

## LOUIS YOUNG

SB 1950 (aeronautical engineering) MIT; senior design specialist, Lockheed-California Company; computed loads for various aircraft, 1950-1953; conducted basic research on aerodynamic heating, 1953-1959; analyzed fatigue test loads for aircraft and evaluated theoretical methods for analyzing fatigue and service life, 1959-1965; developed procedures for fatigue analysis and substantiation, 1965-1966; responsible for setting up fatigue and static test loads for AH-56A Helicopter, 1966-1972; evaluated scatter in fatigue test data, and conducted statistical analysis of test life reduction factors, 1972-1978.



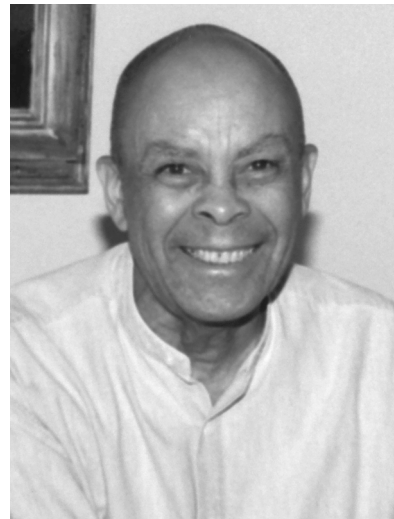
I grew up in Detroit, Michigan. My family lived in a poor section of the city at the time. We eventually moved to another poor section near the streets along Boston Boulevard and Arden Park, where some rich white folks lived. As a result, I got to go to the excellent Northern High School, where forty-two blacks were enrolled. We got a very good education, with me having an 89% grade-point average. Of course, we had classes like calculus, Latin, biology, chemistry, and physics—the whole works. In my time, they had mostly white kids going to Northern High School. Now this school is located in a very poor neighborhood.

My wife died around 1980, early '80s. It was a sudden surprise to all of us. She had breast cancer. I have one daughter who now is forty years old. She's studying pharmaceuticals at the University of San Francisco and she's doing quite well there. The problem I have is I'm trying to stay single as long as I can. It just gets more difficult. You just have to be cautious about what you do, where you go, and what you say, and not be influenced. I get around quite a bit.

I was one of the original Tuskegee Airmen. I got out of the military in '46, and when I left there I went directly to MIT. I went to Tuskegee first. When I got out, the military paid my way. At that time it cost eighty-five dollars a year to go to MIT. What they told you when you first got into the Institute—you get in that big hall where everybody sits together—"Look at the person on your left, look at the person on your right. Next year two of you won't be here." What you noticed—that guy was an educational counselor for some of

the younger kids, he'd come in and you would sit at his feet and the freshman were really nervous. Juniors are a little more confident, and when they get to be a senior they think they know it all. You can see the changes in people.

I think one of the things you had to do when you were at MIT was learn how to read people. I used to fight some of the professors in mathematics, and I liked math. One professor, I talked to him in my freshman class. I had a question on something he put up on the blackboard. He said, "I want you to remember something, young man. When you're in church, you don't argue with God. When you get in my class, you don't argue with me." So I learned a few things there. Then I found, as it got later in the class, sometimes I would walk into a class and I wasn't that good at it. But the thing was, the professor wasn't giving



Edited and excerpted from an oral history interview conducted by Clarence G. Williams with Louis Young in South Pasadena, California, 13 March 1997.

the right kinds of books and things to study and prepare for the class. I walked in boldly one day and asked if he would give some additional books and information. "What would I need to solve those types of problems?" He was very happy to give those to you.

So it took a little politics and knowing how to handle yourself. People in the classroom worked together. I stayed in the dorm. We had our meals downstairs. The meals came with the room.

*That's a beautiful dorm now.*

It's the women's dorm now, the brick building.

*The twin building. Was it a twin?*

Yes, that's right.

