

Project Title: Venus Jones Oral History Project  
Interviewer: Erin Devlin (ED)  
Narrator: Albert Jones (AJ)  
November 4, 2021, 9 a.m., Zoom

AJ: One other thing.

ED: Um-hm?

AJ: Are we recording now?

ED: Did you click the button?

AJ: Yes.

ED: Yes, so we are recording now.

AJ: Okay, I was going to put not interrupt on my cell phone. I just didn't want it—I get all these thousand calls and messages, I didn't want to—can I put do not disturb on here? I think—oh, I'll probably lose you if I do that, though.

(both talking)

ED: We'll just—yeah, that sounds like a plan. All right. So I'm Erin Devlin, associate professor of History and American Studies at University of Mary Washington here with Mr. Albert Jones, brother of Venus Jones, on November 4, 2021. He has graciously agreed to share his recollections and memories with us today, and without any further ado, I think we'll jump into the interview.

All right, so you shared some lovely family photographs with the exhibit development team, including pictures of your parents, Bessie and Albert Jones, and so I'm just wondering if you could tell me a little bit about your family or your parents and how they influenced your upbringing and the upbringing of your sister as well?

AJ: Well, mom—very energetic. Problem solver. Community organizer. Very much involved in the Civil Rights Movement. She was working with the SCLC [Southern Christian Leadership

Conference] and Dr. Martin Luther King, and through her, a new chapter president for the SCLC. And last time I spoke with Martin Luther King was the last time he was alive in Virginia, over at Virginia State University. My mom sort of controlled the politics there through an organization called Petersburg Voter Education Council. And my youth organization, we distributed sample ballots telling the Black community who they were to vote for and explaining what was going on as far as the elections. And so, she and several other community organizers had taken the state of Virginia to the Supreme Court a couple of times. And so, she was a go-getter. She was determined, and so Venus got that that drive and that fire from her.

My dad, he was a hard act to follow. He was a championship fullback in high school, championship team fullback in college, and he came back to his high school and became the football coach, the athletic director, and eventually the principal, as well as the downtown administrator for health, education, physical education. He was a tank commander under General Patton in World War II. He was 250 pounds of nothing but muscle. A very hard act to follow, and he was my football coach in high school. I've got all the scars to prove it. So dad was quiet, but when he spoke, people listened. And he didn't announce his goals and dreams, he just demonstrated. He just accomplished things quietly. Well, that was Venus also. If you needed some good strong advice, no matter what time of the day or night, no matter what the subject, you could always count on her.

So those were the parents. My grandparents lived on Pocahontas Island, Freeman's Island. If you were born on Pocahontas Island, you weren't born ever in slavery. My other grandparents were from Forest, Virginia, and also moves in Pittsburgh, as family migrated. And my grandfather worked for the railroad. I think he ran away from home—he was thirteen, went

to work for the railroad, and died when he was seventy-three years of age. He worked for the railroad about sixty years. Seven days a week, twelve-hour days, so I didn't see much of him. I remember he did my first haircut. My grandmother, my father's mother, was a seamstress, and she was in charge of the patient clothing at Central State Hospital.

My current grandparents on my mother's side—my grandmother was a homemaker, and they had a big house. L-shaped home, ten foot ceilings, and about six fireplaces, and chandeliers, and the French—you know, windows that came from the ceiling, all the way to the floor. My grand—

ED: So those are the grandparents—sorry to interrupt—that were born on Pocahontas Island?

AJ: No, this was my mother's parents. My father's parents grew up on Pocahontas Island. This was in the city of Petersburg, my mother's parents. Her father owned a dry cleaners in Petersburg. Never had a suit on, and I remember him mostly taking us to the little ice cream parlor down the street, and his—talking about his hunting dogs, and his fishing trips.

So again, those were our grandparents and parents, and my brother was an exceptional athlete. I was nothing when it came to athletics. I think my father just looked at me and shook his head. I had very thick glasses. I probably was mama's boy. And I had very thick glasses, and I was into the thespian society, the yearbook—you know, production manager and things of that particular nature. So again, my brother was the athlete and he was all-state in football and basketball. And matter of fact, he had offers from pros in both, and when they came to get [Petersburg-born NBA player] Moses Malone, he told—Moses told the coach, “I know a better ballplayer than me,” and my brother refused to go. He didn't like the idea of entertaining other folks through the game of sports. He just did things just because he liked doing them. My father—(both talking)

ED: Go ahead, sorry.

