



THE ALEXANDRIA ORAL HISTORY CENTER  
OFFICE OF HISTORIC ALEXANDRIA  
CITY OF ALEXANDRIA



# Oral History Interview

with

## Arthur Dawkins

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**Interviewer:** Kerry Reed

**Narrator:** Arthur Dawkins

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**Transcriber:** Dr. Donna M. DeBlasio

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### Summary:

Arthur Dawkins, who spent most of his life in Alexandria, discusses growing up and schooling in this City. He talks about his college education and eventually coming back as band director and assistant principal first at Parker-Gray and then at Minnie Howard. Dawkins, who received his doctorate from the Catholic University of America, created one of the first jazz degree programs in the U.S. at Federal City College (now UD.C.). He also firmly established the jazz program at Howard University. Dawkins discusses some of his famous students, as well as the many jazz venues he played at throughout his impressive career. Porsha Dawkins, also known as Portia, is Dawkins' daughter.

**Notes:**

Porsha Dawkins, Arthur Dawkin's daughter, participates in this interview. She was not considered a narrator.

## **Table of Contents and Keywords**

Minute	Page	Topic
00:00:01	5	Introduction
00:00:17	5	Name, birthplace, hometown
00:00:52	5-6	Family Background
00:07:49	7-8	Early memories of Alexandria and the Boy Scouts
00:12:40	8-9	Schooling
00:15:42	9	Neighborhood, growing up, and house description
00:17:26	9	Lyles-Crouch School
00:18:14	9-10	Safety walking to and from school
00:19:56	10	Description of Washington Street when Dr. Dawkins was growing up
00:21:08	10-11	Memories of Lyles-Crouch and teachers disciplining students
00:24:55	11	Father's work history constructing Pentagon in 1940 and later work at a dry cleaner
00:25:49	11-12	Father's WWII service; mother's work at Torpedo Factory during WWII
00:26:33	12-13	Mother's cooking skills and work as a cook for families in their homes
0030:01	13	Father's service in Navy during WWII
00:30:41	13	Fun activities with friends during youth
00:32:25	13-14	Early training in music
00:36:27	14	Music in Alexandria
00:37:12	14-15	Segregation on buses in Alexandria and D.C.
00:39:36	15-16	D.C. Black entertainment district and performance Dr. Dawkins saw
00:43:35	16	Age one could go into bars
00:44:09	16-17	Discussion of Dr. Dawkins' youth entering grade school at early age
00:48:08	17	Band at Parker-Gray including gigs high school band played outside of school activities
00:51:06	17	High school graduation, attending Virginia State University, majoring in music and affluence of Mr. Patterson, Dr. Dawkins high school band director
00:52:46	17-18	Virginia State University band
00:54:00	18	Virginia State University band playing at UVA

00:55:21	18	Description of Virginia State University band and Dr. Dawkins being the youngest
00:57:09	18-19	Graduation from Virginia State University and becoming band director at Parker-Gray
00:58:55	19	Career at Parker-Gray as band director
01:01:09	19-20	Closure of Parker-Gray
01:01:44	20	Career at T.C. Williams after Parker-Gray closure
01:04:36	20	Type of music played at Parker-Gray
01:05:25	20-21	Career as assistant principal at T.C. Williams
01:06:36	21	Herman Howard as school superintendent
01:07:53	21-22	Founding Jazz Music program at Fed City (now UD.C.)
01:08:41	22	Federal City's innovative music program; discussion of implementing one of first jazz degrees in US
01:12:39	22	Doctoral education at Catholic University
01:13:29	23	Working at Howard University starting jazz program
01:16:06	23-24	Repertory Orchestra
01:17:41	24	Role of Reppard Stone in developing repertory orchestra
01:18:14	24	Description of repertory orchestra and playing with other musicians
01:19:36	24-26	Dr. Dawkins' playing career; instruments played
01:22:07	25	Howard University concert venue
01:22:23	25-26	Howard graduate music program
01:25:15	26	Dr. Dawkins' students who became well-known musicians
01:25:50	26-27	Howard University's Jazz Oral History project
01:29:53	27	Size of Howard jazz program
01:31:41	27	Howard gospel music program
01:32:59	28	Current music scene in Alexandria
01:33:41	28-29	Influence of jazz on other musical forms
01:38:20	29	Dr. Dawkins' daughter Porsha and her music training
01:39:07	29	Discussion of Herman Howard's son Bryan, who is a well-known musician
01:40:54	30	Significance of jazz
01:41:51	30	Appeal of jazz to young people
01:43:46	30-31	Dr. Dawkins' and Porsha's favorite musical artists and why
01:46:44	31	Dr. Dawkins' favorite performance venue: the Kennedy Center
01:47:19	31	Dr. Dawkins' work as a music contractor
01:48:38	31	Favorite memory to hold onto