*I think that's Burton.*

It was across Massachusetts Avenue, on the other side of campus.

*That's the East Campus, but you lived on the west side. When you cross Mass Avenue, where they now have the Student Center, you go down the alley where there are a lot of buildings—fraternity houses and things like that. There are also those larger dormitories. I think Burton House is one of the older ones. That may be the one you're thinking of.*

This was a new brick building. I got into it probably about my sophomore or junior year. I lived there for a while. I had a single, very small room. The white boys seemed to be rich. They had all the booze you'd want. You didn't have to buy anything.

*How did you find out about MIT?*

What got me started was that in Detroit I loved airplanes. I made model airplanes. I'd look up in the skies and watch some of these creeping on the airbase. The thing I remembered about them was that they did not make their moves too strong. I'd hate to see them fly up and all of a sudden, boom!—the wings going that way and the airplane goes face down. So I got really interested in aeronautical engineering. I went to Wayne University for a little while before I could get into anywhere I wanted. They told me that the only thing I could ever do was to be a mechanic in that day. I didn't actually get to be a pilot. I got to be a navigator. But I still wanted to be that pilot.

When I got to Tuskegee, I immediately got shipped up to navigation, being a navigator. They didn't have many people who were mathematical

there. Here we were in a sort of a segregated deal. We'd go in to breakfast at 7:00 AM, and an hour later the white students were by themselves and they ate. They kept us completely separate. Worse than that, we couldn't even get a list of places to get a haircut or anything like that. We were considered completely different from them. I had to walk gigs. I decided all my gigs on that day. In order to get a haircut, I had to go sixty miles from Hondo, Texas, to San Antonio. So every time I had gigs, I managed somehow to get to San Antonio that weekend.

At the barracks, what they did there was put the white boys to bed first. After they go to sleep, they bring us in and in the morning they took us out. Things like that happened. Then later in the war, there were a lot of guys coming back from overseas. We heard about what they had done over there. I'm trying to think of that—not Omaha. There's another big station.

*Oklahoma?*

Yes. We got there and the guy who was doing overseeing, when you walked into those barracks they made sure that we were treated right. We had separate toilets and all that sort of stuff, but we got pretty nice treatment. The thing that was bad there was you could do the least little thing wrong and they would kick you out. You had to be a person who could stay cool under pressure.

*All of you in the Tuskegee Airmen get together every year, is that right?*

Yes.

*About how many of you are still alive?*

I'd say roughly about 450. There were 996 pilots, including navigators.

*They had a big write-up on all of you in Ebony magazine not too long ago, if I'm not mistaken.*

That gave me all kinds of headaches. They wrote about the Tuskegee Airmen Scholarship Program and I'm the chairperson for that right now. I got about five hundred applications between August and November, the write-up came out some time in the late summer. We close our applications on January 15. That article just carried our mail right on up all the way.

*You know all the Airmen, for the most part?*

All of the Tuskegee Airmen? It would be impossible. I know most of them. The ones that are still



Tuskegee Airman, 1940s. Source: Louis Young.

surviving I see in national meetings and things of that sort.

*For the record, for those who have no sense about that achievement of all of you, could you talk to us a little bit about what you saw or what you see at the moment as to the achievement of that group of famous men?*

Right now we're the talk of the town. Today I had a free pass to go to Randolph Field to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Air Force. They had the 1947 Northwest Virginia Second Infantry. The Air Force, 1947 to 1997, is a fifty-year span so they had a big party. It was really nice. We stayed in the officers' barracks, real nice barracks. It was a beautiful view. Nice gifts and everything else.

