa, for two years. And I had two major assignments, part of a public administration group, where I worked in the Finance Ministry, and also taught courses in economics and finance at the University of Liberia.

SM: Wow.

RS: And then I lived in a community where, you know, there were projects to do to help the peo-- help my neighbors. And so it was, like, a three-dimensional kind of experience. Nighttime I'd be working on the lesson plans, you know, with the students, and they had projects to do and all. So, I mean, it was a wonderful kind of multi-faceted experience, you know? And then I had a house boy, and because this was expected, you know, you kind of give a high school person an opportunity to make some money to pay their school fees. Here it's kind of for free. And as a result, he was accepted at Berea College --

SM: Oh yes, I'm familiar with that.

RS: -- in Kentucky. And that was an amazing experience, because they had a quota of five percent African, so he got in. I actually toured Berea, and more than half of the

students go on to get master's degrees. And what was kind of inter-- and he did, too, he got an MBA from the University of Michigan --

SM: Wow.

RS: -- from a very poor family --

SM: Yeah?

RS: -- he was able to take advantage of what America had to offer.

SM: Yes.

RS: And then he went back to Liberia. I also worked with the future president of the country, who was the first female head of state in an African country. So, I mean, I really had a wonderful experience working on community projects as well, you know? And those two years taught me a lot.

SM: I bet. Tell me about your living quarters while you were there.

RS: Oh, that was quite an experience. And what I had to do was, find a vacant -- I found a vacant lot, but also there was -- I had my house built, and I was in temporary quarters for eight weeks, until I was able to -- I got off the plane, I'm 24 years old, and, you know, you don't think, and you walk in the streets because you have to find a house, you've got to build a house. And all of these things were foreign to me.

SM: Did they give you funds for this? Or was this something you had to pay for yourself?

RS: No, what they did is, they -- I had temporary housing in a dormitory area.

SM: Okay. Mm-hmm.

RS: And then they advanced two years' rent to the landlord. And the landlord -- the property that I found, which was half built, you know, sometimes you don't have the money to finish, so you leave it half done.

SM: Right.

RS: So the money was advanced for the rent from the Peace Corps for two years, so that the owner could have a house when I left. Meanwhile, I had a house in the interim. We had to negotiate prices, because the property had pigs all over, and I didn't want pigs on my property, just the smell and all.

SM: Sure.

RS: So that was part of the price, you know, move the pigs. And then I went to supervise the building for which I knew nothing, and then, you know, and it was done in a very crude fashion, where the builders didn't know how to do a window. So instead of the window being this way, it was that way. So we had to redo that. And other than that, I moved in.

SM: Was this, like, cinderblock housing?

RS: Cinderblock housing. I didn't have a thatched roof, but it was cinderblock housing, with a spigot for water for the outside, because that was something intuitively that I felt I needed, because the natives didn't really have the water that they needed. They had to go to the well, and there were frogs in the wells, so this way they could use my water, and not have to bother, you know.

SM: Wow.

RS: And then --

SM: Did you have electricity?

RS: I had electricity, except for days in which the kids would throw coconuts at the power line. (laughter) And then in the middle, trying to cook, it was time -- I had a little stove and a refrigerator. I was in trouble, but I had cold food, and it worked.

SM: Sure.

RS: And I'd go -- run to the local market, and instead of buying your chicken, you had to buy a whole chicken, and then Thomas had to slaughter it, because I didn't -- that's something I didn't want to do. Didn't have meat for almost two years, lost 45 pounds during the two years. Vision improved from 20/40 to 20/12 from the natural sunlight. It was a full two-year period, which taught me a lot. And I came into contact with a lot of American businesses, because there was, you know, the history of Liberia is pretty much linked to the United States, and Black people that went back to Liberia to settle. And they became a group of their own, which they called the "Americo-Liberians." And after I left, maybe about 10 years later, they had two civil wars for 30 years. And this was a rebellion of the tribes against the Americo-Liberians, and it was a rivalry for control. A lot of people were killed, and then others became refugees, they came to the United States. I had a Liberian stay at my place for the first six weeks, and I found a place in the neighborhood for him while he was going to American university. Lucky in the sense, unlike most Peace Corps volunteers, that English was the main language, and the bridge. But there were about 16 tribes, and all of them pretty much were in my neighborhood, because I was in Monrovia, which is the capital of the country, whereas the rural areas were dominated by one or two tribes.