AJ: I was just saying, my pop, you know—he couldn't understand it, but again. And then Venus. Venus was my big sister, even though growing up, she was probably about six, seven inches shorter. And also the case when we were young, you know—I got in trouble with the fellows, I'm going to go get my big sister. Brought this little girl back, and dad had taught her to box, because he used to also be a boxer. And she was (inaudible) so I guess he decided he was going to teach her everything he was going to teach (inaudible), he just hadn't gotten there yet (Devlin laughs). So, she was a southpaw, and she knew how to box, and she would handle whatever trouble I had in the neighborhood.

I used to—we used to have all these hand-me-downs. I remember getting her hand-me-down bicycle. It was called Nellybelle, and I didn't find out until recently that Nellybelle was named after a vehicle on “The Roy Rogers Show.” That's where it came from. So again, she would have these things where she would organize the kids in the neighborhood to—for tea parties, you know? Making money as an artist type of thing, and then she would perform weddings, and she would organize them, have us getting married and all this. Matter of fact, I ran across the girl that I married when I was six years of age. She's a retired teacher now, and now we were laughing about it, but—she was very caring. She always found something for us to do, and I was baby brother, so she'd always have me by the hand, you know? Either dragging me around or keeping me from going where I wasn't supposed to go, and so if you saw one, you saw the other.

But one of my most memorable things that I recollect was her chemistry set. I remember when she got her first chemistry set, and I know it had to be—oh, we didn't have middle school back in those days. We didn't have Pre-K and kindergarten, that type of thing—first grade, and

then you went to high school when you got to the eighth grade. But I remember very early on, getting a chemistry set, and I would go over and try to open up some of the jars to see things and get my hands slapped, that type of thing.

But she was very determined. I didn't see her a lot, because she was an avid reader. She would always be in her room, head stuck in a book. We had a library in the house there, and so mom made sure that on the weekends, after you finish your chores and things, that you were reading one of the classics. And I would sneak in some comic books every now and then.

But it was fun in the household. Our house was like recreation and parks for the neighborhood. In our basement we had a ping pong table, we had a pool table, there was a bar down there—of course we weren't at the bar, but we had a swimming pool in the back, deck, and we had all the little things, you know? Cotton candy machines. So kids would come over just like they were coming to the fairgrounds (both laugh). And so it was a wonderful childhood.

ED: Before we started to hit record, you mentioned that both of your parents were college graduates themselves, correct?

AJ: Yes.

ED: Can you tell me a little bit about that, now that we've got the recording going on?

AJ: Well, again, they were—my father and mother both attended North Carolina Central University in Durham, North Carolina. Back in those days, it was known as North Carolina College. And by the time I got there, they changed to North Carolina Central University. North Carolina was kind of a strange place, because I left—I was born in North Carolina, but I left when I was probably about one or two years of age. Moved to Petersburg, Virginia. It was, I would say, well-known that you were going to be attending North Carolina Central University

when you got of age (laughs). I went to school there, and so it was a family tradition. And I remember getting there, and people knew me, that I couldn't recollect—that I thought I had never seen before. They referred to me as baby brother. Some of them were—they were my mother's former—and dad's former classmates. Some of them were working at the university. One was Dean of Students, Dr. Patterson, and there was a chemist there, Dr. Ezra Totten. There was another lady, that was—she was in charge of the biology department, another former classmate of my mom's. And so again, it was like going home for the second time, and it was really comfortable. I— (both talking)

ED: Oh, go ahead.

AJ: —this little daily planner, and it had a notation there, that I was born May 1, 1950. He made a note in his planner there, and I still have it.

ED: Oh, that's lovely. Yeah, so then it sounds like an environment in your home that was really supporting a love of learning, and education was very central to your household? You mentioned that your dad was a principal. Where was he a principal?

AJ: Assistant principal at Petersburg High School, and he was a principal of Peabody Middle School. Right after the integration of the school systems, they changed Peabody High School to a middle school, and he was the principal of the middle school.

ED: Okay. And you mentioned, again before we hit record, that many of your siblings have pursued careers related to the sciences. Was that a particular focus or emphasis within your family household, or was that just coincidental that you all ended up pursuing professions in the sciences?