*You said you initially wanted to be a pilot, but because of your ability in math they wanted you to be a navigator. For the record, what's the difference between the two?* Any idiot could fly a plane. There's nothing that I wanted to do more than become a pilot. I loved the airplane. I wanted to get my hands on the stick and stuff, but I always got shifted away from it a little bit. When I did get my hands on the plane, I was working for Lockheed. I thought I was the first black engineer in the aircraft industry. Joe Dunning was also an MIT graduate. Mr. Dunning was actually the first black engineer in the aircraft industry. He died while he was a vice president at McDonnell Douglas. He wound up being the vice president at McDonnell Douglas before he died. I was the first black in the engineering office at Lockheed. I don't know who the first one was up at Boeing. I came in 1946—no, 1950. I got out of the military in '46 and it took me four years at

MIT to get to '50. I was the only guy in the aeronautical engineering class to get a job in 1950 for six months. I got mine immediately. But at my proudest moment, when I had this gal with me that I was going to get married to, we were standing in the elevator before graduation and this white guy got on and said, "How come this goddamn nigger can get a job and I can't?" I learned that not only was I the only black in the aeronautical force, but none of the other students got a job until six months after I did.

I was not the first black at Lockheed. I was the second one hired. What happened was the guy from Lockheed, when in Portland, came out and we hit it off really good. We became really good friends. I got back to Lockheed when I came out to California. Initially what happened there, before I got out of MIT—in my junior year—the Navy wanted to see what they could do about getting some of us to work for the Navy, particularly people interested in the aerial courses. I got with them. We got to Port Hueneme and they didn't show up. They wouldn't serve me in a restaurant. Then they put us on the base. We stayed on the base and then they would get us the food. There were twenty-seven of us from MIT. I came into town to visit some friends I knew. The guy that was in my class as a navigator, he was married like pretty normal, but his brother, Bill Terry, was a real lady's man. He and I got together, every time I came in to Los Angeles from Port Mugu with just a month to stay there. What they were doing there is they were firing rockets that have wings on them—if they could fly it would be nice—and they put on four boosters. But they let these boosters sit around for about four or five years, and what happened was they lowered the intensity of the power that they could put out. If you put these on a plane, it would shoot out with these things and the wings would come off right away because you're putting 40,000 pounds of force on it and it only expected 10,000 pounds to take off. So they were just going up and down, up and down. We learned a lot about controlling the stuff like liquid nitrogen and sulfuric acid. We were working with a lot of dangerous stuff. You could take a little steel bar, drill a round hole in it, put a pipe on top of it, and drop a marble in on nitric acid and sulfuric acid and see it shoot way up in the sky. It was really nice.

So basically, I pulled some good contacts in L.A. I went back to MIT and got the job at Lockheed. The thing that happened there was that it came nice and easy to me for a while. I had a lot of hard things to go through, but you wake up. People try to take advantage of you sometimes. Some things that I was working on, other people would take my name off of a good report. They'd get the credit for the report and sometimes got trips and rewards for stuff that I had built. The thing that happened was I had to learn the game. For example, when they thought I was going to leave. One time I got a job offer to go to Martin Marietta, but they were then in Denver, you see. Everybody gave me flak about this and that. It turned out I was making \$30,000 a year at that time, and everybody was getting ready to take this big job down there if I had to move. Twenty-eight thousand dollars a year to stay. I had 120 people working for me there and I was only working for me.

That was a year of strife. I ran into a lot of those superficial deals at Lockheed. They wanted me to go to Israel and get into that field and travel between two towns in Israel. Of course, you've got the offices here and the computer centers sixty miles away and I've got to go back and forth between those two places. I was making at that time \$22,000 a year and they were going to pay me \$18,000 to go. Now, all these situations were set up a little bit phony and I knew it. I started playing the game just the same way that they played it, and that kept me out of most of the company. I did destroy one piece of structure there that cost about \$400,000, and nobody said a word.