SM: Okay.

RS: So I got more of the diversity and mixture, you know, from that experience, which made it interesting.

SM: Sure. So what followed the Peace Corps?

RS: Okay, we had a lot of multi-nationals that were there. And I was fascinated by development, international development, and I -- the most popular major at the time for MBAs and finance was international banking. So the logical next step would be going to work for an international bank, and getting involved in development projects. And, you know, at the university, I had had a lot of experience with their library and USAID where I was reading a lot of material. I got to know the seven banks that were based in the country, and for my course, I was able to have the bankers engage with the students. They even had a dinner there, you know, so -- and a few of them got jobs.

SM: Wow. That's always nice when you're in higher ed doing that, making those linkages for them.

RS: Yeah, just using creative ways, not written in a book, but creative ways, oh, I see this, or I talk to somebody, and we can do something.

SM: Sure.

RS: I had a vegetable garden going in the neighborhood as well, by coming in contact with care, and USAID, and saying, ooh, I think we need to grow some food in the neighborhood, and by the way, wouldn't it be nice if you could put a basketball court up? So it would be a kind of attraction to the teenagers, they'd come to play basketball in my backyard.

SM: Wonderful!

RS: You know? So, I mean, I was lucky in the sense that I was in the capital, where a lot of things could be done just by using a little ingenuity and connecting. So having experience with finance and business, and the psychology and economic major, a logical step would be a bank.

SM: Okay, so --

RS: And I was a lending officer.

SM: Okay.

RS: And I started out in the Credit Department, and then the African Division, and then I branched around the world.

SM: So where was the first bank that you worked in? In the United States?

RS: Yes. I came home and I liked Washington, DC, because I had been here a number of times, and I liked the idea when I was interviewing for the Export-Import Bank, that's where I worked, that it was a small bank, it had a lot of money to lend. They got involved in big projects, and I liked the idea that since there were few employees, that I would have access to the board of directors and to upper management, and that also because the bank was not competing with international banks, you know, in the private sector, that I could ask for a lot of information, which they couldn't, because after all, our interest rates were cheaper. So, I mean, all of these were advantages, so that when I worked on projects and the information was not forthcoming to me, I could demand, because they wanted a cheaper interest rate. So although it didn't pay as well as private sector banks, it was a good place for a start. And for 25 years, after African lending sort of petered off, then I was involved with North Sea oil projects. I got involved with Asia for a while, Asian countries. In between, I was working with Ireland and I was working with Finland and some of the other European countries. And then I ended the career in the last five years with startup operations, because it was a reorganization, and I did startup projects all over the world.

SM: Wow. So had you stayed with the same bank? Or just the --

RS: Yes.

SM: -- same -- okay. For your whole career?

RS: Yes. And --

SM: Now, where did you live in DC at that time?

RS: Hmm?

SM: Where did you live in DC?

RS: Here. I've lived in this apartment for 51 years.

SM: Wow.

RS: I have not moved. And when I first came here, there was more of a wooded area, because there wasn't as much development. And I could look out the window and I would see trails, it was a little safer, the neighborhood was a little safer. And I had a lot of the conveniences that I had in New York City. You know, I had a novelty store, I can't remember the name offhand. They're out of business now, but it was a big outfit across the street, it was like a 5 and Dime store that was located here. Giant was here, the drugstore, the banks. So I had the conveniences of a city, I had the charm of suburbia with all the private homes off Wisconsin Avenue. It was a short

commute to work, it was all of about 15, 20 minutes, I didn't have to deal -- we had the 37 bus. And when the subway came in -- I was here before the subway came in, you know, I could walk to the subway. And it would be a short walk, 15 minutes, and a 6 minute ride, and I'd be in the office in another 2 or 3. So, I mean, it was -- I had all of the conveniences, and I watched DC grow, too, all the conveniences of the metropolitan area, which improved. The conveniences of the neighborhood. A comfort level of not seeing all these tall buildings --

SM: Yes. Yes, yeah.

