

Project Title: Venus Jones Oral History Project
Interviewer: Erin Devlin (ED)
Narrator: Chip Cartwright (CC)
November 16, 2021, 10 a.m., Zoom

CC: All right, you consent to being recorded and I'm going to say got it.

ED: All right, it looks like we are underway. My name is Erin Devlin. I'm an Associate Professor of History and American Studies at the University of Mary Washington and I'm here with Chip Cartwright on the morning of November 16, 2021, and he has graciously agreed to share some of his memories and recollections about the life of Venus Jones with us today, so thank you for sharing your time. We really appreciate it.

CC: Thanks for asking me, it is my pleasure to do so.

ED: Wonderful. Well, one of the things that Venus' brother mentioned when we were talking about some of the folks that we might interview was that you were friends with Venus and sort of grew up in the same neighborhood or area. Could you tell me a little bit about what Petersburg was like when you were coming of age? You mentioned you were born in Winchester, so when did you first move to Petersburg?

CC: Well, we moved to Petersburg about when I was starting the third grade. Petersburg, at that time, was more predominantly an African American community. The subsurface there—there was a Caucasian superstructure. It was a difficult time, you know, and we're talking about Civil Rights times, and so it was somewhat uncomfortable. But my father moved there because there was a better opportunity for him to be able to provide for us as a family. But the conflict mainly was somewhat beneath the surface, but it was, to use the term, colored all of our inner reactions. In fact, there were still in Petersburg, at that time, water fountains that were still labeled for colored only or for whites only. It was that type of atmosphere that I grew up in.

ED: Yes, do you want to expand on that a little bit more? What were some of the other markers of segregation in Petersburg at that time, where you described it as a difficult or uncomfortable space to be in? Is there anything that you want to share with us that might help us understand that even more deeply?

CC: Well, Petersburg was still a kind of town in which you had to remember your color and act accordingly. My parents were very concerned about us, where we were growing up, and the complex that you encountered on a daily basis. For instance, as an example, my dad told me that when I was walking the downtown streets, it was a little different than when we were in the area where we lived. In the downtown streets, there were a number of whites on the street that we would take to the street and avoid—go around, in other words. Not create any trouble for yourself.

In the community, it was different. In the Black communities in which we lived, we still had houses that had front porches and stoops. We would walk the streets in the evening because mainly, a number of us, we were fairly poor—we didn't have air conditioning. It was what came in, so you would sit out on the streets at night, you would visit with your neighbors. It was a kind of supportive community in which there were no fences between the houses. You could come from one yard to the next yard. And I could be disciplined by Mrs. Todd next door just as easily as my dad could discipline me. She would tell my folks, of course, what I had done.

ED: Right, right.

CC: But in the communities—our communities are very close knit. But it was difficult being a person of color when you are outside of that community.

One quick story: at one of the theaters that we went to, of course, we were required to sit in the balcony. The movie *Davy Crockett* came out, and they were drawing for a Davy

Crockett costume with coonskin cap, you know, and fringe buckskins, and stuff like that. I won that and I had to go downstairs, walk down to the front to the theater platform where I've never been before and get it. There were comments that were made, and things like that, but I tell you what, I cherish that costume and I still to this day have that raccoon cap (Devlin laughs). I was a little guy, it was one—but, you know, it was uncomfortable getting it but, to me, when I got it, I said, Well, gee, even somebody who looks like me can still get a hat.

That's the kind of town that I grew up in and I found that I tended to associate with people who tended to have like attitudes like mine and that's where Venus comes in. She was one of those special people.

ED: So when you speak about the community that you grew up in, in juxtaposition to downtown Petersburg, can you give me a sense, like, geographically what we're kind of talking about in terms of spatial location or the distance between those places? It might be from the perspective of a young kid, right? Like, how long would it take you to walk or bike or whatever?

