

Oral Memoirs
of
Sumner Hutcheson III

An Interview Conducted by

Geoffrey Cravero

September 15th, 2025

Regional Initiative for Collecting the History, Experiences, and Stories
(RICHS)

University of Central Florida RICHS

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Interview Histories

Interviewers: Geoffrey Cravero

Transcriber: Geoffrey Cravero

The recordings and transcripts of the interview were processed in the offices of the RICHES Department, University of Central Florida, Orlando, Florida.

Project Detail

RICHES is an umbrella program housing interdisciplinary public history projects that bring together different departments at UCF with profit and non-profit sectors of the community.

Central Florida has often been associated with large-scale, commercial tourism and housing development. While those aspects of Central Florida are important to the economic growth of the region, much of its history has remained unnoticed and under researched. The Public History program at UCF links many projects under one initiative to promote the collection and preservation of Central Florida history. By facilitating research that records and presents the stories of communities, businesses, and institutions in Central Florida, RICHES seeks to provide the region with a deeper sense of its heritage. At the same time, the initiative connects the UCF students and faculty with the community and creates a foundation on which Central Floridians can build a better sense of their history.

Geoffrey Cravero is the digital archivist for RICHES at the University of Central Florida.

Legal Status

Scholarly use of the recording and transcript of the interview with Curtis Rayam is unrestricted. The interview agreement was signed on March 5, 2025.

Abstract

An oral history interview of Sumner Hutcheson III. The interview was conducted by Geoffrey Cravero in Trevor Colbourn Hall at the University of Central Florida in Orlando, Florida, on September 15th, 2025. Some of the topics covered include growing up in Brownsville, the entrepreneurship of his parents and meeting Black musical artists in his father's store, his grandfather, Sumner Hutcheson I, being influenced by Marcus Garvey and immigrating to the United States from the Bahamas, his grandparents' move back to Miami, his grandfather's

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entrepreneurship, and his family's businesses, the history of Brownsville and the types of professionals in the community, attending grade school, and educators that influenced him and his sister, his father attending Bethune-Cookman University and joining the school's first football team, his father facing discrimination while traveling with his football team and the power of Mary McLeod Bethune, the role of friends in the Jewish community in his father's businesses, lessons learned from his father, facing discrimination on the high school swim team and his father's response, the consequences of racial integration, and growing up around the Latino community, attending Bethune-Cookman and Barry Universities, becoming involved in the American Red Cross and his career experience with the organization, including working for Elizabeth Dole, retiring from the Red Cross, selling real estate, and returning to work for the Red Cross, retiring from the Red Cross for the second time, and becoming Vice-President of University Advancement at Bethune-Cookman, retiring from Bethune-Cookman and immediately being recruited to work for Florida International University, his life after retirement doing consulting work and working with the Peace and Justice Institute, meeting Presidents John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson, Bill Clinton, Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush, finding a last-minute helicopter to bring Bernadine Healy to the Mary McLeod Bethune home, and his closing remarks.

Sumner Hutcheson III

Oral History Memoir
Interview Number 1

Interviewed by Geoffrey Cravero
September 15th, 2025
Orlando, Florida

0:00:00

Introduction

Cravero

This is Geoffrey Cravero and I'm conducting an oral history with Sumner Hutcheson. The interview is being conducted at Trevor Colbourn Hall at the University of Central Florida on Monday, September 15th, 2025. Mr. Hutcheson, thank you for speaking with us today. If you'd begin, uh, please by stating your full name and telling us a bit about where you're from and what life was like for you growing up.

0:00:24

Growing up in Brownsville, the entrepreneurship of his parents and meeting Black musical artists in his father's store

Hutcheson

Surely. Um, thanks for the opportunity, first of all, to be here and to talk a little bit about my family. Um, I grew up, uh – I was born and raised in Miami, Florida, in a community that was often referred to as Brown Sub¹. Although I was born in Overtown². Overtown was the Black community, um, in, uh, Miami that actually was very rich because the community involved everything from single family homes to what they used to call Good Bread Alley, which was not so pleasant [*laughs*] in terms of the area. But Good Bread Alley was named that because they used to bake bread in that area. And the smell created that.

But I grew up, um, in, um, uh – in – in Brownsville. But my family's businesses – my father³ was a, uh, first of all, an appliance owner. He had Hutcheson Home Appliance Store on Third Avenue and, uh, Overtown. And my mother⁴ was a beautician. So, my mother had her own beauty shop there in Overtown as well.

So, um, as in – during my early life, one of the things that was really a great experience for me was being able to, um, enjoy, um, looking at, um,

¹ Brownsville, also known as Brown Sub, is a predominately African American neighborhood in Miami-Dade County in Florida.

² Overtown is a neighborhood of Miami, Florida, which was originally called Colored Town.

³ Sumner Hutcheson Jr. (November 25, 1905 - February 11, 1979).

⁴ Hawtensie Joyner (June 12, 1912 - November 30, 1974).

the Butterball⁵. That was a DJ that actually was on WMBM⁶. It was about two doors down from my dad's, um, appliance store around a glass, uh, enclosure. So, it's like, um – let's say like, um, The Today Show⁷, where, you know, people can look in while the DJ was spinning the records. And that was fun as a kid. But even more importantly, uh, because my father had a record store as a part of his, um, uh, appliance store, uh, many times, um, Black artists, many of who[sic] which came to Miami, they would, uh, go to Miami Beach and entertain at the hotels and the like in that particular area. But then, they would come, uh, and live over town because they couldn't live. Uh, and so sometimes those individuals would come to my father's record store to sign autographs. And so, um, a lot of folk came in. I – I got s – see, um, when I was a little kid, Aretha Franklin⁸, when her father, uh – when they came in town. But she was like a teenager at that point. Um, and, um, I got to see her. But the one I missed that I loved most was Nat King Cole⁹. I used to think he was a fabulous singer. But my father was not able to get in touch with us. We didn't have cell phones back in those days [*laughs*]. So, my father was not able to get in touch with, uh, my mom to, um – to bring me over while Nat was there. So, by the time she, um, uh – we were able to, um, get over town, he had already left.

But, you know, they used to stay at the St. Elizabeth Hotel¹⁰, uh, many times there in Overtown. Or some of the other hotels, 'cause, you know, there was actually a thriving community. Overtown. I – I thought that, you know, people will walk the streets and drive up and down the streets and – and so, you know, there was really a lot of interesting situations in Overtown.

0:03:42

His grandfather, Sumner Hutcheson I, being influenced by Marcus Garvey and immigrating to the United States from the Bahamas

Hutcheson And, as I shared with you earlier, even though I wasn't aware of this un – until I was told this by, uh, the family members, Marcus Garvey¹¹ used to come to town quite often. And when he came, you know, he was on his back-to-Africa movement¹². My grandfather, who was a pastor – that was the first Sumner Hutcheson¹³. I'm Sumner Hutcheson III and he

⁵ Milton "Butterball" Smith (May 30, 1928 – January 3, 1990).

⁶ WMBM (1490 AM) is a radio station in Miami, Florida, that was once the premier AM station for rhythm and blues, gospel, jazz, and other programming targeted to an African American audience. It currently broadcasts gospel music.

⁷ The Today Show is a morning television show on the National Broadcast Network that debuted in 1952.

⁸ Aretha Louise Franklin (March 25, 1942 – August 16, 2018).

⁹ Nathaniel Adams Cole (March 17, 1919 – February 15, 1965).

¹⁰ Mary Elizabeth Hotel was built in 1921 by Dr. William B. Sawyer. With ninety rooms, it was the tallest building in Colored Town, hosting dignitaries such as W.E.B. DuBois, A. Philip Randolph, and Thurgood Marshall. It is located at 269 Northwest 7th Street, Miami, Florida 33136.