RS: -- which I like.

SM: Yeah.

RS: And then a variety of activities through the Smithsonian, which was unbeatable. I joined organizations, like the World Affairs Council, which was involved with non-partisan discussions of world affairs.

SM: Does that still exist?

RS: In other cities, but not here.

SM: Oh! Too bad.

RS: I was heartbroken when it happened, because after I retired, there was a funding issue. And it's unbelievable that the World Affairs Council has units all over the United States, but not in the nation's capital. So I'm a member now of the World Affairs Council of Philadelphia.

SM: Okay.

RS: And they sponsor trips, I took a number of trips with the World Affairs Council. It used to be wonderful, because I would go over these ambassadorial sessions that they had, the embassies in town were a major attraction, they still are, you know, for visitors.

SM: Yes.

RS: A lot of activity community-wise, you know, for example, the French Embassy, I used to have lunch there all the time.

SM: Wow.

RS: They're closed now, but, I mean, the Austrian Embassy, which had spectacular, and they still do, they have spectacular free concerts which are quality.

SM: And did you have to join something to have access to this? Or --

RS: No.

SM: Okay.

RS: Neither. For the French Embassy, and I used to go to some of their events, all I had to do was be investigated to make sure that everything was okay.

SM: Sure.

RS: Then I had a path to enter the embassy. And I used to go there at least once or twice a month, and I'd have lunch there, and sometimes I'd bring friends, and got through security, through the pass. The Austrian Embassy, they just had a whole bunch -- they still do, by the way --

SM: Okay.

RS: -- of quality concerts. Through organizations, I got to experience a lot of these embassies.

SM: Yes, but not quite to that degree. I mean, did you have to buy lunch there? Or did they just serve meals, or --?

RS: What, the French Embassy?

SM: Yeah.

RS: Oh, no, I paid regular market price, but it was, I think, cheaper than the restaurants.

SM: Sure. Okay.

RS: And it was quality food, and I could just pick out things myself. I could sit in the backyard, you know, and read for a little while.

SM: How wonderful.

RS: Yes. That's not available anymore, but it used to be. The hiking trails here are just spectacular, but now I think you have to use a little more judgement, you know, because of the times. All kinds of events. And I used to tell friends who I took out through the years who don't live here, it's just amazing, the wealth of activity that this area has, where I did not have a crowded kind of area. I didn't have to deal with traffic. A lot of my coworkers, you know, they lived in Virginia and Maryland, where there are traffic issues to deal with. Here, you have the main streets, but you go off to the side streets, and you wouldn't even know you're in a major city.

SM: That's right.

RS: I mean, it's just amazing. And this neighborhood, Cleveland Park, is part of that kind of -- the old historical homes, I've gone on several tours, you know, sponsored by the Smithsonian and the Historical Society, where they actually took a catalog of all the homes and they went through the history of the homes on this block, which was the original block of Cleveland Park. I mean, where could I live in the city where there's so much culture, such diversity -- music, art, you name it. And it has something for everybody. I was a bicycle rider, so I would do the bicycle trails. I would do a bicycle ride over to Arlington and Alexandria. I would do the trails of the C & O, you know, and then the hiking, I mean, the falls. You know, once you're 65, I think it is, you get a free pass, you know, where you have the National Park.

SM: Parks, yeah.

RS: You know, and that's kind of wonderful.

SM: What national parks do we have right here in DC?

RS: You have the C & O Canal.

SM: Okay.

RS: And -- C & O Canal is a national park here. They turned it into a national park.

SM: Did you belong to, like, hiking groups? Or --

RS: No.

SM: You just did all of this on your own, and with your own friends?

RS: I did it on my own, I did my bicycle ride. Also, the swimming was free, and that was a major -- because after work, I used to go to Wilson High School, and then I would swim the laps.