I'll tell you something that a lot of people don't know. I got pissed off at Lockheed. Let's see, how shall I say this one? Oh, I remember now. It was a deal where they wanted me to go to work on the C-58. I had worked on helicopters, fighter planes. I had worked on practically everything they had. Anyway, the guy called me into an office to talk to me—one of the big wheels—and his discussion at that time was about the fact that he had given me \$688 a week to go to Atlanta. While he's sitting there, the phone rings. He says, "Oh, hi. I want to talk to you two guys. Mr. Young is thinking about going to Atlanta and we'll give you \$2,000 a week to work for him." So I just sat there quietly and he came back and we kept talking. One of the guys, Mr. Pappin—he's a retired boss—

was going to get up a section. So he said, "We're going to do this section"—the fuselage, the landing gear, the wings. I'm supposed to help all these people and make \$680-some-odd dollars a week. So I read *The Peter Principle*. Have you heard of the Peter Principle, the theory that you reach your level of incompetence?

What I did was came home one day and thought about it. I said, "If anyone ever makes an offer that stupid, if it costs me everything I've got to do it." I put on striped pants, shepherd shirt. I put a noose around my neck, put a hat and my raincoat on, and picked myself up. I walked into the boss's office, threw the hood off, and said, "This is how I get dressed when I go to Georgia." I walked up and down the plant for about an hour-and-a-half. Then I put my coat on and covered up to have protection if I got arrested. I went home, took a shower, came back in a suit, and wore it for six months. And nobody ever said another word about it to me. I got a raise, too.

*You had guts.*

It reached a level of incompetence where you're getting screwed anyway because people were taking a lot of my work and taking credit for it, and I knew it—that sort of stuff. Actually, let's go back to that \$2,000 for these other guys. If I had been stupid enough to say, "I will take the \$2,000," I would have gotten it but it would have killed me too, at the rate I'd have to work in order to maintain that level of intensity. What you have to do is work at levels. There was a question there. If I got in that amount of involvement in that C-5 structure in Atlanta, I'd be a dead duck. I'd been working really hard here. A guy died. They wanted to put me in charge. There are idiots down here that have been working with some aluminum alloys and looking for strengths with 70,000 psi. They've designed this stuff up to a million psi, which no material could take the way aluminum would. They made me the lead man, but not the boss. I'd stay over a weekend and write a good report on something when everybody else had left. Someone else would get promoted.

So I got stomped. I didn't let them walk over me any more and I didn't get mad at anybody. I just did my share of the work. When I left there, I was working by myself. People from Georgia came and threw every piece of paper I had away, all the details. I didn't feel like going back to work. I had

been job-shopping for a while and things didn't look too nice. They were working like sixty million dollar deals. They were building planes that were assembled in Panama, all of them. The structure wasn't designed right there either. I'd look on one page and wonder why it stopped there when it should have gone way up. They didn't use the right size sheets of paper. It cost the company about sixty million dollars. When we looked at these sorts of situations, we tried to stay out of problem situations. When people came in from Georgia to replace me, they threw every single piece of paper I had away. They cleaned out the bookcases.

So they asked me would I go down to Atlanta and work on this plane. I said, "Yes." I thought at that time I needed a rest. I thought I'd only stay for two months. I took two weeks off after the first two weeks to go back home to make it easier. Anyway, what happened was all the stuff that I had done, I was smart enough to put it on the computers, but I put it in remote storage. They didn't know about remote storage. When they said, "We'll go up and dial in and get this stuff," they dialed in and there ain't nothing coming up. Then I dialed and I got everything. I got stacks of data coming out. They treated me like a king. Someone tried to say something to me. It was interesting when I went to this place for my farewell dinner to see me get up and speak and I'm the only black in the room. Everybody is wondering, "What are you doing up there talking while all of the white people are sitting down?" It was interesting. I actually got pleasure out of that.

*What company is this? This is all at Lockheed?*

Lockheed, Atlanta. To tell you how good it was, I mean good, when I got off the plane on the first trip—I took a couple weeks off and went back—I went out to get my car and there was a brand new Lincoln Continental.