¹¹ Marcus Mosiah Garvey Jr. (August 17, 1887 – June 10, 1940).

¹² The back-to-African movement was a political movement in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries advocating for a return of the descendants of African American slaves to the African continent.

¹³ Sumner Hutcheson (October 22, 1875 – July 1958).

was the first Sumner Hutcheson. And he would, um, uh, march with Marcus Garvey in their white outfits on the stand down Third Avenue on usually Saturday or Sunday afternoons.

Um, so Marcus was, uh, quite influential in terms of community. And I think it was primarily because, um, most of Overtown at that point was made up of families from the Bahamas. Well, that's where my grandfather came from. My grandfather was actually born in the Bahamas. Um, he actually, um, came to the United States, uh, because of some family dispute over a girlfriend or a wife or something [*laughs*]. So, he came to, uh, the Bahamas, uh – come – came from the Bahamas. He was born in Eleuthera. On the island of Eleuthera. In a town called Hatchet Bay or Alice Town. And then, he went to Nassau to teach school. And then, he left there and moved to Miami. Uh, he eventually worked his way down to the Florida Keys – through the Florida Keys down to Key West. Well, he got married and that's where my father was born. So, my – I still have many of my family and relatives, um, living in Key West, who, um – who are primarily there. And a part of my grandmother's side of the family.

0:05:30

His grandparents' move back to Miami, his grandfather's entrepreneurship, and his family's businesses

Hutcheson

But they eventually – their – their family moved back to Miami. And, uh, when, uh, they came back to Miami, they really, um, were doing all sorts of businesses. My grandfather owned a sundry, uh, as – as they were called back in those days. But he was also a reverend. So, he was a pastor. And he was a good teacher. So many times, I was told, that he would spend his Sunday afternoons on the porch. Always in his three-piece outfit. My grandfather never appeared outside the house, from what I understand, without a three-piece suit on. And, um, he would be on the porch training other pastors, along with Reverend Curtis and, um – Enid Curtis Johnson¹⁴, who was, a, uh, good friend of the family's. And just passed in her nineties just recently. She and her father and my grandfather would spend time together there and they would train other persons.

My grandfather eventually built a rooming house, as it was called. And on top of the rooming house, there was a, um – the family quarters. So, they had family quarters and they had a 16-room rooming house on the bottom. And many times, people who came in from the Bahamas would stay there maybe temporarily. In fact, I still have some copies of the receipts. I forgot. It was very, very cheap [*laughs*] that they used to stay. I

¹⁴ Dr. Enid Curtis Johnson Pinkney (October 15, 1931 – July 18, 2024).

still have some copies of those at home, where my father kept them. And so, I've kept them.

And so, um [smacks lips], my father, um [smacks lips], had lots of businesses. He – he was not only in, um, the – in the appliance business. He eventually closed his appliance store and decided to become a real estate broker. He was one of the first registered real estate brokers – Black – in the state of Florida. Because at one time, real estate folks were selling swampland [laughs] in – in – in Florida.

And so, um, my father, who was born in 1905, um, to – and my mother, as I mentioned, who was a beautician, got married in 1935, um, there in Miami. And, um, as you could probably – if you add up all of those things, you probably think, well, wait a minute. Something is not right in terms of me. I'm 75 now, but, um, the reality is that, um, my parents were married for about 16, 17 years before I was born. And then, my sister came along about four years later. And I have a sister by the name of Pamela. And she's that – she's still a Hutcheson. So, she's Pamela Hutcheson, who, um, I'm very proud of my sister. Because, um, she's done a lot of really great things in her life. Um, had to cut – had to overcome some obstacles with drugs and the like. But eventually went into the McDonald's business. And actually owned five franchises before she retired. So, I'm very proud of her.

So, uh, but anyway, back to my dad. My dad, um [smacks lips], then went into the real estate business with the – with the help of a gentleman by the name of Mr. Songer[sp]. Mr. Songer[sp] was a Jewish gentleman, who my father established a relationship with. And, um, they, um, worked together to, um, help him get his real estate license. And he opened then Hutcheson Realty. Uh, and then he used to sell houses. Primarily in the Brown Sub, or Brownsville.

0:09:08

The history of Brownsville and the types of professionals in the community

Hutcheson

I – I always get that mixed up now. Because we always called it Brown Sub. And so, now they call it Brownsville – but – community. So, that was the area he sort of farmed, if you will [clears throat]. The interesting thing about Brown Subdivision was that it was actually originally a – a large farm owned by a gentleman by the name of Mr. Brown¹⁵. And it was his subdivision. And when the, uh, county of Dade decided to carve out that community and they called it homeowners paradise. But for ten years, they couldn't decide whether that community would be white or Black. So, it took them a long time to actually, uh, make that decision. So, they

¹⁵ William Lafayette Brown (October 29, 1878 – December 12, 1952).

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finally made the decision that it would be a Black community. And so, we were one of the first, um, um, uh, families to move out there in 1950.

My dad built his own home in 1950, uh, moving from Overtown and moving out to Brown Sub. And, um, I, you know – when we get a chance, I'll show you some of the pictures. I actually still have pictures even of the house before it was actually, um – we actually move into it. Because they had to do it for permitting and tax purposes. They would look at the house and make a decision on what it would be taxed.

But, um, it was, uh – it was really a lot of fun growing up in that community as well. Um, and one of the things that was really fascinating about that particular community is that while, um, people started moving to Brown Sub, and it started developing, and moved into homeowners paradise is the area that it was plotted as, um, they would, uh – a lot of professional people lived in that community. So, my teachers. Most of my teachers lived in the neighborhood. Uh, most of the doctors in the community lived in that neighborhood. Most of the Black dentists lived in that community. Some of them still having their businesses over town, uh, with the business section of that area, as my father did. But, um, would have, um, you know, just have their – their life over there because they could build single-family homes, um, on land that was actually pretty interesting.

I – I remember people used to tease my dad and tell my father he moved into the Everglades. Now, you're from Miami, so you know Northwest 7th Avenue used to be the edge of the Everglades. That's what they used to say. So – so [*laughs*] they – sometimes I – some of my dad's professional friends used to always tease him. "Why you moving out there in the Everglades?" And then, they eventually – they would come out because my dad would, uh, encourage them to come out and look at homes.

In fact, um, in our community, we had some really outstanding people. And, um, one of these days, I'm going to write a book about it because I really honestly believe that in the number of people who, um, not only grew up in that community, they produced, um, uh, children who really professionally did very, very well. Um, from actors to, um, managers to – in fact, my, uh, doctor here in Orlando is – I grew up with him in – in Brown Sub. Didn't know who he was until – when I moved here, you know, as CEO of the American Red Cross. And I'll talk about my history in the Red Cross in a minute. But, um, there were a lot of professionals that lived in that community. So, we had some outstanding role models. As we saw, you know, teachers who used to buy new cars every year. I used to think that was kind of fascinating. Boy, you can buy a new car every year.

And they used to always talk about our house because our house had a

garage, which a lot of people didn't. And we had two cars. And a lot people were like, "Wow. You have two cars [*laughs*]" You know, so I used to get kind of ribbed about that quite a bit when I was in elementary school that, you know, you all drive. Your – your family's got two cars. But my parents were both in their own business. And my mother's real – um, beauty business was doing very well. She did – she did – she did hair. And, you know, a lot of Black folks used to come there and get their hair done. And so, she had a really thriving business. In fact, she did a lot better sometimes than my dad did because his business was, um, you know – real estate business can be off an on. So, it can be better and worse. And he owned his own firm. He wasn't a – a member of the KAI Family¹⁶ or the – the Coldwell Banker¹⁷ as they are now. And those kinds of companies. But so, he had his own company. So, um, you know, he had to struggle sometimes in terms of trying to manage. But we – we were – we were blessed. We were truly blessed. We were a truly blessed family.