SM: Wow. So you were quite athletic.

RS: Yeah. I did that, I would walk. You know, unfortunately at a certain age sometimes, you become a victim of stenosis. If only I had paid a little more attention to doing stretching and other exercises when I was younger, maybe I would have been in better shape.

SM: Oh.

RS: But you can't look back.

SM: No. No, you just keep going forward. So how did you hear about the Village here?

RS: Okay, I read my mail regularly --

SM: Okay?

RS: -- and, you know, after a certain period of time -- I'm the youngest in the family, you know, and I had to go back and forth to my parents and then my sister, and then my niece, they're all gone now. And my -- yeah, those are the main people. And after my aunt passed away at 103, and I was aware of the Village, I really didn't have time, because I was away from home a lot, you know, to go back and forth to take care of them, that the time then came, and I saw, oh, the Village, and I'm going to join. And then all of a sudden, I got the stenosis. And if I didn't get the stenosis, I would have joined, you know? And I might have been on the other side; not a driver, but maybe a volunteer, but I lost my mobility. And when I lost the mobility, I couldn't walk for more than about two or three minutes. And I've been taking physical therapy now for three years, and now I've been able to fortunately get home physical therapy four days a week.

SM: Oh, that's good.

RS: So and this has really helped me. So I was aware of the Village, and then I figure, oh, now I need the Village. And then Frank came up here, and we had a meeting, and that's how I got started. Not the way I wanted to get started, I wanted to get started the other way, but what can you do?

SM: Yeah. Circumstances.

RS: They have kept me very nicely during that period of time, and I'm really grateful that there's such a thing as the Village. And one of the volunteers who was in my group started a Village out in California --

SM: Oh!

RS: -- a number of years ago, in the wine country of California. He retired as a lawyer, and he said, "Gee, I think I can start a Village." And he did.

SM: Great.

RS: So that's how I know about the Village.

SM: Tell me about Cleveland Park. How has it changed? I know you talked about right here, Wisconsin Avenue, and the --

RS: Yeah, you look at the Wisconsin Avenue corridor and you see a lot of tall buildings, you see a lot of tall buildings, you see a lot of development, and a lot more traffic.

And it wasn't that active -- it wasn't that active a street before, so, you know, they have preserved, I think, a lot of the positive sides of the neighborhood along the corridor, but it's not as attractive.

SM: Okay.

RS: And also, it's not as conducive to the way things were. Lots of stores which I never had before, lots of restaurants I never had before. Driving, it was a pleasure then, because the roads weren't as crowded as they are today.

SM: Sure.

RS: And a lot of changes in terms of businesses. And then you have the demographics, which have changed a little bit as well.

SM: Yeah. Well, tell me about it, you have a 50-year window here of -- how has it changed? What was it like when you first got here? Over the decades?

RS: Well, I went into the police station when I first got here, and I said, "Gee, is there a lot of crime here? Because I grew up in New York, where I had to be very, very careful all the time." And they laughed. And, you know, people had their doors open, you know, the Giant wasn't as large as it is now, it was probably a quarter of the size. They did have a fish department, and they did have a butcher. There wasn't -- and the parking lot wasn't underneath, there was a parking lot which was on the side of the Giant. And then there were fewer kinds of structures across the street. So, I mean, it wasn't as busy, and there was more opportunities for parking without the layers that they have now.

SM: Sure.

RS: And we definitely didn't have that many six- to eight-story buildings.

SM: Okay.

RS: So that, to me, is a big, big change in what it was before. The side streets still have the same pleasant kind of atmosphere as it had when I moved in. So that part, I really liked, you know, just the walks, you know. And then I was here when the subway was built, so there were several opportunities to watch them.

SM: Sure.

RS: You know, because it was a lot different building -- the subway started here in time for the Centennial in 1976.

SM: Okay.

RS: That's when -- and the first line was the red line, which came up to Cleveland Park.

SM: Okay.

RS: So there were several opportunities, I could see the build, and the construction was a little different than New York City because of the softness of the soil, they had to go deeper.