AJ: Well, I don't particularly believe in coincidences (inaudible) type of thing. I can remember going with my mother out—I think it was Waverly, Virginia—her first teaching job, and I

remember going with her to her classroom on a weekend or something, and seeing all these jars full of all of these different animals in some kind of embalming fluid or something. I forgot what it was. But—and so, that sort of sparked my first bit of interest in trying to find out, you know, the meaning of life, or how things work. On another occasion, the students were dissecting animals. I'm sure my sister, she was probably exposed to a lot more than I was in terms of the biology and the chemistry. And so I think it was—you know, through association, whether it was purposeful—I would probably—knowing my folks, I would think so.

I was programmed to be a patent attorney, and my uncle, my father's brother, was supposed to have been the lawyer in the family, and the military interrupted that, and he became a juvenile domestic courts relations officer instead of (inaudible) the law degree. I also went to law school at UNC [University of North Carolina] in Chapel Hill. So with the physics and the law, I was supposed to become a patent attorney, but it was kind of boring to me. I mean, after you're fighting your way through the Civil Rights Movement, sitting in an office looking at patents all day long, it's just not doing it for you. Though I had been around education all my life, and so that was what was comfortable for me.

But again, the household and education was, you know, “Don't bring anything in that's less than a B.” You might not see the light of day for the next month or two in there.

ED: High expectations, right?

AJ: Oh yeah. And we had the best—my mom, she was non-stop when it came to education. At night time before we went to bed, it wasn't enough to have milk and cookies or something before you go to bed, or somebody to read you a story. Not my mom—she would act them out. I mean, we would have recitals—I mean, even dance recitals. She would dance, she would recite, and so it was a show every night.

ED: That's great. Can you tell me a little bit more—because you mentioned a little bit about life in Petersburg as you were growing up—how would you characterize, I guess, the community in Petersburg? And what do you think drove your mother's investment, in particular, in being engaged with civil rights activism?

AJ: Well, I'd had a very sheltered life, as you can tell. And I got involved in the Civil Rights Movement because of what I heard was happening to other Black people. Not that I had experience. I thought that—I didn't go into the stores, and tried on my Easter clothes and my Christmas clothes in the parking lot out in the back of the stores. I just thought that I was some type of rambunctious kid who might break something, you know, was the reason I wasn't going in. I thought the reason we were doing a lot of camping during our summer vacations, because we just liked the outdoors. I didn't know it was because they wouldn't let us in the hotels. And so I didn't figure those things out until later down the line.

So coming up in the community, I would say it was sort of high pressure from the standpoint of community involvement. Working, organizing, being a part of something bigger than yourself. If it wasn't building floats at the high school, or putting on a play, or being in the concert band, you were helping to register people, or feeding the hungry, or you're getting people sample ballots for upcoming elections. There was plenty to do and everybody was pretty much on the same page.

I think of my friends and classmates—they were just like me. I had a very close classmate who passed away last week, and we had known each other since the first grade. And matter of fact, I had interrupted some set of twins who were planning to kick his behind after school. And because he was so grateful for me interrupting them—but he talked always about my mother's egg salad sandwiches and tuna fish sandwiches, because I hated them, and he



would always trade his peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for my egg salad sandwiches and tuna fish sandwiches. And he was still talking about my mom's sandwiches the last time I talked to him, maybe it was about two weeks ago, just before he passed.

And so it was a good community. It was—again, everybody was on the same page, everybody was striving. And the message that was taught in school was that, No, life isn't fair. But just in case you got the opportunity to compete, you had to prepare yourself to be twice as good as your white counterpart. Just in case you got the opportunity to compete, because it wasn't going to be a fair fight—so you couldn't go to the judges, you had to knock that person out. And you couldn't go to the judges, and that's how we were focused.

ED: So this is sort of in the late 1950s, early 1960s, in that kind of time period?

AJ: Exactly.

ED: And then, you mentioned that your mom was even involved in some court cases and things. Do you remember any particulars about those?

AJ: I don't remember the nature. I know it was around civil rights, and I think it was probably something relative to the schools or the elections because that's (inaudible).

ED: Yeah. Those are her strong areas of interest?

AJ: Matter of fact, she spearheaded in my little civil rights organization, a youth chapter of SCLC. We did all the leg work. I mean, we covered the whole community, from door to door every election, in terms of passing out ballots and getting people registered. But we had the first Black city councilman in Petersburg, long before any of the other cities in Virginia. The first Black mayor—so it was sort of common place, and we'd got to the point where we thought we knew what we were doing, and other cities and states were emulating the things that we were doing.