CC: Yeah, it's from the perspective of a young kid, but we tended to—you know, there weren't much mixing, even in the poor people, of whites and Blacks. We tended to have our own little areas. The core downtown area was, at that time, I would say was mainly poorer whites. And then you went out and away from that, away from the downtown area, when you got into the little communities, those were Black only. And as you got farther out into the bigger homes outside of the business area, then you got to where the more prosperous Caucasians lived, and that kind of thing. So I mean, the big houses, they weren't in our neighborhoods. Westview was one of the more—let's say it was a developing area which more prosperous African Americans were able to buy into. And now it was still—it was Black only, for the most part. I never saw

any whites in that particular area. But it was in that area to where we had our teachers, professional people, you know, people who are moving up tended to be going to. And it was there, in that area, where I met Coach Jones and his wife, who were both teachers. And that was where I began to associate with them and because of that, my friend Venus.

ED: Right, so that neighborhood was Westview, you said?

CC: Westview, yes.

ED: Yeah, and I think when I was speaking with Mr. Albert Jones, he mentioned that his dad helped to—or constructed the house that he lived in postwar, so when you describe it as a developing area is it, like, mostly post-World War II kind of housing?

CC: Yes, I would say that. It was a subdivision that had higher levels—two levels homes.

Whereas—but when my family moved there my dad couldn't afford that, so we lived a little bit away. Still in the Westview area, but in a single story, maybe—if it was 1000 square feet, you know. Nothing else. Hey, but we had seven kids in that house. It was cramped. With bunk beds of course, and we made it work.

ED: So you mentioned that you first met Venus and her family, and you referred to Coach Jones, her father, and her mother, who was a school teacher. So did you first kind of become associated with the family and with Venus' parents through their roles at the school, or did you get to know them as a friend of Venus? What was the sort of moment that you first got to know the Jones family, do you recall?

CC: I'm trying to recall here. Probably the first contact was probably through school. Through the school. Everyone was aware of who the coach was, everybody knew who Coach Jones was. He was the football coach, all right, and in the neighborhoods we all played together, and Westview Elementary School was near there—I didn't get to go there, but their basketball

courts were close there and that's where Venus' family—they lived close to that, so with her brothers and everybody else in the neighborhood, we all knew each other. But maybe the first connection was probably with Mama Jones in school, and the more visual aspect there was Coach Jones and the football team. Which is important because Coach Jones had boys around all the time, so you got to imagine Venus grew up in that more boy environment with her dad who was considered to be disciplined and tough, and she acquired many of those characteristics herself.

ED: Okay, so can you tell me a little bit more about that? How do you think that environment sort of shapes her character?

CC: Oh geez, let's see. She was a small statured person, but she also had a very fiery disposition. In other words, you didn't try to pull anything over on Venus. I had a friend, Chucky Wilson, and he and I and Venus kind of palled together. Kind of like the three musketeers kind of thing, you know. We'd do things together. When Chucky and I would—we would go visit Venus at her house because her house was bigger than our homes were. We'd go over there, and one of the reasons we went over there—yes, we had fun together, we played board games and things together—but Mrs. Jones would feed us (both laugh). And so Venus got in the habit of doing that, too, and we'd go over there and we'd watch TV and we would eat whatever was available at the time. And you're kidding with Venus, if she didn't like what you did, she would punch you in the stomach (Devlin laughs). And I was the recipient of many of those punches from her. She would just punch me in the stomach, punch me in the arm, but mainly she was physically—she had a presence about her even though she was small and thin in stature. If she didn't like what we said, she told us right then and there, right now. She didn't allow things to fester or to move on, so you knew where you stood at any point in time. And

(inaudible) because of that. Matter of fact, I had a crush on her. That kind of thing. But she was a good friend growing up and—so we weren't more boyfriend girlfriend kind of thing. More so is that I admired her a lot.

ED: So when you were going over to the Jones household to hang out and watch television, play board games, and eat food, how old were you when this was happening? Was this when you were younger, when you were in third grade, or sort of more towards your high school years?