And, unfortunately, going back to my grandfather, he died when I was eight years old. So, I didn't really get to know him very, very well, unfortunately. Um, and I wish I had because I hear so many great stories about him. From his teaching to his – to his entrepreneurship. In fact, um, I used to have a good friend of mine who used to call the house and the area that he owned over town "the Hutcheson Compound" because it not only included that home, as I mentioned the rooming house with the family house on top, but it also included a mango grove on the side. So, it was large, large properties that he had there. My – my – my family's always been kind of entrepreneurial. I – I don't – I don't know how I got just in social services and like [*laughs*] – but, uh – but, you know, they we – they were pretty entrepreneurial.

0:15:02

Attending grade school, and educators that influenced him and his sister

Hutcheson

So, anyway, um – so, my sister and I grew up in Brown Sub. And, um, we were pretty, um, blessed to be in that community, as I said, because that community, um, uh, had a lot of people who – who were very good at their professions. Um, the principal of my elementary school. Um, there was a – a very extraordinary, um, nursery school or, uh, daycare kind of program run by a woman by the name of Ida Jackson¹⁸ down the street a block from my house. And it was called Jackson Toddle Inn¹⁹. And it was amazing. Mrs. Jackson, even – I didn't go there, but, uh, my sister did. And Miss Jackson had a very unique teaching style. She used to use a bolo bat, you know, that she used to – I don't know if you know what a bolo – you probably don't know what a bolo bat is, but it's a – it's a piece of wood with a string on it that's elastic. An elastic piece. And it has a ball on the end. So, you – so she used to take that apart and she would teach with it. So, she

¹⁶ KAI Realty is located at 2955 Northwest 126th Avenue, Sunrise, Florida 33323.

¹⁷ Coldwell Banker Realty is located at 1682 Jefferson Avenue, Miami Beach, Florida 33139.

¹⁸ Ida Belle Jackson-Mosley (July 15, 1916 – July 18, 1984).

¹⁹ Jackson's Toddle Inn was a primary school started on September 13, 1946, by Ida Belle Jackson-Mosley and her sister, Ruth Johnson. It was located at 3038 NW 48th Terrace in Miami, Florida.

would hit on the side of her chair and she taught [taps table] John [taps table] and [taps table] Mary [taps table] said [taps table] go. You know? And that's the way she would teach. And it was interesting because most of the people came out of her school like my sister, who was extraordinary.

Let me kind of share that story with you a little bit. Um, my sister went to, uh, Jackson Toddle Inn. And, um, once, um, she finished Jackson Toddle Inn, um, they used to have an entrance exam before you went into the public school system. But when my sister, uh, went in and took the examination, she, um, uh, had a, um – she – in other words, when they – they – they graded her. And when they graded her, it was at a sixth-grade level. So, they were – oh, you know, Black teachers in a segregated school system, they were like, oh we – oh, man, yes. We got to put this six-year-old in the sixth grade. And my father was, "Oh, no. That's not gonna happen. I'm not putting my daughter." And so, they went back and forth for a couple of weeks. And they finally decided to put her in the third grade. So, I have a sister who, um, like me, graduated from Bethune-Cookman²⁰, but she graduated, uh, from high school at 15, went through college in three years and graduated from college at Bethune-Cookman at 18. So [laughs] – so – so she was – she was always the smart one in the family [laughs], you know, like. So, anyway, um – but I – I'm very proud, as you can tell. I'm very, very proud of my family and the many things that we've accomplished.

0:17:54

His father attending Bethune-Cookman University and joining the school's first football team

Um, my father went to Mrs. Bethune's school. And I want to – I'm going to switch to that. So, I'm kind of going back and forth a little bit. But it – let me go back because, you know, you – you may not be aware. Uh, growing up as a kid in the twenties, you could only go to eighth grade because that's the only – they stopped school for Black kids at eighth grade. So, my father comes out of the eighth grade and, um, he – and, you know, he's – he's stuck. He wants – but his father doesn't want him – his father wants him to go on. And so, he enrolled in Mrs. Bethune's school. And, uh, Mrs. Bethune, um, used to spend a lot of time in and out of Miami recruiting students and the like. And so, he went to Mrs. Bethune's school. And in 1923, while she was – while he was at that school and it was just becoming co-educational because it originally started with five little girls and – and there was a bunch of girls that she taught. But she eventually, uh, developed a co-educational program. Well, he went there and he was on the first football team in 1923. And, by the way, that team is going to be inducted into – to the Bethune-Cookman Athletic Hall of Fame this weekend. So, I'm really excited about that. But that team, um – and it's so fascinating because here at UCF²¹ is where I did most of my research to find information on their archives here about the team. Uh, and I have some photographs of that – of the team as well. Uh, he was a running back and a defensive back. There were only 15 members of the

²⁰ Bethune-Cookman University is located at 640 Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune Boulevard in Daytona, Beach, Florida.

²¹ The University of Central Florida is located at 4000 Central Florida Boulevard in Orlando, Florida.

team. So [laughs] – and he used to always say that Mrs. Bethune named them the Wildcats. And, um, she [laughs] actually many times would come out and – and be the assistant coach, uh, while [laughs] – while the team was being, um – while the team was practicing. Um, they used to travel around. They traveled to Miami. They traveled places in Alabama. Um, and – but Miss Bethune really had an outstanding program there as well. You know it's Bethune-Cookman University now. And, of course, my sister and I ended up going there as well. Didn't plan to. Somehow that just happened. But my father used to talk about Miss Bethune so much. And she used to come by our house when she was in Miami, uh, because she loved my dad so much. Now, of course, I was a little kid. So, I only have just brief kind of glimpses of that. 'Cause she died, I think, when I was about five or six years old. But she used to come by all the time and see my dad. Um, and so, uh, my dad is very, very fond of Miss Bethune, and Miss Bethune is very fond of him.

0:20:37

**His father facing discrimination while traveling with his football team
and the power of Mary McLeod Bethune**

Hutcheson

Uh, one of the stories I'm going to tell, uh, about the power of Mary McLeod Bethune. I mean, I could sit here all day talk about Mary McLeod Bethune. But one of the things that I am going to talk about this weekend as they go into – go into the Hall of Fame, and I'm probably one of the few children or grandchildren that they're able to find now. But, uh, my sister and I will be there and, um, one of the stories that's always so fascinating to me. You know, I came, um, through college during the Black power movement. You know, we were about Black power [laughs]. And so, this particular story always resonated with me.

Because when my father used to tell me, I used to – oh gosh, I used to be so angry sometimes. Um, he, um, said they had to borrow a school bus in 1924, I think it was. So, you can imagine that must have been a little rickety bus and it only had a little one – one stop light. And they were driving through some dirt roads in Alabama going to play a game. They had been driving all night, and they got stopped by a sheriff dep – deputy. The sheriff deputy, as he came, uh, out of his car and, uh, he broke the light. And he went up and told the coach, who was driving the bus, "Do you know you have a broken light? You can't drive through our community, uh, with a broken light." And, you know, some of the players tried to tell but they had to be quiet, you know, that – that light – he broke the light. But he said, "Okay." Well, you have – there's – there's going to be a fine. You either have to pay the fine or all you guys – all you boys are going – boys are going to jail. Okay? So, unfortunately, the coach did not have any money. He actually made them follow him in and – and – and actually put the whole team in jail. So, somehow the coach was able to get like communications back to Mrs. Bethune and tell her what happened. Few hours later, the sheriff came and unlocked the jail cell and said, "Okay, you boys can get back in your – in – back in your bus now. Um, and I don't know who that Black woman is that, uh..." Probably called her something else. "Uh, Black woman is. Boy, she has to

be mighty powerful if she gets you out of my jail." And somehow she arranged to get them out so they could continue on their travels. Of course, um, he – even she evidently arranged for him because when they got back to the – to the vehicle, they found that the light was repaired. And the one light [*laughs*] was repaired.