ED: So was your sister, Venus Jones, was she also involved in these registration efforts, and distributing the sample ballots, and encouraging people to be active in elections?

AJ: Yes. She was—Venus was three years older than I, so the group of kids that she worked with were a little bit older. You know how kids are, they want to stay with their age group—but every person was on board.

ED: Yeah, great. So then, as your sister is—you know, she's coming of age—I know you mentioned that it was a family tradition to go to North Carolina Central State. So tell me a little bit about the factors that drove her decision to go to school in Virginia, and how the family reacted to that, if it was a departure from tradition?

AJ: Well, I think my—I think what sort of overcame the idea that she wasn't going to North Carolina Central University was the fact that she wanted to go to the University of Virginia. And they wouldn't accept her at the University of Virginia. They didn't think that she was a strong enough student. And my pop went to UNC in Chapel Hill, because back in the 40s, they didn't allow Blacks to attend graduate programs, and so that's how he got to Chapel Hill.

ED: You mean he went to UNC rather than UVA [University of Virginia] for that reason?

AJ: Right. And so, that was a fight right there. So they suggested that she go to Mary Washington and get some ground and foundation, and so she went to Mary Washington, and she finished the chemistry program in three years. So right back to UVA, threw that in their faces, and applied for med school and of course, they accepted her.

So my family does not shy away from a good fight. I tell people all the time that one thing that I learned how to do from my pop was how to win. And I learned that also from my mom.

And so, I remember being on your campus. Venus's first year, they had a dance for the students, and I was invited up to the dance. And I can't find that picture to save my life. Yeah, go dancing and having a great time. And I remember Venus's roommate. And they were just good times.

College life was always comfortable to me. I saw people working, and having a great time, and everybody smiling—I said, I've never seen this many people smiling and working at the same time! (Both laugh) And I tell people all the time, I could have skipped high school and gone straight to college, with was what was going on there.

ED: Right. So when you were visiting your sister at Mary Washington College, or when she was home for breaks or holidays, what did she tell you about her time at Mary Washington? Did she share stories?

AJ: I only got glimpses. Every now and then she would bring students home with her. It was the end of the week, it would be a group of girls, this type of thing—and of course, they didn't want me around. But I remember just different folks from campus coming home with her and spending the weekend, and little functions that they would have.

ED: Did she ever describe what it was like on campus? Do you think it was a supportive environment, or did she encounter hostility, or—you know, how would you—do you have any recollections?

AJ: No. I don't remember her ever saying anything negative in reference to the university. I think she was at peace with where she was, and was having fun and finding success, and everything was fine. Never any issues that I ever heard or saw anything about.

I remember reading an article, somewhere, for her. Asked her if she was having a hard time adjusting to college life, being one of a few Black students, and I think that she somewhat

resented the question. And her response, in that—it mentioned something about how the university could consider itself a moral institution of learning never having exposed the student body to African American students. She was the type of person that, if you took her for granted, or did something out of the way—her response would not only set you straight for that moment in time, but for all possible future occurrences. My dad was the same way. And so, again, she had a great time there, and that's what we expected, and that's what she got.

ED: And you said when you came to campus for that dance the first year, that you remember her roommate, and so—I don't know, did you have a chance to experience what the campus was like during that era, or what her dorm room was like, or what her relationships with her peers were like, or anything like that?

AJ: No, I remember all the girls were really friendly, and pretty, and we had a great time at the dance. My memory—you know, I'm old as dirt now, so my memory is not that good. I remember going around, but nothing stood out other than—again, it was a campus and I had been on several campuses before, and it was a beautiful campus. And I knew she was happy and safe, and so those were my main—

ED: So I know she was interested in ultimately going to medical school, but she chose a chemistry major in order to pursue that passion. So what is it—you mentioned earlier that she had a chemistry set when she was younger—what is it that you think she gravitated towards in relation to pursuing studies in chemistry?

AJ: Well, I don't know particularly about the chemistry angle, other than knowing that that's a good foundation as far as medicine. That's where a lot of kids find out if they can cut the mustard. So I would think that my mother just thought it was a good foundation-building to start with, and so I'm quite sure that was—that came from my mom than anywhere else. In the

high school, we had outstanding teachers and professors. Because of the timeframe, a lot of the teachers in our high school had PhDs because they couldn't work at the major universities, and so we had some outstanding physicists and chemists. And a lot of the chemicals that we used, we got from Fort Lee down the road—

ED: Oh, wow.