CC: It was more towards sixth grade—fifth, sixth, seventh grade, that kind of thing, when that happened. I guess later on, as we got more towards—into high school, Venus and I became, I would say, even more connected, largely because of our dreams and what we saw for ourselves. We found in ourselves some of the same characteristics. We were both confident. We both did not like being told we couldn't do something, and particularly when it came down to looking ahead, as far as what we wanted to do, and I guess I kind of started this.

I decided at an early age that I wanted to be a forest ranger. And that wasn't—I remember when I first told my mother about that, she said, Is there anybody who looks like us who does that? I told her, Well, it's a big government agency, mom. There's bound to be somebody who looks like us who does that. And it wouldn't be until after in my career during the 100th Anniversary of the US Forest Service, I wound up being the first African American forest ranger in the history of the organization.

But that kind of stuff, stepping out, I talked to Venus about that. Her desires—she knew she was going to be moving away from Petersburg at some time, and she didn't quite know what she wanted to do. I kind of had the same idea. I didn't quite know what I wanted to do, but I was going to do it, even though there wasn't anybody who looked like me. We had support

from her parents being teachers. I think that was a good environment for me to grow up in. Yes, I had my home but, as with many professional African Americans in that area, we got support. Now they would have preferred—and Venus got the same advice that I did—that we would stay in go to school locally. That we would do something local that we would, in turn, bring back to the community. But Venus and I were cut from a different cloth, and I think that's where our main connection came, is that we could talk to each other about what we wanted to do. She wasn't quite sure what—where she was going to go. I mean, she always had pets around her and we talked about her—she liked horses. We always talked about her interest maybe in veterinary medicine or something like that, but she never really narrowed that down until later. I kind of had an idea. I don't remember her specifically talking about medical practice, going into, but I knew she supported me and I supported her, which continued on once I left and moved and went to college, and then she did her thing as well.

ED: Yeah, so you graduated a little bit ahead of her then?

CC: No, she was ahead of me. She was a year ahead of me.

ED: Oh, okay, I'm sorry. I got that mixed up.

CC: She was ahead of me. And she would remind me that she was older (Devlin laughs). It was one of those brother sister kind of relationships, you know. And I like that. She was (inaudible) any other girl that I know up to that point in time. And we would go on later on into life, even in college, in Mary Washington, when she went to Mary Washington, she had me come up.

ED: Oh yeah?

CC: Oh yeah. Yeah, she had me come up. I went to a formal dance with her. I remember the first time she had me to come there, I didn't have a tux, and she said, No problem, I'll get you

one. I'm a college freshman, where am I going to have a tux? But her brother had one, and we were the same size, so she took care of that.

I was in the Corps of Cadets program and when we had our junior ring dance, I asked her to come to Virginia Tech and be my date, and she did, because we would talk now and then. On the surface, we kept up with each other, just to find out how the other was doing, and largely because I was going to a predominately white institution, which was my first time. She was in Mary Washington, all right—the Black student population was a handful. And it was the same thing at Virginia Tech. It was a handful. So we had common, I would say, issues that we had to deal with and, and so we would talk about, How's it going?

And it wasn't going easy for either of us, where we had chosen to go to school. People weren't coming out to make us feel really welcome in both of those environments. So we had things that we shared that were similar and we could support each other, but we still had our dreams. And that's what drove us both to move on and to get ahead, no matter what we encountered. And that's what I liked about her. Like I said before, she was feisty. She was tough, you know, but she had a fire. She was driven to succeed, and she was willing to pay the cost to succeed.

ED: Can you—I don't know if you recall any of the details or any of the experiences that she shared with you about some of those challenges or some of those costs that she encountered during her time at Mary Washington. Is there anything that sticks out in your recollection?

CC: I remember her telling me a similar story about—she would encounter white students who were surprised that she was going to school there, who were surprised that there were actually blacks going to school there, which was somewhat similar to my situation—we just had so few. And that she was someone who had to educate them, because they would be inquisitive. She

had to be tolerant of their questions, because sometimes they didn't know quite how to phrase them, and sometimes they just phrased them based on their heritage and what they had heard, and so you had to take a deep breath and say, How do I want to respond to this? I hope this comes out right. That kind of thing there.