Again, I can tell you tons of stories about Mary McLeod Bethune. And my dad's experience. And being with her. And like she was a quite a powerful person in our history of the United States. She really was – has now what? Three statues around? Four statues. One in Lincoln Park in Washington DC run by the National Park Service. One at the US Capitol representing the State of Florida. That was done just recently. Um, last few years. Um, there's one in Daytona Beach, that's exact opp – um, the exact, uh, statue. The one in Lin – um, in, um, Daytona Beach is made out of bronze. But the one at the Capitol is made out of, um, [*taps table*] what is it, ivory? Yeah, I guess it is. Yeah. So, anyway, um – so, the same, um, sculpturer did both statues. And then, there's actually one on the campus of Bethune-Cookman. So, it's just a powerful, powerful person, you know, and – and the like.

0:24:16

The role of friends in the Jewish community in his father's businesses

But kind of getting back to the family, um, my dad did well in real estate. In fact, um, he had a lot of very, very close friends in the Jewish community, um, that I think were very positive in helping him expand his businesses and help him, uh, grow his business, especially in real estate. In fact, he even owned some acreage down in the Everglades at one time called Dreamland Estates. He and Mr. Fuller. Mr. Fuller was one of his business partners, who was hi wo – a guy who was Jewish, who was in Miami Beach. And my father used to do business with him. And, uh, they had this property. And then, eventually the government came in and unfort – and – and fortunately bought it all up because they needed to put some new waterways through the Everglades and the like. So, they ended up buying it all. And so, that was quite profitable for – for Mr. Fuller and for my dad. And – and my dad took that opportunity to retire from his real estate business. And my mom did exactly the same thing. She retired from her beauty business. And, um, they were able to live a good life for a few years before my mom passed at an early age of 62, which is really unfortunate.

0:25:34

Lessons learned from his father, facing discrimination on the high school swim team and his father's response

But, um, uh, my dad went on and, um – and enjoyed the rest of his life. And – and I think he lived until 74. So, um, uh, I'm very proud of my parents. I – they – they did a really good job with us. Um, and one of the things I learned from my dad, and I guess he got it from his grandfather, was that Black people in this country can do anything. They want to do it, they can do anything. He told me, "Don't ever, ever let that, um – the fact that you're African-American or Black, we

were called that, you know, the names have just changed over the years [*laughs*]. That you were Negro. That you were from colored to Negro to – to Black to African-American. Um, don't ever let the color of your skin hold you back.

And so, I remember I used to swim competition in high school and college. And I went to Miami Jackson High School²². You probably know Miami Jackson, uh, Senior High School. Well, when I went there, it was all white. There were a few Blacks who were there before us, but we became what they called “the big experiment” in Miami Day County in terms of school systems. So, they brought in this, uh, very experienced, uh, white principal. His name was Mr. Burroughs. I will never forget him because he was really a great man. Uh, and they, uh, brought in some special teachers and they even bought some teachers from my segregated junior high school to, um – to, uh, um, uh, work at Miami Jackson. To integrate fully Miami Jackson. They also brought some, um, students in from Dorsey Junior High School²³, which is in the Black community and kind of further northwest. They brought them in. And so, we were a part of this great experience. Um, the experience was really, uh, for the most part, very positive.

But I remember my swim coach one day made the comment that Black men and Black girls don't swim as good as white women and white men because they're not as buoyant. They can't stay on top of the water. And I came home and told my dad that. He said, "What did he say? He told you that?" He said, "Sumner, don't you believe that." You know, we couldn't Google it [*laughs*]. So, he said, "Don't you ever believe anything like that. Okay?" That is the kind of thing that's always been something that has held African Americans back. Being told those kind – or Black people back. Um, and so the next day when we pulled up to Manor Park Pool, where we used to do our swim practice, my dad's car was sitting in the park. And I said, "Oh my God, I know this is going to be interesting." And so, my dad got out the car, and he told Mr. Helmers, who was the, um, swim coach, he said, "May I speak to you?" Uh, I know that my dad wore him out about telling us that story, okay? Because he came back as we were doing our warm-up practices. We just went in the pool inside just as he – because he – my dad kind of held him for a while. So, we just did our warm-ups and then he told us to come and sit down. And he said, "I made a statement yesterday to you all and Mr. Hutcheson came and – and – and talked to me about that. And I will never ever make that statement again 'cause that is obviously something that I was told and I believed it. And it – it – it probably is not true." 'Cause my sister, now she was a really great swimmer. I was an average swimmer, but my sister was a great swimmer. She used to be in the county competitions and all of that. Uh, so, obviously, that was not at all true.

0:29:31

The consequences of racial integration, and growing up around the Latino community

²² Miami Jackson Senior High School is located at 1751 NW 36th Street in Miami, Florida.

²³ Dorsey Junior High School, now D. A. Dorsey Technical College, is located at 7100 NW 17th Avenue in Miami, Florida.

But the problem was – is that many of the students, um, as soon as we, um – the school was integrated, they left the community. They – they went Coral Gables and Miami High and some other schools. They just – they – they took off, you know. So, I went into school when we were just a very small percentage in 10th grade at Miami Jackson. By the time I graduated, uh, we were the majority because many of the white students – but there also a lot of Latino students there. A lot of Cuban students. Primarily Cuban students who were there as well. So – and, uh, we – we all s – we got along. We had a good time. We used to have a lot of fun there and the like.

And, um, I was really blessed because, um, I found out later in – in learning about my family history that my father grew up in the Latino community in Key West. You know, that community was primarily, uh, very mixed. You know, people used to go back and forth to Cuba and – and – and Tampa and the Bahamas. That used to be like the trading routes in the Americas, that part. And so, um, one day my father told us that he was going to be taking us with him back to Key West. We used to go to Key West all the time. I mean, we used to go Key West at least once a month 'cause my dad love to fish. And my foo – my sister-in-law and I love to fish. So, we go down there all the time, too. But we, um, went to Key West. And he was telling us that he was going to get – try to find a birth certificate for his aunt because he – she wanted to send her children from Cuba where they live back to the United States. And, um, I mean it wasn't significant to me, you know. That was during the sixties and the Cuban Missile Crisis²⁴ was going on. I remember one of our trips down to Key West. We were going down US1 and there were missile silos on the beaches off of the Keys. because, you know, they were really serious. That got to be a really big crisis with Cuba at the time. But anyway, so one of my cousins was able to come out of Cuba. And when she came to our home, we had to – she had to stay with us for two years because that's the requirement of, uh, Cuban-Americans coming to – I mean Cubans coming to the United States. And she does – she did not speak a word of English. Okay? So, we're sitting at the dinner table. I mean, we were very formal, my family, sitting at the table having breakfast one morning. And a parakeet is flying around 'cause he – my daddy used to let him out and he would fly around [*laughs*] and then he would sit on his head. But my [*laughs*] – my cousin used to think that was so strange. So, she started talking to my father one morning in Spanish. And my father started telling us what she was saying [*chair squeaks*]. I was like, "Dad, you speak Spanish?" He said, "No, I don't speak it, but I understand it. Because I grew up in a home where I spoke Spanish until I was 12 years old."