*This was what year?*

That was roughly about 1986. I got a brand new Continental that I used for these two weeks. They gave me a smaller car when I came back the second time. I had a suite of rooms at the Embassy Suites, non-itemized expense accounts. It was nice. I had a ball. I enjoyed it.

What I'm saying is you read these things and you sort of protect yourself. The reason I had to turn down most of these jobs was because when they had the Electra Aircraft fiasco and the planes

were going up, what happened there was they didn't make the leading edge strong enough. They had a propeller-driven system. Here's the leading edge here; out here you've got a great big propeller spinning; this part where there's folding is weak, and you're doing what a gyroscope is doing because this propeller will spin and rotate like this. All of a sudden, the propeller went *spsssh*—take the whole wing off and you wind up falling to the ground about this deep, airplane and all. Those sorts of things happened.

You'll never believe the hours I have worked. Sometimes I know I worked twice the hours. During that crisis, they'd go to a restaurant and just booze all day. We didn't get much work done, but we sure were happy. I'd work from like seven o'clock in the morning and I'd leave here at 5:30 the following morning. I'd go home and take a shower and come back to work. I would work twenty-three hours on one survey. I hated it. I went from roughly 140 pounds to about 220. I finally lost the weight. It was a fight, but the thing was I got what I wanted. I could have gotten the \$2,000. But the way that I had been working, I figured it was going to kill me. That's why I had to think about acting crazy. When I walked in the way I did, I didn't give a good God damn. If I stayed I was going to be messed up enough. You get into those sorts of situations, but actually it wound up good for me.

*How long did you stay with Lockheed?*

From 1950, thirty-eight years.

*You had different kinds of positions while you were there, based on what I hear you saying, and promotions during those thirty-eight years.*

Well, you didn't get the promotions right away and you didn't get the promotions until you decided to fight for them. Like in the Electra situation, that woke me up and I said, "I'm doing all the work and they're getting all the credit. No. I'm not going to let them do that to me any more."

*You had to fight for what was yours.*

I did. When I did all this crazy stuff, when I went home and took a shower and went back in a suit for six months, nobody said a word to me about how I had acted. When I went to Atlanta, when I walked in they treated me like I was God. "Don't be afraid, Mr. Young. You can do that." I had a ball. It made up for all of it, all the bad things I men-

tioned. Then they put me into the job-shopping bureau. You make much more money than when you work in the factory. I worked there for about three to four months and I quit that. It was a good feeling to make \$2,000 a week or more.

*Now, let me backtrack just a little. How would you describe your experience at MIT? You did your undergraduate work there. How would you describe that experience coming in—what—in 1946? First of all, you had to be extremely good to have gotten accepted, particularly as a black student coming to MIT in 1946.*

What they didn't know, we were poor blacks living in a poor neighborhood, and right next to us was Arden Park and Boston Boulevard. And right next to them was Northern High School. It was a classic, it was the best kind of high school you could ever go to, except they had a technical school downtown that people went to. For a straight high school, I had Greek and all that stuff—Latin, calculus, physics, biology. Anything you name, we had. You had to be good.

*How did you rank in your class? How did you do in your class? They had class ranking, right?*

Yes. I was at the eighty-nine, ninety percent level.

*When you finished, that's when you went into the service. I went into the service. I tried to get into Wayne University and I went there for about a week. The reason I quit was they told me I could never become an aeronautical engineer and I didn't want to be anything else. Then I worked in the Hotel Palmetto and I didn't like the kind of tips you got. Back in those days, women asked you to go out and get some beer or something—whiskey—and they opened up just about this much, and that's your tip. That was making good money? I said, "To hell with it," that sort of stuff. Then what I did was I worked in the factories. I volunteered once for the military and they turned me down because of a heart murmur. Then I tried it again and I made it. So it made me feel pretty good. I wanted to be a pilot bad.*

*So that's when you went into the service. Yes.*

*Then while you were in the service, you went to Tuskegee.*

Basic training first, and then Tuskegee.