SM: Okay. Oh, okay. Is that why we have those big escalators in a lot of places?

RS: Yes, because of the nature of the soil, that that was necessary.

SM: Are some of them going underneath Rock Creek Park?

RS: Yeah, there are -- there's certain levels, the streets that go underneath Rock Creek Park, and why that happened, I don't -- we did have the bridge, you know, the Taft Bridge, which was in your neighborhood --

SM: Yes.

RS: -- we did have that in 1972 when I moved here.

SM: Okay.

RS: That's when I moved here, was '72. And it was in May of '72, when I moved in.

SM: Right. So tell me about some other things that were significant events in your life, or turning points for you that you can think of.

RS: One turning point was, after coming back from -- I retired, you know, at age 55, and I'm 80 now, 81.

SM: Okay, so you've had a long retirement already.

RS: I've had a long retirement. And one of the things that changed was the free time and the opportunity to travel around America, because I had been involved in the international banking area, and people said to me, "You know, you really need to understand the United States a little better." So I had goals, and the major goal I had was to complete the journey to all 50 states in America --

SM: Wow!

RS: -- and to see all the presidential libraries, and to experience as many of the national parks as I could. And then, to take trips to Europe, I also took -- I did a lot of international travel afterwards. I took trips to South Africa twice. I took a trip around the world.

SM: How did you travel with that? Was it by plane, by ship?

RS: That was an executive jet. And that was my one big splurge --

SM: Okay.

RS: -- with National Geographic Society. I took four trips with the National Geographic. That was another big plus in the city, is the Geographic, and, you know, what they do. And four of the pictures on the wall are some of the highlights -- the Taj Mahal, Angkor Wat, Petra.

SM: Wow.

RS: And Tibet.

SM: How long were these trips?

RS: The trip was 27 days, and it was 12 countries. And it's -- I started from Florida, and from Florida, I went down to Peru, and from Peru to Easter Island. And an Easter Island picture I have in the bedroom. And then from Easter Island, I was in Samoa and then down to Australia, and then India. And the advantage was, we had a 757 which was reconfigured so there were wider seats, they were all, like, first class, and then while I was traveling, there were lectures that were given on the screen.

SM: Wow.

RS: And so they had a lot of resource people, because Geographic had funded a lot of ventures overseas, so we got into villages. For example, in India, instead of landing in New Delhi, we landed in the town where the Taj Mahal is. So instead of having a four-hour ride, I landed on an air force base. And then they had about 100 people in each area who were on the ground, and they were taking care of a variety of trips while we were in each spot. So there were 12 stops. And it was like a trip of a lifetime because --

SM: Sure.

RS: -- I had a lot of -- I was in villages in remote places. My take away from it was, there were a lot of people that had very little in life, but they sure looked happy. And it kind of makes a -- it kind of gives you a feel that you don't have to have a lot of money to enjoy a rich life. It's kind of how you feel inside. And it doesn't necessarily mean -- just give them enough food, and let them do and enjoy what they have in their natural surroundings, you know, with safety.

SM: Yes. Yes.

RS: With safety, too.

SM: Those sound like great values, and how do you contrast that to life in the United States? And then maybe later you can tell me about the contrast, the visiting different parts of the country. Is it united? Or has it got a different flavor in different areas?

RS: I think there is. And from the education I had in New York City, I was not exposed to a lot of the cultural history of the American West.

SM: Okay.

RS: Not fully understanding the Indian situation, the American Indians, visiting remote areas like in Oklahoma and Utah and some of these other states, where I could get, such as North Dakota, where I could get an appreciation for a different part of American history, which was not kind of part of the curriculum in New York City. I was totally unaware of the migration of the Indians to the State of Oklahoma. That was harsh.

SM: Yes.

RS: I got to see some of the ruins in the South, the Indian mounds. I got a better feeling for the civil rights issue when I was in Alabama and Mississippi. I got a better feel for the natural land that we had, a good part of it in the American West. And then just the lifestyle, and just the way people were thinking, you know, we tend to sometimes not be as close to the land as a lot of the people are in the Western part of the United States. They appreciate more, I think, the natural wonders in Oregon --

SM: Sure.