AJ: —things that you wouldn't find in the high schools today. It was top-rated stuff. Like I said, we could have skipped college compared to what we had to do when we were in high school. So there were good foundations laid there at Peabody. All curious, really serious, and had excellent backgrounds.

ED: Right, right. And as you mentioned, she finished the chemistry program at Mary Washington College in three years.

AJ: Yes.

ED: So you've shared a lot of beautiful photographs from graduation day, and it seems like there were—that your family was in attendance, things like that. Can you share anything about your memories of that day, and what it meant to Venus, or to your parents, or to your larger family, to sort of partake in that important milestone and celebration?

AJ: Well, we had family, friends were there, grandparents were there, neighbors, and of course, all of our immediate family. It was just fun and joyous and—we had already sort of conditioned ourselves to her standing out, because she was a hard act to follow in high school, let me put it that way. And I remember, we used to have these standardized tests, and the district would have in the different areas, math and science—and school systems would compete against one another. And Venus would always come in first place, first place, first place, first place. And I would go to these competitions—and again, they had all the high schools in the district. Every

year, I never even got an honorable mention, and so, again—I'm Miss Jones's sister—brother. So, you know, I'm trying my best to live up to this living legend, and my last year—my senior year, and I was taking physics and I was just getting—no, I was going to be taking physics next year, and the summer before that senior year physics, I decided I was going to study physics, and just be proactive about it. I had a pocket full of cards with information on them everywhere I went, and my friends were helping me.

And so after the competition, we met in this huge auditorium for the awards to be announced, and I said, Man, if I don't get honorable mention, it's over. So by the time the honorable mention went by, and by the time they got to second place, I was down in my seat, head bowed. I wasn't even listening—I was down there bawling and crying. And the next thing I knew, people were beating me on my back, and I had won first place.

ED: Oh, congratulations! (Laughs)

AJ: I said, Man, I finally caught up with Venus in something! (Both laugh) She was happy for me, too, because she was the first person I called to tell.

ED: So she was an important role model for you in that respect?

AJ: Oh yes. If I had a question, and I couldn't go to my parents, I would go to Venus. It was just like talking to mom and dad at the same time.

ED: (Laughs) Right. Wow, that's amazing. So you said that the family was sort of used to her being a standout, right? So after her life—or at Mary Washington College, she as you mentioned, went on to UVA, and went to medical school there. And so you mentioned that, you know, your dad had been interested in pursuing graduate work there and hadn't been admitted. And so, your sister was admitted to UVA medical school. What was the significance of that for her, you think, and your family?

AJ: Well, I'm quite sure it was—it's like, my posture about conflict, or achieving the goal, or—the fight's not over until I win, and so I just don't go around announcing the fact that there is a fight. You ain't going to know until I have you laid out on the canvas, that I've gone off with the trophy, so that's the posture with the family. The fight's not over until we win. We don't make announcements, we just keep fighting. So I'm quite sure that's the context in which my parents took her admission to UVA. Just a (inaudible) of the battle.

That's how they were. My mom and dad were—my dad was like, quiet and reserved, and my mom was like, bouncing, bouncing, bouncing, she couldn't keep still. And I remember them—they belonged to a social club in Petersburg, and they would have formal affairs and things, you know, dances and what-have-it. Recitals. And I remember the ladies in these fabulous gowns and things. Men in their tuxes, and they—it looked like they were on ice, the way they were dancing. My grandmother used to make a lot of the gowns for the ladies, because she was the seamstress. But it was—just watching them. They worked hard, they fought hard, and they enjoyed the times in which they weren't doing one of those two things at the affairs that they had. A lot of times we would get stuck, when we get older and we were teenagers, we got stuck being babysitters for the other teachers and things who were also at the galas and things of that nature.

ED: Yeah. So what do you think—you're clearly at the moment of celebration, it's a victory in terms of the ability for Venus to attend UVA. What do you think—like, why do you think she wanted to be a doctor? Do you know? Did she ever talk to you about that?

AJ: Probably because my mom was a pre-med student.

ED: Oh, okay.

AJ: I think Venus's birth, and mine sort of interrupted that plan. Venus was a continuation of that goal. That's how I always looked at it, because I said, Now, what's the probability of her just coming out of the egg and randomly choosing that? Mom was already in pre-med, so it's got to be an association there, you know? So that's how I always looked at it.