*Now, this movie they had out, do you think that movie indicated essentially what happened in general to the air-*

*men that they trained and so forth? Did it have the major issues in that movie?*

What you really have to know, at Randolph Field they have all the records. You had to be awfully careful. You could slip up just slightly or do something slightly wrong and get kicked out. The guy buys this new suit and new bars and things because he knows he's going out as a lieutenant or something, and the day of the graduation he doesn't hear his name called. All that sort of stuff. The least little thing would get you—just looking at somebody wrong or just saying the least little thing. You had to be awfully sensitive in interacting in that place, and that's how you did the white folks. You figure out what they're trying to get you to do and you find ways to keep doing it, doing it better. You had to play the part. You had to learn how to play it quietly and not angrily or in a personal way. You sort of have to do something first and then you figure out finally what happened. Why you're doing it is because somebody else is putting the pressure on you. "What can I do to take this pressure and reverse it the other way?" That's what I tried to do and I did it. I didn't always get away with it.

*There were very few blacks at MIT when you were there.*

There were six blacks from India. They don't consider themselves black. I was really the only black there my year for four years.

*How were you able to get into MIT when there were no others there?*

I was an honor student at Northern High School. I had things like Greek, Latin, calculus, biology, chemistry. There was a bunch of rich people living on those two streets next to this high school. These kids, I played tennis with these white kids and all that stuff in Detroit. I was the only black fellow with them, just because it wasn't social. Right now I wouldn't send a dog to that high school.

*You applied to MIT, though, in a way like they did, I guess.*

I took the SAT test and you did whatever you had to do to pass it. We had to take a series of tests.

*You must have done well.*

I was good in math. I still am.

*Do you remember what your math scores were on the SAT's? Were they the SAT's in your time?*

That's a long, long time ago.

*I know it is a long time ago, but you know you did very well.*

Yes.

*Did anybody visit you to talk to you before you were admitted? Do you recall as to how that process occurred?* I went in and took a test when I got out of the military to go to college. I applied at MIT and they accepted me. I was so isolated the first year. I approached some professors who were giving me a little trouble and conned them into doing things the right way, at least consider that I had not made a mistake when I had made one. The other thing that happened there is that you had to hit the ground to do what you want. The other thing that happened there that was really strange—since I was the only black boy, they had a \$150 scholarship for black women, and I got that. That was in my third year. I got a job there correcting stuff from professors' classes and stuff like that.

*You must have been outstanding. You were what we would now call a teaching assistant.*

Except for one thing. The only thing I did wrong, and it really was wrong, is I cheated one time in my last year. The white boys had a copy of the test that the professor was going to have and we all studied that, and they gave us another test. I'll never forget that one, though.

*You had to be very good.*

It's reading people and reading situations. For example, when I did that crazy thing with the clothes and booze and all that sort of stuff, I didn't give a damn if they laid me off for that because it couldn't mean that much to me. They were killing me slowly. You go from 140 up to 220 in a period of eight months. They never helped me. It was a big mistake. After I got to be 220, I went to a private hospital and the doctor told me I had to go on a diet. What happened was the nurse gave me a child's diet. The only thing I could eat on this diet for breakfast was one piece of toast, one tab of butter, and a cup of coffee. Lunch consisted of cottage cheese and raw green vegetables, one piece of bread, half a cup of tea, and stuff like that for dinner. What I'm trying to say, in effect, was that in thirty days I got down to my regular weight. I've never seen anything work that well.

To give you an example, I can't remember the exact year but I went home and I was at this gross weight—I think it was '72 or '73. What they

were doing there, they would take trips across to see whites in different countries. They wanted me to go around the South and recruit blacks. I was going in just prior to complete desegregation and I was staying in white hotels and stuff like this like in Nashville, Tennessee, at the college there. If you could have just seen me in this. Every little thing—"Is the coffee right? Is the tea right?" That's what it looks like. The white guy was going out to—not Alaska, but China and places like that. I knew what was going on. But when I got that weight, it scared me to death. It helped me a lot, though. I had a lot of built-up pressure because I'd had enough of it. It taught me a lot of things about how to get along with people and to handle different types of situations when they didn't pay you well.