She asked me to come there because she did to be her date because there wasn't any African American students or anybody else who she had met that she was interested in going to this dance with. It was that kind of thing. So I don't have any specifics, but I knew it was lonely for her at times. And we (inaudible) that loneliness and we could because I experienced it as well.

ED: So when you were at Virginia Tech you had similar experiences as a student then?

CC: Yes. When I went there, the school had about 10,000 students total and there were less than twenty African Americans in all the programs. I mean, to give you an idea how lonely that could be—when I would see another African American way across the other end of the drill field—I couldn't tell who it was, but I could tell it was somebody who looked like me—I would wave and they would wave, and it would give you that little bit of sense of, I'm okay, I'm not by myself. And remember for me, as well, it was my first time being in a largely white environment. And she had the same thing and had to deal with that.

Now I'm thinking she was probably stronger than me in dealing with that, but we learned to make it work. And we were apart now and then, as I said, we would call and say, How you doing? I'm going to stay here, and we would say, Good, and pat each other on the back and we'd go do our thing.

ED: And so when you came to Mary Washington to come to the dance, do you have any recollections about the campus or what it was like at that time?

CC: Oh. Let's see. I remember mostly women. You know, no wonder at that campus at that time. You got to remember at Virginia Tech we had just begun—not just begun allowing women, but we had just opened the campus, so my class was one of the first ones in which we had six Black women at one time in the school in my class year. And so it was interesting for me to go to Mary Washington, and she would introduce me to her friends, and I would take note of how many were African American, and there were a few. And how many were not.

I can't think of anything more specific about that, except I know she was very glad that I came to school, so I could see where she where she was. And that was why I reciprocated and said, Why don't you come down to Tech? And we would walk around and we could—it was the same type of environment, you know?

Virginia State University college was right next—we're in Petersburg, and it was one thing being on a campus that's predominantly Black. You're comfortable walking around. I would have to say that at Mary Washington, when I was with Venus, we got stares. And I felt the same kind of comfort level or uncomfot level—being ill at ease—when I was at Mary Washington as I experienced down at Virginia Tech. The atmospheres were similar. I would like to say that they were welcoming, but I can't say that they were. There was an edge to being in those environments at that point in time.

ED: Do you remember—you talked a little bit about your impressions of Mary Washington. Obviously, Venus also came to your campus in Virginia Tech, you mentioned that you walked around. She was at a predominantly—as you mentioned, a predominantly female school. Did she have any kind of reaction to being on Virginia Tech's campus? Did she reflect on any of the differences, do you recall?

CC: The only thing I can remember, because I was in the Corps of Cadets, which largely was—it was all male at that point in time. And so I took her—when we were able to bring the women on to the floors and she said, “There's nothing but guys here.” (Laughs). But then, like I said before, she was comfortable being around guys so whenever she met somebody, she always had an impression. I do remember the guys talking about, Hey, she's something else. If someone would say something, they would kick me or something, and she didn't think it was quite right, she was in their face (Devlin laughs). I think that's one of her qualities to her success. She didn't let things pass by. She was confident in herself, to where she would step forward when she felt she needed to step forward.

ED: Yeah. So you were in Virginia Tech's Corps of Cadets. Did you go on to serve in the military yourself then?

CC: I did. (Both talking). What I was going to say—when I graduated, I was a semester late in graduating because I was out of school for—I mean, quarterly—because I busted my knee playing some intramural football. So I graduated and got my degree and then went into US Air Force. I served for—until the Vietnam conflict ended, and then because I'd already been with the US Forest Service as a technician, they offered me a position on the rolls back at the interprofessional position as a forester in Oregon. That's where I went.

ED: Okay, and so obviously Venus went on also to serve in the military in the center part of her professional career. Was that something that she, as you all were coming up, that she expressed interest in? Or is that something that sort of took you off guard when she pursued that avenue? How would you characterize that?