When we moved back to Miami, my dad used to make me wear a, um, top hat. That's what he called it. Made me and – and he used to make me wear a top hat.

²⁴ The Cuban Missile Crisis was a 13-day confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union between October 16 to October 28, 1962.

And I only spoke Spanish in the house 'cause my grandfather spoke it. Evidently, he learned it. My grandmother learned it and spoke it. But – and they all – 'cause they all grew up in Key West, where they had a lot of Hispanic families who were mixed and – and the like. C – couple my aunts married Hispanic, uh, Cuban men and moved to Cuba. And like – so I was just fascinated. I was like, "You know how to speak Spanish?" I mean I just all these years. I'm – I'm in junior high school at this point or middle school what they call it now. And I can't believe that my dad knows how to speak Spanish [*laughs*].

So – but anyway, um, that was a – that was quite an experience as well growing up with Sonia. So, she started teaching us Spanish. I picked it up a little bit. I – I, um, I picked it up a little bit. And, in fact, my son – my son, Sumner Hutcheson IV, I made sure that when he was in school in Miami, he taught with Spanish every year. Now he speaks Spanish fluently. So, they just missed my generation. They – my dad spoke Spanish evidently. I don't speak it that well. I can even get by, you know [*knocks table*]? And my, um – and my – my son speaks Spanish, um, quite well.

So, again, um, you know, the culture of living in Miami-Dade, as it is now, still is very multicultural. You got a lot of people from a lot of different countries. And – but it certainly is not the place I grew up. Miami was a big little town. That's what I used to call – big little – no. A t – a town that was – yeah. A big little town. I mean, it was just a very interesting place to grow up in Miami. And, um, Brown Sub was an exciting place.

0:34:32

Attending Bethune-Cookman and Barry Universities, becoming involved in the American Red Cross and his career experience with the organization, including working for Elizabeth Dole

And so, I came through high school and I went to Miami-Dade Community College. Then went to Bethune-Cookman and – and I had a really good experience. I was a student government officer at, uh, Bethune-Cookman. I participated in a lot of different organizations and activities on campus. Had a really good time. And then, I went to graduate school at Barry University in – in Miami with a master's degree in – in social work administration. Uh, in between that time, I started working as an intern at the American Red Cross. Uh, uh, well, 35 years later, I retired from the American Red Cross as a senior executive. I was everything from, um, a Red Cross, um – I worked in Miami as the – the youth's director and then I went – I moved to the American Red Cross in Washington DC. I was the disaster director in Washington DC. And then, uh, I ran one of our service centers, or branch offices, in Washington DC. And when a new executive CEO came in, he made me his assistant CEO in Washington DC. And so, I just kept moving up the ladder in – in the Red Cross. I eventually worked as the CEO of the American Red Cross in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, or the Susquehanna Valley area. Um, I was CEO there. Uh, I worked, actually, as, um – as the vice president they call the regional executive officer. So, I had responsibility for

managing and over being responsible for, um, uh, rechartering Red Cross chapters and everywhere from New Jersey all the way to West Virginia. So, I—I could tell you that could—now that's another hour of conversation there because that was a very interesting community. C—different communities from flying into West Virginia on little puddle jumpers, as we used to call them, to being in New Jersey, where they were threatening my life because [*laughs*] we wanted to do something that we needed to do.

Um, and, um—but I worked for Mrs. Dole. Uh, Elizabeth Dole. She was president at the time. And so, I had a very good experience working for her, too. That was really, um, an extraordinary experience. And then, I came here to Orlando to be the CEO of the American Red Cross in Central Florida. And, in fact, one of the better stories I have is that, um, Jacob Stewart at the time, who was over the, um, chamber here, asked me one day, "You think you could get Elizabeth to come down and do a presentation for us?" I said, "Sure." He used to have these monthly events. I said, "Sure." So, they announced that. You know, I called Elizabeth and asked her. W—she said, "Sure, I'll—I'll come down there. I—I'll be, um—I'll be happy to do that for you." And sh—he normally used to have it downtown, but the thing sold out so fast after they knew that Elizabeth was coming, that, um, they literally had to move it here on campus. They had it at the arena. So, the Elizabeth—the—and she used to do what I used to call the Dole stroll. She used to, um—used to have her mic on, but she used to walk around and she talked and the like. So, that was a—a really fascinating experience being escorted onto campus by the campus police and escorted to the airport [*laughs*] by the campus police, you know, who, you know—who took us with lights flashing and sirens going and the like. But they s—they sold out the arena as many seats that they could put in there, uh, with Elizabeth though.

So, you know, I've had that—the Red Cross was that—was an outstanding experience for me. I had—I could talk about all the many things that happened with me and—and, uh, the American Red Cross. Um, uh, from, you know, being threatened by life in New Jersey to, um, going to, uh, West Virginia and, um—and—and people saying to me, "You're the new CEO RE—REO?" "Uh, yes. I'm the new REO here and—and—and yes, I'm here to work with you here in West Virginia [*laughs*]." Because you know those folk are not—they don't see a lot of Black folk in West Virginia.

0:39:00

Retiring from the Red Cross, selling real estate, and returning to work for the Red Cross

So, but I had outstanding—and I guess the best part of that is that I eventually decided, okay, it's time to retire. It's time to do something else. So, I went off and sold real estate for a little while. And all of a sudden, I get a phone call from the president of Bethune-Cookman University, Dr. Oswald Perry Bronson, Sr. I love that man. Um, he's now passed on. But he called me one day and said, "Sumner,

I have a really major issue here at Bethune-Cookman. The Kresge Foundation²⁵ has given us a significant amount of money to help us, um, grow our fundraising. And that's not what's happening. So, I need you to come and talk to me about how you can – because I know you used to raise money. And, in fact, we had a tornado here. I don't – you – I – you probably want to hear that was in the – that was right after I got here. So, it was the – the nineties tha – that killed 50 people in Orlando. And, uh, I had just become CEO here. And, um – and I raised – we raised – and I don't say I, but we raised – my board working with me and volunteers and the like, we raised something like \$6 million in two weeks to support that, um, disaster relief operation. Mrs. Dole came down again during that time for me and – and helped me, um, because she wanted to see what I was doing, you know? She was the one who encouraged me to come to Florida 'cause she said that when they had disasters here, nobody would ever really raise any money. So, Sumner, I need you to go down there and do that, you know? And so, she immediately – after she heard all the money we had raised, she came down and – and we went out to Kissimmee and places where really, um – and one of the things that was really fascinating that tornado, um, killed 50 people. And one of the really tragic stories I will never ever forget is a woman who came to Mrs. Dole and was telling her about how she heard this noise. She went to the door of her home with her baby and the baby was swept out her hands. Unfortunately, that baby was found in a tree about two days later dead. And she talked about some Mrs. Dole, who was a very, very religious person. She gathered everybody around her and they did a prayer for this woman and – and some other I was very touched by that, you know? By that particular experience. But, again, the Red Cross. I could – I – I – I can talk forever about my Red Cross experience. See, I'm not even letting you get to your questions, am I [*laughs*]?

Cravero You've already – honestly, you've gotten through almost every one I was going to ask so [*laughs*].