01:49:32	31-33	Porsha and her sister Iris' educational background
01:54:14	33	Wrap up

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General	Childhood; school; neighborhood; family; college; jazz; music; school band director; segregation; Boy Scouts; teaching
People	Howard, Herman; Howard, Bryan; Patterson, E.L; Byrd; Donald; Stone, Reppard; Coltrane, John; Mathews, Lopez; Davis, Miles
Places	Alexandria, Virginia; Parker-Gray School; Lyles-Crouch School; Virginia State University University; Federal City College; University of the District of Columbia; Howard University

**Kerry Reed** [00:00:01] So thank you so much for agreeing to do this interview. Dr. Dawkins, you know, I've read a lot about you and I feel very privileged to be here with you today.

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:00:09] Why, thank you.

**Kerry Reed** [00:00:11] If we could just start with your full name, if you don't mind.

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:00:17] Arthur Curtis Dawkins. Curtis is my father's name, and Arthur, of course, is my grandfather's name.

**Kerry Reed** [00:00:27] Arthur Curtis Dawkins, absolutely. And when were you born, sir?

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:00:32] October 15, 1935

**Kerry Reed** [00:00:39] And where were you born?

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:00:40] In Lexington, North Carolina.

**Kerry Reed** [00:00:44] Lexington, North Carolina. Is your family from Lexington, North Carolina?

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:00:52] No, actually just my father and mother and me and, I don't know. There were two of us from North Carolina born. Me and my sister were born in Lexington. She was born in 1938.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:01:14] 1937.

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:01:16] 1937, okay. That's right, because that's her mother.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:01:21] My mom and his sister were born the exact same day, same year, same everything.

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:01:32] Not only that, we have two cousins with the same, and two aunts. I don't really know what that is.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:01:38] I won't get too much into the story, but the woman that adopted my mother is also born March, and I'm saying it's a different year, but March 10 as well. So, all these people were born March 10, and then my mom was a twin, so March 10 has a lot of significance.

**Kerry Reed** [00:02:01] Absolutely.

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:02:05] But her mother was born in 1938, right?

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:02:09] No, 1937.

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:02:11] 37[1937]. Alright.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:02:11] His sister and my mom--same day same year same everything and then they were high school then my mom and dad they were high school sweetheart

**Kerry Reed** [00:02:20] That's adorable

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:02:21] Hey, hey, Parker-Gray.

**Kerry Reed** [00:02:22] Parker-Gray. So then from Lexington, North Carolina, how did y'all get up to Alexandria then?

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:02:30] Well, we were with the migration.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:02:36] Yes. But first, the Dawkins are from Gaffney.

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:02:41] Gaffney, South Carolina. That's right. My father is from Gaffney, South Carolina. That's good, yeah, Albany.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:02:48] And then grandma, where's grandma?

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:02:50] My mother is from Beaufort, Georgia, but the two of them met. And that's where we came, and my sister and I came into being. The two of the them in the migration north to work met in North Carolina. I don't know what it was, well, I guess North Carolina was probably a good middle spot. So they met together, and my father and mother met in North Carolina in 1938, but, no, before 1938, because they were, yeah, right, they were before me. So I'm going to say that they, we brought the four of us, my sister, my mother and father, left North Carolina, in 1940. And I remember that much and heading north for work. Actually, he worked as a laborer to build the Pentagon in 1940. We started public school in 1940 in the city of Alexandria. My mother got us-- well, me first, because I was a couple of years older than my sister--got me into a kindergarten called Miss Martha's Kindergarten, which is on the corner of Henry and Oronoco Streets, right? It's still there. Of course, that area is built up from what they were. But we lived on Henry Street, which was around the corner, where your niece, I mean, your cousin there.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:05:06] Oh, right, yeah, Orinoco.

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:05:11] Yeah, okay.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:05:14] Around the corner from here.