CC: Well, it took me by surprise. I hadn't been expecting that, but she was still trying to find out where her place was going to be, where she was going to make her contribution in the

medical profession. And so I guess it took me by surprise, but then it didn't. Stepping out and doing something that was unexpected—that was Venus Jones.

ED: (Laughs) Right.

CC: Now I've gone in and in service—she knew I was going in service. And she was up at Tech and all the talk from guys around, all about what we were going to do when we went in the military. I don't know if that had an impact on her or not, but she got to see that and got to have me as part of her special interest telling her what I wanted to do.

Being in the military—I had two goals: one was to be an Air Force officer and the other was to be a forest ranger. And so she heard me talking about that, and if that influenced her or not, I don't know, but she did. But I was not surprised at how well she did once she made the decision to do that. When Venus would focus on what she wanted to do, again, there was no stopping her. She was that kind of individual.

She went on to become a lieutenant colonel—I was already out of service at that time and she reminded me now that she held more rank than I did (Devlin laughs). She was good at the career, but the one-upmanship, that was a characteristic that she had too. And because we kind of grew up as brother-sister, feisty kind of thing, we were always trying to one-up the other and, come to admit, she probably one-upped me a whole lot more than I did her.

ED: (Laughs) So it sounds like even as you kind of moved into your adult lives that you still maintained some contact and communication, then?

CC: We maintained some contact. I got married, and she was off doing her career, and so it slacked. We didn't remain as close as we did. I knew she went to Arizona as part of her payback for her medical degree, and I had spent some time in Arizona at the time, so we talked about that. But we didn't really—we weren't as close as we used to be, because she had a career that

she was moving on with, and I had mine, and I had a family. Things like that. My crush with Venus remained as a crush, but as an admirer, and when I had heard about what was going on with Mary Washington, it made me smile to remember.

ED: Yeah, I was wondering if we could—so there's a couple things we've touched base along the way that I'd love to sort of talk about a little bit more. One of the things you mentioned earlier on, was that you and Venus shared a lot of common experiences and challenges, but also just sort of the dreams that motivated you, and when we were talking about that you mentioned kind of, like, a broader community of support, right, that sort of provided support to the both of you as you sort of embarked on these paths. I wonder if you might talk about that more in terms of the community of support in Petersburg, or in your schools, or other kinds of community institutions that gave you the confidence that you needed to pursue these dreams.

CC: Well, I would have to say, besides the—it was an educational community is where—and speaking from my standpoint, I got both. In high school, it was my math and science teachers who supported me and encouraged me when I told them what I wanted to do. And they said, Well, do you—again, do you know anybody who does that who you can talk to? And no I did not. That kind of thing.

But it was a particular one, Miss Beth Norbert was one of my science teachers, and when she found out what I wanted to do, knowing that my parents wanted me to stay locally and become a professional person, do that kind of thing, she said, “Is this what you want to do?” and I told her my story, and this is probably off subject, but when I was in the eighth grade, there was a TV program called *Lassie*. Remember *Lassie* with Timmy Martin? And during one segment Timmy Martin and family went to the Pacific Northwest, got caught in a major forest fire, Lassie got burned, was rescued by forest ranger Corey Stewart. And it was

there that I thought—I said, That's what I wanted to do. And I came back and one of the—I mean, after watching that series, that was one thing I talked to Venus about, that was, You know, I think I can do that. And she said, Well, then you're just going to have to go do it.

So I had support, you know, so I saw that and I told certain teachers that, they supported me they made me aware of the consequences, that how it might be very difficult for a person of color to do. And that I would have to rely a lot on myself initially. When I went to Virginia Tech, I had professors who—that they, in their professional career, they did not know of anyone who looked like me, all right, and I probably should be thinking about something different. But I had one advisor, Dr. Heikkinen, he was an entomologist. He tried to get me—said, Why don't you go into the research field? He said, The inner research field, you will probably achieve better than out amongst the masses trying to be a forest ranger. And I said, No, this is what I really wanted to do. And he says, Okay, then here's what you're going to need to learn and here's what you're going to have to find out about yourself, so that you can handle these situations. So when I was off in the upper quad at Virginia Tech and in the forestry environment, I got some support. All I needed was a little. They encouraged me to step out and go away from Virginia Tech during the summer, work for the US Forest Service, find out what life is like in that before you graduate. Find out what the situations are going to be. And I did that, and I found that not only could I learn those situations and deal well with them, but I could prosper in them.