0:41:45

Retiring from the Red Cross for the second time, and becoming Vice-President of University Advancement at Bethune-Cookman

Hutcheson [*laughs*] But then, um, I got a call one day back to Dr. Bronson at Bethune-Cookman. He said – I said, "Dr. Bronson, I do not want to work at Bethune-Cookman University." He says, "No." He said, "I just want you to come over here and talk to me." Well, Dr. Bronson was a very crafty person. And I see why he was such a good president. He was there almost 30 years. You know, presidents don't stay at universities that long. And so, he said to me, um, "I – I just want to get chance to talk to you." Then, about an hour later, his secretary called me and said, "Mr. Hutcheson, uh, can you be here by 1:30?" I said, "It's 12:00. You know, it's going to take me an hour plus to get over there." She said, "Just put on a sports jacket and come on over." When I walked into the room, Dr. Bronson is there in the room with board members of the board of trustees [*laughs*] [*taps*

²⁵ The Kresge Foundation is a philanthropic foundation headquartered in Troy, Michigan, that awards grants and makes investments in arts, culture, education, health, human services, environment and community development.

table]. So, you know – and so I said, "Oh boy, I think I've been tricked" in my own head I'm taking – but I'm not going to let Dr. Bronson be humiliated or look bad. I want him to look really good in front of his board members. And so, they start interviewing me. They – they – they started interviewing me. Well, the president of the – chairman of the board at the time was the president, um, Stanley Marshall, I think his name. Yeah. He used to be president of FSU²⁶. He was also chairman of the board here. And I remember he got up and said, "You know, Dr. Marshall, I've got to catch my plane." After about 45 minutes of them interviewing me, he says, "Whatever you need to hear." I remember he came and touched my shoulders and he said – he was standing behind me. He said, "Whatever you need to do to get him here, you need to get him here as vice president." So anyway, the group broke up and Dr. Bronson said, "Well, come on with me to my office. I want to talk to you." And I was like, "Oh boy, here we go [claps hands] [laughs]."

But he convinced me to make that hour and 15 minute drive from Ocoee, where I live, all the way to Daytona Beach every day. And, um, we had a very successful campaign there, um, in University Advancement. Uh, I actually, um, was able not only to meet the Kresge goals that they had given us, we actually got two major bonuses of \$100,000 a piece, um, because the board had increased their giving significantly. I worked with the boards – my board representative to do that. And, you know – so we did some great things when I – when I was there. I – I loved – and then Dr. Bronson left. He retired and – and when the new president came in, I – I left.

0:44:24

Retiring from Bethune-Cookman and immediately being recruited to work for Florida International University

And as I was driving home that afternoon, my good friend, who was the CEO of the American Red Cross in Miami-Dade County, uh, Howard Lipman²⁷ called me. He just happened to call me. You know, this is how God works. I'm driving my – feeling kind of good. Okay, I'm – I'm retired again. And – and Howard says, "What you doing?" I said, "You know, I'm driving home." He said, "Okay." He said, "Um." And so, we're just having general conversation. And I said, "By the way, I want you to know I left Bethune-Cookman. I – I resigned from Bethune-Cookman." He said, "Good." I said, "What do you mean by good?" He said, "You're going to come work with me at FIU²⁸." I said, "Howard. I'm not coming all the way back." I said, "I don't want to live in Miami. I don't want to be in Miami." He says, "Well, again, come and just talk to me. Come and just talk to me." Well, long story short, I ended up working [laughs] at FIU as his associate vice president. And then soon after that, he left. And so, I was the acting, uh, interim pre – vice president for advancement for a while. And then, uh – then I left there and then took on one other assignment in Miami and that was at

²⁶ Florida State University.

²⁷ Howard Lipman (February 1945 –).

²⁸ Florida International University is located at 11200 SW 8th Street, Miami, Florida 33199.

Florida Memorial University²⁹ which is the HBCU³⁰ down in Miami. So, I did that for a short time and then I retired at that point.

0:45:44

His life after retirement doing consulting work and working with the Peace and Justice Institute

I've done some consulting work. I, um, enjoyed my work in the University of Guyana in – in Georgetown, Guyana. I used to have fun going over there. Sometimes not so much fun because one day I drank the water. Boy, why do you do that, Sumner [*laughs*]? I was sick as a dog [*laughs*]. But – but I – I enjoy working with the – with the president of the University of Guyana, who I knew from FIU. Actually, I met him there, but he was, uh, Guy – Guyanese and he, uh, went back to be president of the University of Guyana. So, I worked with him there. Um, and I've worked with some other nonprofits and the like.

And – and now, um, you know, I – I spend time primarily, uh, working with the Peace and Justice Institute³¹ here, where I chair the board. I – I chair the board and, um – and, unfortunately, with all the things going on with DEI³² throughout the country and the state of Florida, I got to be careful where I say this now, but, uh, it was a part of the Valencia College³³ at one time. But things changed and so we had to come out and become our own 501c3. The Peace and Justice Institute. And so, working with Rachel Allen, who's an outstanding executive director, we have really built that program. And the program is still thriving in – in – in places where people still don't want to talk about diversity and inclusion and the like. But, um, we're still thriving. She's doing an excellent job and programming throughout the area has been recognized. She's been at the United Nations and done presentations and – and she's, uh, spent a lot of time in Sanford. They've had a lot of concerns over the many, many, um, uh, years since the Trayvon Martin³⁴ situation. And so, it's, um, it's been – it's been pretty exciting, uh, that program and being chairman of the board. And growing the board. And growing the resources because now we got to raise money all the time. So, that's been a lot of fun doing that as well with Rachel. So, I am enjoying that very much. So, what else do you have? Anything else on that question list that you have for me that you wanted to make sure I tackled?

0:48:02

Meeting Presidents John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson, Bill Clinton, Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush

²⁹ Florida Memorial University is located at 15800 North West 42nd Avenue in Miami Gardens, Florida.

³⁰ Historically Black College and University.

³¹ Peace and Justice Institute is a non-profit organization founded in 2008 with its headquarters in Winter Park, Florida.

³² Diversity Equity and Inclusion.

³³ Valencia College's main administrative mailing address is 1800 South Kirkman Road, Orlando, Florida 32811.

³⁴ Trayvon Benjamin Martin (February 5, 1995 - February 26, 2012) was an unarmed African American teenager who was fatally shot in Sanford, Florida, inspiring marches, protests and rallies across the United States.

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Cravero Honestly, you got through pretty much every point I was going to ask about, um, including – I – I was waiting to hear about the Peace and Justice, but you got to that one, too.

Hutcheson Yes. Mhmm.

Cravero So, oh, um, I did have one actually...

Hutcheson Okay.

Cravero ...note that I – I read somewhere. Did you end up meeting President Kennedy³⁵?

Hutcheson Yes.

Cravero Will you tell us a little about that?

Hutcheson Oh, yeah. Absolutely. Wow. You – you got a lot of information there [*laughs*].

Cravero [*laughs*].

Hutcheson Yes. Actually, the week he was killed, I met him. My father, um, was not only, um, good in business, he was good in politics, too. My father became one of the fir – I think the first A – African-American member, Black member, of the Democratic Executive Committee. So, you know, the Democratic Party in Miami-Dade County, he was on the executive committee. He had to be elected to that position and he was – and he was the first Black. So, when, um, President Kennedy came to my – he came to – he was killed on a Thursday. I will never forget this. He was killed. I was in junior high school. Uh, and he came to Miami on a Monday. The Monday before he was killed. And he landed at Miami International Airport³⁶. So, the Democratic Executive Committee was allowed to go and greet him on the tarmac. That shows you things have changed a lot, you know, with Secret Service and all of that. But they were there. But still, we were able to greet him. So, my father, not wanting us to ever miss an opportunity, took my sister and myself with us – with him and so – with him. And so, as Kennedy came down the plane, I remember him slowly coming down the plane – that, um – down the steps. And he, um – Air Force One. Uh, and then he greeted people. We were right in the line. So, we got to shake his hand as he went off and then he got, of course, into his car and left.

But what they didn't tell you. I also miss – I met – I met President Johnson³⁷, too. So, I told you my father was very active in politics. So, he used to own a, um – when he was in his later years of his real estate business, he bought a, um, three

³⁵ John Fitzgerald Kennedy (May 29, 1917 – November 22, 1963).