RS: -- the State of Washington, for example. Presidential libraries taught me a lot, too, not because they were president, but because they kind of showed the development of our leaders. And the times in which they lived in, it gave me a different side. I was aware of some of the achievements, for example, of the Bill Clinton administration, and it was not covered in the press, and yet it was very well covered in the library in a very, very comprehensive fashion, and a very friendly -- viewer-friendly way, you know, the major -- and I never really have to see it to believe it, you know, when he got elected -- I'm just giving that as an example --

SM: Sure.

RS: -- Little Rock, Arkansas --

SM: Yes.

RS: -- that's a very dangerous area. And, you know, when he got inaugurated, you know, they showed the area, you know, downtown -- you can't walk there. And when I stopped at a library, they told me, "You're going to have to use a hotel car to accompany you, because it's not safe." And then what I saw was a library that was built in an impoverished area, where you had development and shops right next to the library.

SM: Okay.

RS: And he, in his -- and by putting the library where he did, he led to a mini development in a small, little section of Little Rock where you could walk.

SM: Interesting, because I understand the Obamas have chosen to go back to South Side for the library, but then I've heard that it's causing more gentrification, which I guess they didn't necessarily want to do that; they wanted to kind of, I think, incorporate the local people that were there for all those years. And so it's -- have you been there? Well, no, that's not built yet.

RS: They haven't built it yet.

SM: They haven't built it yet.

RS: I'm familiar with the neighborhood and where it is, because it's a long -- ooh, it's in the 50s, the south side of the 50s, and it's going to be nearer the lake.

SM: Right.

RS: Part of that area, which is right near Hyde Park.

SM: Yes.

RS: You know, that area has been mixed for years, and you have the University of Chicago near there.

SM: Right.

RS: You know? And it's near areas, but Chicago has undergone a lot of changes. You know, when I lived there for a short period of time, you have an area called Bridgeport, which was once part of Mayor Daley's neighborhood, and it was Irish.

SM: Okay.

RS: Today -- and Spanish, it was a mixture of Irish and Spanish. Today, there's a lot of Hong Kong people that live there.

SM: Oh. Okay.

RS: And that area has been rejuvenated, because, you know, with the Hong Kong money that was coming and some expansion of the Chinatown area in Chicago, you could literally walk where I couldn't walk before, because when I was 15, I was walking the streets of Chicago, and the police picked me up. And they said, "You know, it's not safe for you to walk in this neighborhood." And I think we -- "Where were you coming from?" And I said, "The Allerton Hotel." "We'll take you back to your hotel." And then my dad wrote a letter to the Chicago Police Department. Today -- that was an impoverished area at the time, it's not today.

SM: Okay.

RS: And you could walk there. And there's been an expansion of Hong Kong Chinese culture --

SM: Okay.

RS: -- with some nice Chinese restaurants. So neighborhoods have gone through flux. You see the downtown area of Chicago, you see a huge amount of construction that's going on downtown. And South 57th Street -- I haven't been there for a while -- you have a museum there. It's the Science and Industry --

SM: Okay.

RS: -- and then you're not too far from another one, which is within a mile, which is a Middle Eastern museum on the campus of the University of Chicago. So his library is going to be somewhere in that little area.

SM: Okay.

RS: So gentrification, I think there's been some through the years, that there's been a mixture.

SM: Okay.

RS: That's kind of my take on it. Now, where they grew up, I think it might have been a little further away from the lake.

SM: Okay. Yeah.

RS: But I really, you know, I can't comment on what I don't know.

SM: Sure. Now that you're into this decade of retirement, do you have any interests? Goals? How do you spend your days here?

RS: Okay, aside from my physical therapy right now, which is an hour four times a week --

SM: Yeah, it takes time, yes.

RS: -- and -- I spend a lot of time reading, walking, the little walking I can do for the shopping.

SM: Sure.