And all that helped. And then back in the Corps of Cadets, learning about leadership, and how—what to do and what not to do, and that not only could I follow people, I found out that I could lead and people would follow me. Which contributed a lot to the difficulties that I

encountered, because in a lot of the places I worked, I was the only person of color, unless I was in a Native American area. Within the workforce, I was the only person of color.

So, I had help from my educational environment, mostly, and now and then during my professional career I had people who would support me and whom I could mentor with. We didn't use that term when I was going through, but I found people that I liked who were willing to show me the ropes. And I particularly remember one—in everybody's life there probably is, but I had probably two people who, on the side, would offer me advice about how to deal with the situations I was encountering because people would be shocked to see me there. They would think that they would have to treat me differently than they did anybody else, and I would have to learn how to handle those in order to be successful.

ED: In those kind of, like, early educational years, you mentioned that you felt maybe Venus benefited from growing up in a household of educators as well. In what ways do you think that might have helped?

CC: I think because they were both professional people. They were both used to dealing outside of their living circle, you know, the organizations and institutions who they had been connected with in their lives. For instance, I would have to say, in my immediate family, my mom and my dad, our professional area of focus was small. And our connections were small, so in a protected area. One of the reasons my mom and dad wanted me to stay and go to school local was that I would have help. I would have support. I would not hit the world without a lifeline. And Venus' family, because both of her folks were educators, they had already done those steps to step outside. They knew what it was like to deal in an environment that was not necessarily welcoming, all right. That's what I'm trying to say. They laid the groundwork for her because she would listen to their stories, what it was like growing up, and that they had achieved beyond

mainly what others may have thought they could not go. And I benefited from that environment too, from associating with Coach Jones and Mrs. Jones as well. To where they would reach out, and when I told them what I wanted to do, it was okay in their family.

ED: Okay.

CC: They had those kinds of discussions.

ED: Yeah. So you remember, like, early on, when you were having conversations about what life might be like after leaving Petersburg, you mentioned at first—at least, you weren't completely aware of Venus' interest in pursuing a career in medicine. Do you remember anything about maybe when that started to crystallize, or when it started to shape her plans for what she wanted to do in terms of college and things?

CC: No, I really don't. I really don't. I don't have any particular thing because she would tend to keep things to herself and think about them, and focus, and plan. And so I did not know, but once she made up her mind, there's no question in my mind, she was going to move on in that arena, and that if she would go down in flames, it would be in a ball of glory. But she kind of kept things to herself, thought it through, and then went ahead and accomplished it. That was just the way it was. So I don't know particularly when she decided that the medicine and—which didn't surprise me, but deciding to do it afterwards by joining their Air Force, that was a surprise for me, of her being willing to do that.

ED: So, when I was speaking with some of your other classmates they were talking a little bit about sometimes how colleges and universities would come to Peabody High School to talk to students about their programs and things like that. Do you remember any of those kinds of processes or decision-making kinds of conversations about where to go to college? You mentioned obviously Virginia State is in Petersburg. You chose to go to Virginia Tech and

Venus made her own series of decisions, so do you remember any kinds of conversations around those kinds of questions or issues?

CC: No, I don't. I don't have any conversations about—I remember when we would have the college fairs. Virginia Tech never did come to Peabody High school. UVA [University of Virginia] did, and she had an interest in UVA, I think, because they did. That kind of thing. But no, I don't have any recollections about that.