³⁶ Miami International Airport is located at 2100 Northwest 42nd Avenue in Miami, Florida.

³⁷ Lyndon Baines Johnson (August 27, 1908 – January 22, 1973).

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storefront building in Liberty City. It was really Allapattah³⁸. Y – yeah. It wasn't Liberty City because it was really Allapattah. So, one storefront was his real estate business. The middle storefront was my mother's, uh, beauty shop. And the third place on the corner was rented. He would rent it to different groups and places.

But this particular time, a gentleman by the name of Charlie Hadley³⁹ used to run with my dad. And Charlie was very, very prominent in Miami-Dade County and they started Operation Big Vote⁴⁰. So, they used to be there, uh, and would be on the phones with people making sure that they understood how – the importance of voting. And even before that, my daddy was also, uh, an officer in the Dade County Young Democratic Association. That was a Black organization. And so, they would often interview candidates who were running for office. And then they would rate them and put a big advertisement in *the Miami Times*⁴¹, which is the Black newspaper in – in – in Miami-Dade. Still is Miami-Dade County. And they would put this whole big strip so that you could cut it out and take it with you and you'd know who to vote for. City commission or – or judge. And these people were not African Americans in most instances. Most time, they were white, but still my – because the group had interviewed them.

But anyway, here it is. We had Operation Big Vote and I'm on the phones calling people asking them do they need ride, uh – rides to the poll. 'Cause that's another thing that I used to do is after I got my, um, uh, regular license, I – I used to go pick up people and take them to the polls. So, I was there on the phone and all of a sudden, I guess my dad knew it, but I didn't. I was just on the phone. All these Secret Service people swept into the building. Okay? I was like, "What's going on here?" 'Cause I didn't know who it was. But, you know, you can always tell they got these little things in their ears, you know, like well, what's going on here? And somebody I said, "Come on over here. Just come and stand right here." President Johnson and his – and his motorcade drove up to the building. He actually came inside, shook everybody's hand, congratulated them on their Operation Big Vote and, you know, encouraged them. He only stayed probably 15 minutes. 20 minutes at the most, probably. And then, he got back in his motorcade and – and left. So, I got to meet both Kennedy and Johnson probably within a year because, of course, you know, Johnson became president after Kennedy was killed. So, I got chance to meet both of them and – and – and that was, um – that was quite an opportunity.

But the – you know, but as I went to Washington DC, I don't know if you know this, the president of the United States is always the honorary chairman of the board of the American Red Cross. And so, they used to always declare Red Cross

³⁸ Allapattah is a neighborhood, located mostly in the city of Miami, Florida in metropolitan Miami.

³⁹ Charles Hadley (January 8, 1913 - 1985).

⁴⁰ Operation Big Vote was an electoral drive that used grassroots door-to-door tactics to get Black voters to the polls. Palm cards were created as voting guides and office space was offered to preferred candidates. The operation was prevalent from the 1950s through the 1980s.

⁴¹ *The Miami Times* is an African American newspaper based in South Florida that was established in 1923.

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Month. Okay? So, I got to shake Bill Clinton's⁴² hand when he was president. When I was living in DC and working at the Red Cross in DC. Uh, I got to shake Ronald Reagan's⁴³ hand when he was chairman of the board – uh, honorary chair 'cause they would always come, um, over to the Red Cross chapter rather than the Red Cross national headquarters because we had a big conference room that, you know, you could have people stand around and they could walk in with all the secret service and all that. I used to always tell people – I used to always be fascinated whenever you see all these people on polls, um, look like they're working on the telephone line or something. Those are Secret Service [laughs]. So, when – when you saw them start climbing these poles, you know something – you know, that things are happening. So, I got to shake Ronald Reagan's hand. I got to shake Bill Clinton's hand and in the receiving line and the like. And so, um – so I've had – I've had – I've had a few presidential touches, if you will [laughs]. So, in my lifetime, which is really good. And oh, no. I got another one, too. Um, George Bush⁴⁴. This the – the second George Bush.

I was on the board of Seniors First⁴⁵ here in Orlando. I don't even know if that agency still exists, but I was on the board. And George Bush came to visit Seniors First. And so, we were told as board members I – I have that picture too. Um, a – as board members, that you're going to be on the front line of the row of seats, okay? But you are not to move. You're not to – you stay still as President – as President Bush enters the place. Well, George Bush walks in the place and he's smiling and stuff and he's looking at me the whole time. Okay? I mean, literally, he's looking at me the whole time. And he walks right over to me. Well, I'm not going to sit there. Why? So, I actually stood up [laughs]. And secret service – I sort of started looking around. I stood up and shook his hand, gave him a little hug, and then he went down and – and – and greeted the others who were still sitting. But I wasn't, you know? I'm a man. I'm not going to sit down, you know [laughs]? So, I got – I got a chance to spend that little time with George Bush as well. Yeah. I had some good experiences in life. Like I said, I'm truly blessed. You know, I've had some really, really lifelong experiences.

And I've been trying to encourage my son, who's Sumner Hutcheson IV, um – who just recently had to move down to, um, South Florida to spend time with his mother, who has dementia unfortunately. He – he lived in Atlanta for a number of years. Couldn't get him to go to Bethune-Cookman. He went to – he's a Morehouse⁴⁶ man. And so, he went to Morehouse. And then he went to Barry University as I did. But the day he graduated, he went right [taps table] back to Atlanta. And he stayed there until just recently, when he's moved back at the age of – how old is my son now? 51. Oh, gosh. He has a birthday coming up this week. I just thought about that [taps table]. 52, I guess he'll be this week. Uh, but,

⁴² William Jefferson Clinton (August 19, 1946 –).

⁴³ Ronald Wilson Reagan (February 6, 1911 – June 5, 2004).

⁴⁴ George Walker Bush (July 6, 1946 –).

⁴⁵ Founded in 1966, Seniors First is the largest social service organization in Orlando, Florida.

⁴⁶ Morehouse College.

you know, I've tried to get him involved, but he's not. He says, "No, Dad." I just – I love admiring what you've done in life [*laughs*]. I don't need to have, um – have those kinds of experiences as well. So, yeah. So, I – yeah. I've touched a few presidents in the – in the United States. Not all of them, but I've touched a few. There's some who I wouldn't want to touch, but that's a whole 'nother[sic] story [*laughs*].

0:56:40

Finding a last-minute helicopter to bring Bernadine Healy to the Mary McLeod Bethune home

But – but, um yeah, but I've had that experience especially because of the Red Cross, too, and – and some we – some things that we've done. In fact, let me tell you how – how – how much influence, um, after Elizabeth Dole left the Red Cross to run for the Senate. You remember she was a senator at one time. Uh, we had a – a president by the name of Bernadine Healy⁴⁷, who became president. She's unfortunately has transitioned at this point. But Bernardine wanted to come down to visit me here in Orlando. They always love coming to Orlando. So – and so, when she got here, you know, I worked with her for a couple of days. And, um – and then she, um, said to me, she says, "Senator, my staff tells me you went to Bethune-Cookman." I said, "Yes." She said, "Well, you know, Mary McLeod Bethune had a lot to do with the American Red Cross." I said, "I know." She founded the American Red Cross chapter in Daytona Beach, Florida. She actually was on the first Negro advisory committee to the National Red Cross. along with Charles Drew⁴⁸ and some others. And she was one of the people who insisted on that committee that they stop separating blood. They used to actually put blood after they took it out of human beings. Black blood, white blood, and used Black blood on Black people, white blood on white people. She made them put it all in the same case so they wouldn't be – she got a lot of push back. Of course, the Red Cross got a lot of push back, too. 'Cause they were like, "Wait a minute. You used to send us separate bags. Now you're sending us, you know, this one bag. And now we got to figure it out." Well, you don't have to figure it out. You all – you concerned about is what type it is. Is it O? Is it C? You know, whatever. What it – what is it the type that's needed to be transfused into – into human beings?