*Who were and who are your heroes and role models and mentors? When you look back on your career, your education, who would you consider your role models and your mentors?*

Well, my mother pushed me pretty hard. The trouble with it, at home what happened—when I was a little boy—I got beat up a couple times. My mother somehow got me into a private school. They used to keep me there late at night if I didn't get my work done. You didn't go home until you got your work done there. When I started in the black schools in Detroit, I got all the hard courses. That gave me a good start. I like math. I like people, but the thing is jobs are more politics than anything else. If you get angry, you lose the battle. That's why I had to keep my head together. I might not have adapted to it, but I had to do it to keep it cool before I got my act. You don't want to get in and shoot off unless you don't have anything to lose. I had a lot to lose. So you have to read the people and know how to handle them without getting angry.

*Is there any advice you would give to a young Louis Young coming up now in terms of his career and what he needs, just based on your own mostly very positive experience and learning experiences that you've had?*

Believe in yourself. Do what you have to do. Because once you give up, you're not going to make it anyway. No matter what the odds are, you've got to pay a little dues. I loved that place so much I don't know what would keep me away from it. That was my philosophy. The thing that hurt me was knowing math and not being able to

do it as a pilot. I used to watch these Cleveland airplanes, air races live around Detroit. “Why are those things going up? You planning on going down like that?” “I don’t want to do that.” I really got disgusted when I got into navigation, but right now it doesn’t matter. I was a very poor boy in Detroit. We were on welfare and all like that. What I’m basically saying is that things look up, but they don’t always work out the way you want them to.

*You retired from Lockheed in what year?*

’88 or ’89. I worked about eight or nine months after that, horsing around. Then I just quit altogether. There was a lot of traveling, seeing Europe. I remember the Asian part.

*You really enjoyed the traveling.*

Yes.

*Is there any topic or issue that you can think of that you would like to say that comes to mind as you reflect on your own experience, and on the experience of blacks at MIT or in your own career?*

The problem I had with my daughter, and she’s not dumb, is getting her to believe in herself. When she looks at a tough thing, she gets scared. What I keep trying to tell her in the middle of this is that once you get scared, you’ve lost the battle. You’ve got to keep believing in yourself no matter how hard the situation gets. I played a lot of politics here. For example, as chairman of the board I got up sometimes and told people to shut up in a meeting, then walked by them politely and said, “I didn’t really mean it” and give them a little pat on the back. Stuff like that. So my name got put in a time capsule. They twisted a cylinder into the ground and when the hundredth anniversary passes, my name will be there as the chairman of the planning board for those years.

*Chairman of the planning board of—  
South Pasadena.*

*You played a major role.*

That was the only time I did anything. The trouble I ran into, it was these old white women would start chasing you around and stuff and you had to learn how to avoid them. I know. I think we’re maybe the third black family in the area. I got involved in politics with these people. You’ve got these people circulating when we were married and all that sort of stuff. Sometimes you would

find out from someone else that they were in the process of getting a divorce. There were those who were trying to find out what these black folks got, and I didn’t want to deal with it. All of them are married. Not one was single and they’re trying to get me in an affair. And I wouldn’t do it. For example, they had a picnic over here one day and I went over and talked to a couple of guys. One guy I hadn’t met before. I went over the next day to a meeting and this time it was all the real nasty, nasty words—sat down and didn’t say another word during that meeting. When I walked out, three women asked me if I would go out with them. They’re all married. I said, “No.” I avoided that. I had talked to one of their husbands the day before and he was talking about her. So you had to avoid these sorts of situations that are wide open. That’s the big deal.

*Well, I guess I can see why you’ve been very successful.*