ED: Okay. And of course, one of the things that we kind of have come to understand is that she applied to UVA, and they kind of, like, redirected her to go to Mary Washington. Do you remember anything about her reaction to that or that particular juncture?

CC: Just briefly what I remember, she was not happy with that. That she could not go to UVA directly. That an alternative—but it was a plan that it would work and she felt that she could do it, and I remember her saying, Well, I'm just going to do it quicker and then get back to UVA. That I do remember. She said okay, they weren't going to stop her. She was just going to do it and just do it faster.

ED: Right, which she did do, right? She finished her undergraduate in three years instead of in four. Yeah.

And so, when, after graduating from Mary Washington, when she was admitted to UVA's medical program, do you remember anything? Were you still in communication with her at that point? Do you remember sort of how she felt about that?

CC: I know she was excited that she was going, but we didn't have any conversations about that point in time. Again, I got focused with my own life at that time, getting married and trying to establish my career in the US Forest Service.

ED: Yeah, I understand. But you were in, like, tentative enough communication, I guess, that when she went to Arizona, for example, for aspects of her residency, that you were able to share some of your own experiences there?

CC: Again, we had similar experiences. I mean, I was stationed—let's use that term, if you would—in rural, forested areas in which I would probably be the only one who looked like me. She had the same experiences. I was dealing with Native American populations, because they managed or own the land surrounding the federal lands which we managed. She, in Arizona, was dealing with Native American health issues in Arizona. So again, we had another point of commonality and we would talk about the people who we met, how they live their lives, that kind of thing. So we still had a common connection. We were finding similar experiences no matter where we were, and that we decided, you know, we can do this.

ED: Yeah, so that moment in Arizona is sort of her first foray out after medical school, so do you think that that experience was formative in some ways, and if so, how?

CC: Mainly, probably because she was dealing with a people of color that was different than her home base. And who had needs, who had fears. And she felt that she could make a difference. Which I had some connection with—I felt I could make a difference. So she never got into detail about the people except the overall, Hey, I met these folks and they don't have. They have needs. How do I go about meeting those needs? What is it I can give back to them? Which, of course, was who she was. She wanted her presence in their lives to make a difference when she moves on.

ED: Yeah. I mean, I know we've sort of talked about how, as you established your adult life, right, that the communication become more distant, or less frequent. At that moment, when she was starting her military career, though, did she ask you for any advice? I mean, you were not

only in the military, but you were also in the US Air Force, so did she turn to you for any advice or share anything about that kind of transformative moment?

CC: No, we never did talk about it. I mean, of course, she wanted to know, did I like it? And why didn't I stay? I had opportunities to stay. I remember that, but I think she'd already made up her mind that, Okay, this is my career field. I'm not (inaudible) doing the Indian health service aspect of it. And, like I said, whenever you visited with Venus, she took stuff in but she'd already had an idea where she was going to go. But she was that kind of person. Nothing really caught her too much by surprise. So, no, she didn't ask me about what I thought, because she'd already made up her mind that she was going to do it. And I wouldn't be surprised—she never did tell me this—that she'd already decided that she was going to outrank me at some point.

ED: (Laughs) It goes back to those old board games that you used to play, right?

CC: And she didn't like losing.

ED: Right, right, right. Yeah, so, you know as you were establishing your adult life and as she was moving through her career, how would you describe the nature, I guess, of your relationship at that point? Like, did you run into each other at times in Petersburg? Was it sort of exchanging notes occasionally? Or was it more sort of, like, hearing about what you were up to through family connections and mutual friends and things like that?

CC: Yeah, it was more about hearing through family, friends, you know, connections like that. I can only remember, and I don't have any detail—I know we did call now and then just to say, How you doing? Things going okay? I knew she was happy in the military. I knew she felt she was making a contribution in the military. But also that she was looking forward to the time when she would not be wearing the Air Force blue. And I asked her once, You know where you

might want to go? And she says, No, I really don't know yet. But it was during her career in the military that we really kind of separated more.