**Kerry Reed** [00:05:17] So really quick before I ask you about the schools, what was your father's name?

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:05:22] My father's name was Curtis Nolan Dawkins.

**Kerry Reed** [00:05:27] Curtis Nolan Dawkins

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:05:28] And my brother, Nolan, the judge, was named after my father. I didn't receive that privilege, so he named Nolan after him. And Nolan was born in 1948, but I was almost ten years old when he came. Well, actually, I was more than ten. So, his middle name, my father's middle name was Boyd, Nolan Boyd.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:06:10] Where did Boyd come from?

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:06:11] I don't know what, let me see, let's see, my father's name.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:06:17] Curtis Nolan.

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:06:17] Yeah, okay.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:06:19] I never knew where Boyd came from.

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:06:21] Boyd, if I think correctly, it was a cousin of ours from South Carolina. But we didn't know them because things were so difficult. That group, my family group, including my father and my mother's family, also came. She was born in Beaufort, Georgia, and stayed there, I would assume, just as a teenager. I'm sure that she didn't know she was gonna meet my father, but that was good for me.

**Kerry Reed** [00:07:11] Absolutely. And then, what was your mother's name?

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:07:12] My mother's name was Mittie, M-I-T-T I-E. And I don't think she has a middle name.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:07:21] I don't know of a middle name.

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:07:22] I don't think she had one.

**Kerry Reed** [00:07:23] Did she have a maiden name?

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:07:25] Maiden name was Cunningham.

**Kerry Reed** [00:07:30] Cunningham. Mittie Cunningham Dawkins. So then, when y'all moved to Alexandria, you said you were living on Henry Street.

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:07:40] Yeah.

**Kerry Reed** [00:07:42] Initially.

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:07:43] 509.

**Kerry Reed** [00:07:44] 509 Henry

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:07:44] Yes.

**Kerry Reed** [00:07:49] Do you have a first memory of Alexandria? What was your first memory of Alexandria?

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:07:54] You know, I was old enough when I came here, because she put me in kindergarten. I still was about five or six, but I do remember that street there, I mean, it's the same street that you see now. So, I do remember that. I remember that there was a Boy Scouts Club that [was] established around the corner on Oronoco Street and the master, the head, of the Boy Scouts group used to take us on trips. Now, I'm sure I was probably maybe 12 or 13. But I do remember hiking from the Boy Scout Club, which is on Oronoco and Patrick. And we used to hike from that point to what they call Randall's Farm. I'll connect that in a minute. [laughter]

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:09:38] It's very significant.

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:09:38] Randall's Farm, and I'm just saying--it seemed like, how far is it from this spot we are in now to... We don't have to go to Mount Vernon. You can go to; I'm going to say, Bellevue Boulevard. So, from that point we hiked and we did it once or twice a year. And so that's about I want to say.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:10:11] South Alexandria.

**Kerry Reed** [00:10:14] Yeah, that's far.

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:10:16] Hmm.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:10:17] I can't do it now. I don't know if I could have done it in five.

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:10:23] So we hiked there, and the significance of that is that is a farm that we hiked on. The place that Porsha was born, where we live now. We live in what we call Randall Estates. It was named after the man who owned the land. But we walked from, I remember as a young Boy Scout, we walked down, it was just Washington Street, right here, so all the way down to Fort Hunt Road.

**Kerry Reed** [00:11:13] Oh wow! That's quite a walk.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:11:13] Yeah. As a little boy.

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:11:15] It may be--what would you say, is it ten miles, is that ten miles?

**Kerry Reed** [00:11:20] Roughly, it is, yeah, absolutely. That is quite a walk, it is. So. were there a lot of Black children in the Boy Scouts with you?

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:11:32] All Black, all Black.

**Kerry Reed** [00:11:33] All Black.

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:11:35] All Black, yeah. And the scoutmaster was Black also. So that, if I remember, the scout master

was one of my teachers later. I went with the proper grade. So, he was one our teachers there. There were two of them, him and his brother and one other person. And I'm going to say there were probably ten of us, Boy Scouts. But we didn't get in any trouble and got down there and walked back.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:12:23] No bears.

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:12:25] Yeah.

**Kerry Reed** [00:12:26] I certainly hope not.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:12:27] Because that was imagine probably look nothing like now.

**Kerry Reed** [00:12:31] Of course.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:12:31] It was woody, very, very woody.