RS: And I read. And I have the Zoom, you know? And of course now, we have the computer, which gives us a lot of information. I watched -- during the pandemic, I watched a lot of travel kind of Zooms, which kind of kept me occupied.

SM: Okay.

RS: And then the organizations that I belonged to, I was interviewing for a number of years. I interviewed for 25 years for Columbia University for their Graduate School of Business admissions committee, and I used to go downtown to GW, and I used to interview for perspective candidates from the DC area who were playing in New York. And then I'd take a trip up to New York periodically and just meet with the admissions staff.

SM: Right.

RS: That -- I did awful lot of walking in museums, you know, prior to the -- now it's enjoying -- tonight, I'm going to watch a presentation about South Korea. Earlier in the week I watched a presentation about Taiwan. So several days a week, I watch some quality through World Affairs Council, Columbia University and the Smithsonian.

SM: Wonderful. Well, you sound like you have a very rich life. And you certainly have had a career that's been so varied, and yet so significant. And you've got such a real, broad world view. What's your hope for the rest of us here in this area, going forward?

RS: I hope, first of all, that whatever decision happens in 2024, during the Kennedy -- or when I was younger, there was a spirit of togetherness in America. And my wish for going forward as a country and as a community that our culture can come back a little bit into a sense of being together. Too much acrimony, which I think needs to change, and I hope that there is a leadership focus, you know, in the next two, three, five years which will change the dynamic away from hate and division to understanding one another. I also have a feeling, you know, as I look at the future, we need to pay more attention to people who are in need, because we're only as good as the weak links and needy; we have to be a compassionate society. We also have to have better management. And people who are leaders are people who

establish a way of thinking. And we need to have more in the leadership ranks that kind of goes in that direction of positive thinking, to critically look at educational opportunities in this country, to make it available for people, to not necessarily look at stereotype ways of solving, but listening to from the bottom-up some of the issues that need to be focused on. And I hope that when I watch the new Speaker, and I heard the speeches on the inter-- which we didn't have an opportunity before --

SM: Sure.

RS: -- of the new Speaker of the House and of the Democratic leader -- there was a message of hope and coming back together. They both stated what the principles were of their political parties in a very positive way, and in the spirit of compromise. And I said, "Gee, this is a good day, if only society -- if only, one, the actions would match the rhetoric, which I hope it does --

SM: Sure.

RS: -- and also, the sense that it could trickle down to society. And I'd like to see younger people in leadership positions, you know, who are more energetic, and who are more tuned to what the needs are of people to come. You know, because I think there's a lot of feeling -- you ask yourself the question, are the needs of the next generations, are they being properly addressed today? You know, climate change being one --

SM: Sure.

RS: -- you know, where they're involved. Crime and economic opportunity -- because I do a lot of reading, and I'm a little concerned that we have a very high prison population, and we really need to work on that to get on the -- first of all, do we need to send them all to prison, or do we -- are there other means of preventing a lot of these things from happening? So I just hope, looking to the future, that there's more positivity, and not combativeness, but listening instead of -- really listening hard as to what people need. And voting for and projecting people in power who have a vision of where they want to take us.

SM: Well, that's a nice way for us to kind of maybe wrap it up. Is there anything else that you wanted to have included?

RS: I think the Village does a wonderful job.

SM: Okay.

RS: And I'm really amazed, you know, now that Claire has branched out and has more time for herself, that I'm really impressed with the depth of services that they offer.

SM: Yes, there is.

RS: I'm impressed with the spirit and what it does. And I say to myself, if we didn't have the Village, what would I do? Because I do need rides for some medical appointments. I do need occasional help with the shopping. I have gone to a couple of the activities. But I do have a mobility issue.

SM: Okay.

RS: And I think the Village has created, for me, a sense of some hope. And I've met some wonderful people --

SM: Good.

RS: -- people who've driven me to different events. And now with Dan to assist Claire -- and Claire will tell me, you know, through two or three years that, you know, getting a ride has been close to 100 percent -- close. She's busy doing something else, I think she heard. So I think that's how I would want to wrap it up.

END OF AUDIO FILE