I only had one call that I remember a little detail afterward with her when she went to Mississippi, and she was in practice. We talked about, that we're going to get together, and then unfortunately she was involved in a serious auto accident and never carried through that. And I told myself, I should have made an extra effort. Because she was that kind of a special person.

ED: So, as we kind of, like, reflect back on her legacy at Mary Washington, or as you do that as a sort of personal friend, what do you think is one of her most important legacies? How would she like us to maybe think about her legacy or her contributions?

CC: Well, the thing is that she had a legacy. She made a difference. When you're talking to people, I always said that I would like my epitaph to be on my tombstone that, "Here lies Chip Cartwright. He made a difference." She made a difference because of who she was, because of her personal characteristics of her dedication to whatever she would focus her mind on, she believed in it, and that she was willing to pay the price. Be that—no matter what that meant, and in both of our cases it meant being away from immediate family. Stepping out there into the unknown.

She made a difference in that she did not let her skin color prevent her from achieving her goal. That she would just smile at people when they would say something that was not appropriate, because she knew in her own mind, I'm going to make this work. I'm going to.

I'm proud to know that the Venus was the first African American—one of the first African American graduates there at Mary Washington. I'm glad that I knew her. I'm glad that she was my friend. I'm glad I had her in my life. In the many things that we shared, even though

we didn't keep real close connection, we knew that we could always count on the other if need be.

ED: Those are some beautiful recollections. Do you—are there things that you think it's important for us to know that we haven't touched on today, or things that you'd like to expand on? I always like to make sure that I'm not steering the interview too much into—sort of open up space for you to share the things that you think are important. Are there things that you would like us to talk about more?

CC: I don't know, there's something about the time when Venus and I were growing up, and the area were in, that—with African Americans have produced a lot of successful African American men and women. We had the support and protection of our immediate families, but yet they did not really stand in our way to reach beyond where they had had their goals and where they thought was safe. They loved us and would have preferred that we may have done something different, but they also did not prevent. So there was an encouragement from that type of thing. It must have been something in the water, especially there in Petersburg, because I can think of a couple other people who had these qualities, and that allowed us to face adversity at that time, deal with it, and prosper. And one of those people who is at the top of that list, and she lived too short a life, was Venus Jones.

ED: One of the things you've kind of touched on a couple of times when thinking about that is it's kind of like balance of being encouraging, but at the same time being forthright and realistic or pragmatic about challenges and obstacles and things like that. Do you think that there was a balance that was struck there and way that maybe contributed, in some senses, to the ability to kind of navigate through these troubled waters?

CC: Otherwise, I think you could have gotten in trouble if there wasn't a balance there. If you didn't have the things that made you stop and say, Okay, maybe I need to change trains. Or there are the pushback things that you could have just run hell bent into and you would've hurt yourself and those that you care for in the process of doing that. And as I look back on my life—and maybe she encountered the same things—sometimes I wish I'd done things differently, because it hurt my personal life. I paid a price with family and making these achievements. And I wish I had not inflicted that price on them, because I feel I may have missed out on some. But again, I wouldn't have been able to achieve what I wanted to do, my goal, my dream, if I had not been willing to pay that particular kind of price. And I'm sure the same would be—if Venus and I were sitting side by side each other, we would mirror in those comments. Whether it was in the military, or in when she was doing the Indian Health Service. Oregon down to Mississippi, there's a price that you have to pay, and you have to be willing to pay that price upfront. And she was willing to do that. And I can look back at my life and say, I was too. I have no—there aren't regrets, but sometimes the pain that you inflict upon others because some of the choices that you make, as I look back—geez, I wish I wouldn't have had to do that.

ED: Absolutely. Yeah. Well, thank you so much for being so generous with your time today and sharing these recollections and thoughts and everything. If it's okay with you, I'll go ahead and stop the recording and we can talk a little bit about what will happen next. Okay?

CC: Thanks for asking me.

ED: Oh, of course, it's our privilege and honor, really, to have the opportunity to speak with you about this important part of your life, and also, of course, of Venus Jones' life.