**Kerry Reed** [00:12:37] So where did you go to elementary school?

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:12:40] I went to elementary school at what was then Parker-Gray. But it was one building for elementary. I don't think we had it, in fact, I know we didn't have junior high. So, I started in that building, which is now the Houston Center [the site of the Charles Houston Recreation Center]. I started elementary school there after [inaudible] kindergarten, elementary school at Parker-Gray.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:13:17] That's for first grade?

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:13:19] First grade. And it wasn't a name. It wasn't, I don't, no, I know it was. It was, it was not named elementary, because, but it was an elementary school, but the interesting thing about it was that building had high school also.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:13:37] So it's first grade to high school.

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:13:39] To high school, right, right. The same building that we've had all of the ceremonies and my brother Robert has done so much recreating. That same building was where we went to elementary school and high school. And again, there was no middle school.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:14:08] There was no middle school.

**Kerry Reed** [00:14:11] Did you walk to school?

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:14:13] Yes.

**Kerry Reed** [00:14:13] Got it.

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:14:15] Yes, we did walk, because my folks moved from Henry Street to Madison Street, from 509 to 820 Madison Street. And these are all current numbers that are in, but far, basically different places.

**Kerry Reed** [00:14:34] Of course, of course.

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:14:36] We walked. They moved from a house on Henry Street, yeah, to 820 Madison Street, which was another house. It was a single house, but it was, you know, very compact. My brother, me--well, Nolan wasn't actually in school yet--but Robert went to Parker-Gray and my sister Betsy went to Parker-Gray, also the same building that I went to. So we're all with the same building on West Street.

**Kerry Reed** [00:15:30] So I'm pretty familiar with that area because I go to Charles Houston a fair bit and I get tattooed down there as well. Yeah. Yeah.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:15:38] Very nice.

**Kerry Reed** [00:15:38] Thank you. So, what did Madison Street look like when you were growing up?

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:15:42] Well, that's interesting. [laughter] Robert has, in his research, some pictures of Madison Street when we were living there, and I can't remember exactly, maybe I never got to show them, but he did show them. But it was sick. They were very, very meager living single family houses. My mother used to have me pay the rent, five dollars a week to rent the house

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:16:30] Where do you find five dollars a week for rent? [laughter]

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:16:32] Madison Street.

**Kerry Reed** [00:16:37] Absolutely. So living in the house, living at 820 Madison Street, it was your mother and your father, yourself and your two brothers, and then your sister, Betsy.

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:16:48] Yeah.

**Kerry Reed** [00:16:48] Oh wow. How many rooms were in the house?

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:16:50] Well, I think there were two bedrooms upstairs, and obviously there were that many people. We had to use the downstairs also, so my mother and father stayed in the bedroom upstairs, and then the three of us stayed downstairs. So, it was tight.

**Kerry Reed** [00:17:18] Absolutely.

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:17:19] Yeah.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:17:22] What about Lyles? You told me about Lyles. When did you go to Lyles?

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:17:26] That's a good question. It's the same Lyles-Crouch as now. So, I tried to correct that with the naming of Parker-Gray. From Parker-Gray, we all had to leave in sixth and seventh grade. Yeah, I think sixth and seventh grade, and leave Parker-Gray on Madison Street and walked to Lyles-Crouch, the same building that you know now, on Pitt Street. So we walked there for two years, for those two grades.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:18:11] Sixth and seventh?

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:18:12] Yes.

**Kerry Reed** [00:18:14] Got it.

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:18:14] Now, I would assume, you know, it probably wasn't 100% safe like being in heaven. But we had to be careful, and all of a sudden, me, Betsy, Nolan, and Robert, no, Nolan. Betsy and Robert walked with me, although I was a year before them. So, they did walk with me. And we were never harmed, and so it was tough times.

**Kerry Reed** [00:18:59] Absolutely.

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:19:00] We managed.

**Kerry Reed** [00:19:02] Was that something you had to be careful about when you walked to Lyles-Crouch in the city?

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:19:06] Yeah. Well, I mean, I guess you have to be careful now, but, yeah, but not for the same reason. You know, during that time, I think the segregation part was probably, the racial issues were probably greater than any other safety issues because my mother said, "don't walk in the white neighborhood." So, you know, we walked straight down Washington Street and we get walked back up this way. So, yeah, so we knew not to walk too many blocks off of Washington.