ED: Yeah, absolutely. So after she—you know, at UVA she was breaking barriers, both as an African American student, but also as a female student. She was one of the first women to move through that program as well, correct?

AJ: Right. Venus was—let me put it this way, she was a bit of a tomboy coming up. She would—I had a brother also, who's, like, eighteen months younger than I, so at one particular point in time, she had two of us that she had to ride hurdle. That's kind of a chore. You got two baby brothers wearing the daylights out of you. But she was good with us, and she took the time with—you know, to talk with us, and play with us, and develop our little fine motor skills, and drawing's one of the things that she and I would do. We would draw horses, and I'm just thinking, as much as she loved horses, I remember long before there were any horses, we would draw pictures. We would find pictures of horses, and we would draw them, and then we would color them, and it was one of our Saturday morning activities to see who could draw the prettiest horse. And so, we had a lot of fun things, different games and what have you. We had a Sears and Roebucks catalog book that was about, what, four or five inches thick? And looking at all the toys and things, and drooling over the toys that we wanted.

But it was relatively quiet in the house, unless you were—again, before bedtime, we probably had more activity going on with mom in that performance for us before we went to sleep. But it was—dad was always telling jokes. But it would be the same joke every time, over and over! (Both laugh) He used to talk about the night before Christmas, and this is in the



middle of the summer, you know? And he would tell us these jokes, and he would laugh like he was hearing it for the first time, and we're over there looking at him, shaking our heads. And Thanksgiving was a big affair for the family. Everybody would gather around, our uncles would come, and cousins and friends and it was just fun.

ED: So it sounds like you had a very close kind of family relationship. After Venus graduates from UVA, life takes her to Phoenix, and San Francisco, and far-flung areas. Was she able to return for those Thanksgiving holidays, or do other things like that to maintain contact in person, or—

AJ: She would come home for the holidays. And I even visited her when she was in (inaudible). It was hot as Hades.

ED: In Phoenix, is that what you said?

AJ: —summertime. It was the wrong time to go to Phoenix. And she was doing her internship, I think, in neurology there. I think she did her—another specialization, in dealing with children—pediatrics, in San Francisco. It might have been first. But I also visited her when she was in San Francisco, and those were crazy times. They'd just kidnapped the Hearst girl and the Zebra gang was shooting people down in the streets, and Jimmy Carter just had the first gasoline lines and things going on. It was crazy out there. You never heard anything about the east coast except for New York and Washington D.C. The rest of the east coast didn't exist.

ED: You think she enjoyed her time in Phoenix and San Francisco?

AJ: I don't know about Phoenix. She had an accident when she was in Phoenix. She was into horseback riding then, and she was riding one of her horses out in the desert and I think she fainted. Well, she fell from a horse and hit her head. I don't know how she got out of that

situation. I guess she just came to and got back on her horse. But she could have lost her life out there, riding around in the desert.

And then in San Francisco—we lived out in the Sunset District, because I went out there just to visit, and then I decided to stay for a little while. I even got myself a job while I was out there (inaudible). And I would drive her car around. She had a Targa Porsche. It had a—the clutch was in the stick, so if you touch the stick to shift gears, it would go out again—you could put it anywhere. But of course, all the police thought I had stolen somebody's car. My hair was halfway down my back at the time. I wore it in a ponytail, and so they said, What a strange looking kid with these thick glasses and a ponytail driving a Porsche. They would pull me over every other day.

But she had a beautiful dog, a Weimaraner, and she rode her horses up and down the beach. And she was always trying to get me to be the daredevil. Anything she was interested in doing, she had me to try it first. I'd end up jumping off the utility shed associated with the house there with a towel around my neck playing Superman. It was an umbrella on another occasion. But she wanted me to do this hang-gliding thing—these kids were jumping off of cliffs over the ocean with these kites on them. And I said, Oh no, no, no. Brother [Butch?] not doing this one.

And we lived—she moved—when she was at Andrews Air Force Base Hospital, living at Oxon Hill. And I had just moved to DC, and I was working at the American University in DC. And we were sharing a condo, and we lived near Rosecroft Racetrack, and that's where she—she was into show dogs at that time. She would actually—her and a couple other doctors had this expensive dog, a long-haired German Shepherd, golden shepherd, or something. They paid, like, twenty-some thousand dollars for this dog. I said, You guys got to be out of your minds.