So, I said, "Absolutely." She said, um – she said to me – she said, "Son, you know, I have a flight at 5:00." I remember she looked at her watch and said, "I have a flight at 5:00 and it's 10. Is there any way that we could make it to Daytona and back and so I could visit Mary McLeod Bethune's home⁴⁹?" You know, Mary McLeod Bethune's home is on campus and it's actually on Trip Advisor. If you go to Trip Advisor, it's the number one attraction, not the Speedway⁵⁰. It's the number one attraction in Daytona Beach. Uh, and a lot of

⁴⁷ Bernadine Patricia Healy (August 4, 1944 – August 6, 2011).

⁴⁸ Charles Richard Drew (June 3, 1904 – April 1, 1950).

⁴⁹ Mary McLeod Bethune Home is located at 640 Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune Boulevard in Daytona Beach, Florida.

⁵⁰ Daytona International Speedway is located at 1801 West International Speedway Boulevard in Daytona Beach, Florida.

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people go in there 'cause they left the house exactly at – after she died with all her memorabilia and everything. And they've had to – in fact, just recently they reopened it again after they've had to many times refurbish it. Because, you know, I mean it's old. So, it's had. But they did a major refurbishment just recently and reopened it.

So – so, um, they, um – I said h – I said, “Bernardine, that is tough.” I said, “Because you never know what this traffic is going to be like on I-4 out here.” And, like I said, “but, give me – give me a few minutes.” So, I went in my office and I started thinking. I called my secretary and I said, “How can we get Bernardine in there and back? Ah. Let me call Sheriff” – um, what was his name? It's Sheriff Mina⁵¹ now. But what I can't remember. There used to be a sheriff in – in – in – in Orange County. He ain't[sic] have no neck. I remember [laughs] he – he – what was his name? I can't think of his name. Anyway, you know, because I'd worked with the Red Cross and had a lot of interaction with the sheriff's department and him [sniffs], I called him. I said, you know, I'm going to [inaudible], “Sheriff, uh, the President of the American Red Cross is here, and I need to get her to Daytona Beach and back before 5:00 so she can catch her flight out of here at the airport.” He said, “Give me ten minutes. I'll call you back.” He called back. He said, “Okay, meet me at the – we'll meet you – meet you – the three of you – the two of you meet me at, uh – meet my helicopter at the International Air, um – the Executive Airport⁵². The Executive Airport. And we're going to fly over.” She get – so, I called Dr. Bronson – my good friend Dr. Bronson. Before I used to work there, you know, he's president. He's my alma mater president. “Dr. Bronson. Um, we will be coming to Daytona Beach. Um, the – the pilot tells me we're going to need to land on the football field. So, I need you to be there to greet Dr. Healey.” And he was standing there all proud with a couple of his, um, vice-presidents waiting with him. And they were sitting there and the helicopter landed. So, the three of – the two of us got out[sic] the helicopter and Dr. Bronson leaned over. He said, “How did you get – how did you get this done? How'd you get this done?” The helicopter stayed on the field. We went and visited, uh, the Mary McLeod Bethune House. Dr. Healey was so impressed by the fact that, you know, she started the first hospital for African Americans, not just a school. She started a hospital for African Americans in Daytona Beach. She founded the Red Cross chapter. She was on the first Negro – Negro, uh, committee for the Red Cross, if you will. Advisory committee for the Red Cross. You know? All of that. She learned so much that day.

We used to have a very large national convention. They don't do it anymore because it got to be too costly, but we sometimes will have 10,000 people at a convention. Well, the convention following that particular visit, which was only about a couple of months later, she opened up her presentation by introducing the mother of the Red Cross. And she had this huge picture. Well, you know, she

⁵¹ John W. Mina (August 31, 1968 -).

⁵² Orlando Executive Airport is located at 365 Rickenbacker Drive in Orlando, Florida.

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was on the screen. They were on screens. Huge screen – on the screen. She had Mary McLeod Bethune. This is the mother of the American Red Cross. And I want you to understand why. And so, she went through all the history of why Mary McLeod Bethune and all the stuff – the things that she had done with the American Red Cross and all the things she had done in politics and the like. So, that was really exciting to be able to see that. I was so proud of that, you know? Being able to – and then, um, I had one of my staff members come over and pick me up because he had to fly her back to the airport airport, um, to, um – or, um, to MCO⁵³ so that she could, uh, fly out on the plane. So, one of my staff members came and got me and we drove back to [laughs] to Daytona – I mean drove back to Orlando [laughs]. Yes. But that was an exciting trip, too. Yeah.

So, that's my – that's my touches with presidents. And – and some folk who have really made a significant difference I think in my life. Certainly in my experience. And I – and I really appreciate all of it.

1:03:21

His closing remarks

Cravero Mr. Hutcheson, thank you so much for sharing your time and speaking with us. Um, we answered all the questions I had for you.

Hutcheson Mhmm.

Cravero Is there anything else you'd like to ex – expand on or add? Do you have any final thoughts for us before we wrap up?

Hutcheson Well, um, since this might be a reel that, um – that one day someone else will see, I'll say to my son, Sumner Hutcheson IV, "See? I did it." He always used to say to me, "I – either you need to write a book, or you need to do a video on the family." You know? And there are many other things about the family I'm sure I missed in the process. I should have maybe brought a list myself of some things but – but quite honestly the pride is there. Um, we've[sic] always were told to be very prideful. People always wonder. They always still say to me, "Sumner, you used to walk in a room and the whole room would stop at the Red Cross." That's what they said. Like it appeared – it felt like the whole room would stop. I said, "Because my father told us you walk with your shoulders back. You stand up straight." And I still try to do it even though I'm getting so old now. Older. I, you know – as you get older sometimes you start leaning. But, um, uh – but, um, try to still do that. I think that's very, very important that there are so many very positive stories.

Um, I will tell you just go – I'm – I'm going to go back to Brownsville again. Um, so I have my doctor [knocks table], who grew up two blocks from me. His parents were teachers and principals in the Dade County school system. I have, um,

⁵³ Orlando International Airport.

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unfortunately, Emmett, um, Williams, who just passed about two or three months ago. He was actually a professional, uh—I think he did promotion of actors because he lived in New York and did that very, very well. Um, uh, we've got, uh, people who've grown, um—some of my friends, who were, um—one of my other friends teaches at Prairie View⁵⁴ as a—as a—as a nursing—over the nursing department. Prairie View in Texas. Uh, I mean I can just go on and on with that list. I got a friend by the name of Milton Vickers⁵⁵, who, uh, we used to ride the streets with. And, um, on our bicycles. And, uh, he's done a lot of things in his own business and also for Miami-Dade County, working in the county over there. So, I mean those stories go on and on. And we've got so many people in that community that—who have done extraordinary things. And, um—and Brownsville needs to be recognized as that [*claps hands*]. It, um—it produced some extraordinary individuals. And I—I'm a little humble. I don't usually get chance to talk about myself very much, but [*taps chest three times*] I'm blessed [*laughs*]. So, thank you very much.

Cravero This has been Geoffrey Cravero with Sumner Hutchinson at the University of Central Florida on September 15th, 2025.

End of Interview

⁵⁴ Prairie View A&M University College of Nursing is located at 6436 Fannin Street in Houston, Texas.

⁵⁵ Milton Vickers (November 9, 1949) -).