We would take him over to the racetrack in the evenings so he could exercise, and she would drive around the track, and I would hold the dogs, you know? (Inaudible) just go exercise them. He had his own pet—a black lab named Sam was—the dog's name was Luther, and Sam was jealous of Luther, and would try to take him off and get him lost and come back without him. Venus would turn around and stare at him and say, “Go back and get him,” and made sure he’d go back. And then she tried to get me—I don't know what they call this sport, where they have a little carriage behind a single horse and they race. What is that, some kind of steeplechase or something?

ED: I don’t know.

AJ: But she tried to get me to do that. I said, “Oh, no, that's too close to those horses” (both laugh). But she got me to take up handling the dog and what have you.

But I remember one of the little boys that she took under her wing and raised. His mother was in the military and had to go to Germany. Venus kept him those years, and then Venus got shipped off somewhere, and I had to go up there and watch him, keep him. And he was just a toddler—I guess he might have been about four years of age, and so I had to take him to his daycare. It was way out in the county at some horse ranch. I said, What kind of daycare is this on a horse ranch? That was my sister and horses, you know? If anybody was going to find them, she was going find them. And so, at the end of the day, I went and picked him up, and I said, “Russell”—and he's the young man that became the professional football player for the Giants on the Super Bowl team—a linebacker. And I said, “Russell, what did you learn in school today?” He said, “The teacher read us a book.” I said, “Well, what was the name of the book?” He said, “Mama Goose.” I said, Mama Goose? I don’t remember any story about Mama Goose, and it dawned on me he was talking about *Mother Goose*. I said, “Okay” (laughs).

ED: There you go. Mama goose. So you mentioned in passing, you know, that—being on the air force base, and then getting deployed—but we haven't had a chance to talk yet about her military career. So can you share with me any insights into what factors contributed to her decision to become a doctor with the Air Force?

AJ: I haven't the slightest idea, other than maybe the connection with dad and my uncle Robert. I think my uncle Robert was in the Air Force. My dad was in the Army. I didn't see that coming. But I remember going over to pick her up in the evenings at Andrews Air Force Base. She was in charge of the neurology department there. There, it was just like watching that sitcom “M.A.S.H.” I mean, they were always kidding around, you know? It was light-hearted, and they were having fun, and they enjoyed being around each other. And my sister—I know later in life, she must have been missing them, because she watched that “M.A.S.H.” program religiously. It was fun for them, at least the times that I saw them.

ED: Yeah. So did she spend—I know she retired in the nineties, is that right?

AJ: Yeah.

ED: So did she spend most of her professional career, then, as a military doctor?

AJ: Yes. She spent twenty years in the military, and then when she got out, she opened up a neurology clinic in Clarksdale, Mississippi, at a hospital there. And she had a horse ranch there. She had a lot of—I guess you call them ranch hands. I think her barn cost more than her house. She was crazy about her horses. She would call me and invite me out, and wanted me to come out there and break some of her horses for her, (inaudible) riding, you know? And I can ride, but I think we all got that from my grandmother on my father's side, because they were from Saratoga, New York, by way of Vermont. They were dairy farmers. And I had gone through ancestry, and looking up the family and traced them back to Vermont, and they had a dairy

farm, and they had an indentured servant living with them, which I thought was (inaudible). But again, the whole thing of horses with her, was a commonality throughout her life.

When she was even at University of Virginia, there's a stable there, a very famous stable there. Matter of fact, there's a road named after the family, the Barretts, a stable in Charlottesville with one of her girlfriends. And so again, she loved those horses. But she invited me to the farm, to her ranch, and wanted me to break some horses. I said, Best thing I can do is build you a dummy and put it on him and let him buck all he wants to. Because you won't be breaking me up with any of your crazy ideas. No, no. I was her crash dummy.

ED: Yeah. So she—she also did—I mean, she was deeply interested in horses, you've talked about that she was interested in show dogs at one point, adventures like hang-gliding—

AJ: Fencing.

ED: Fencing?

AJ: Yeah. She made the boys, all three of them, have fencing lessons, and riding lessons, and this type of thing. So it was kind of funny, and I—and she insisted, I know—when she would take them out, or they would go out for dinner, and—

ED: Uh oh. Mr. Jones, you've frozen up.

[recording ends]