**Kerry Reed** [00:19:56] Got it, absolutely. Do you remember when you were walking down King or, excuse me,

Washington Street? What did Washington Street look like?

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:20:11] I'm going to say not a great deal different than it does now. Most of these houses were built in the 1800s, I mean on this street. Is that true?

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:20:24] I think it's probable.

**Kerry Reed** [00:20:24] Yeah, this one definitely was.

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:20:27] So these houses were here, and the ones that were torn down. Washington Street was not too much different from what it is now.

**Kerry Reed** [00:20:38] Got it.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:20:40] Was it four lanes? Was it as many lanes as it was separated?

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:20:43] No, I think it probably was just two lanes.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:20:47] One going north and one going south.

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:20:52] Yeah, we're talking about in the 40s [1940s] and the 50s [1950s] now.

**Kerry Reed** [00:21:02] What do you remember most about Lyles-Crouch when you were going there?

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:21:08] Last time was my fifth, no, sixth and seventh grade.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:21:16] And mama went there also?

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:21:17] Oh, yeah. Everybody went to Lyles-Crouch because which would have been a middle school now. But she went to Lyles-Crouch--of course we were there at different times, because I was a couple years older than her. But Lyles-Crouch was, if I remember correctly, Ms. Allen was my sixth-grade teacher and very strict and was the kind of person that we would not want to cross.

**Kerry Reed** [00:22:01] Yes.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:22:05] And that meant something back then, not like today. [Laughter]

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:22:15] But the problem that kids that I met afterwards was that we accepted that some of those teachers were going to be abusive in today's terms. I don't think the kids today totally accept that.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:22:42] The teacher could be arrested for it.

**Kerry Reed** [00:22:44] Yeah, absolutely.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:22:50] And they told your parents, right?

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:22:52] Oh, no question!

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:22:53] But the parents didn't sue them, they would just say, it was okay, you know, "well you did what you had to do." That's what your parents did.

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:23:04] Ms. Allen, who was also from South Carolina, the same place as my father from, did you know that? Ms. Allen, she's born in Gaffney, just like my daddy.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:23:14] Oh, I didn't know that.

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:23:16] So, I had got a little ambitious and called one of my classmates a bitch, so she said, "You said

what? Did you say whatever she said?" "No, ma'am." "Oh, no. You said it. I heard it." She went and told my daddy and my mama, because she said, "this boy, he needs to be..." Well, my mother washed my mouth out with soap. So, I guess that soap may be better than a strap.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:23:59] I don't know if you know the movie "A Christmas Story?"

**Kerry Reed** [00:24:06] Oh, yeah, of course. Oh, yes, of course.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:24:08] So every time I see that scene, I think of him.

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:24:12] With the soap.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:24:12] Yeah, with the soap in the mouth. He said the F word. That kid said the F word.

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:24:16] Yeah, okay, okay.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:24:17] His parents brought him right home. [laughter]

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:24:21] So that's all about that. But she did it to humiliate me and to make me look bad in front of all my buddies.

**Kerry Reed** [00:24:36] Yes.

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:24:36] And they laughed. They thought that was a really funny for her to wash out my mouth.

**Kerry Reed** [00:24:41] Absolutely. So you mentioned that your father was a laborer building that built the Pentagon. He was one of the men that worked on the Pentagon. Once that was finished. What did your father do?

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:24:55] Actually, he started working in a cleaners. And at that time, he was a presser. And he worked there for entire life. In fact, he, he would still work, while he had retired a few years early. But he worked in a cleaning, pressing place.

**Kerry Reed** [00:25:25] Got it. Was that here in the city?

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:25:27] One was, in the end, was here, but most of the time it was a plant in Fairfax off of [inaudible] Road.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:25:42] I didn't know that.

**Kerry Reed** [00:25:45] And then, did your mother work, or did she stay home and raise you?

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:25:49] She stayed home, she stayed home. However, she worked during the war, I'm going to say during the 1940s, say 1941, 1942, 1943. He went to World War II, and she did work for two or three years at the Torpedo Factory here.

**Kerry Reed** [00:26:22] Okay, wow.

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:26:24] And it was the same building and everything, except they built torpedoes.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:26:30] It was an art. [Laughter]

**Kerry Reed** [00:26:31] Of course, of course.

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:26:33] She worked there for three or four years and she also worked at the airport as a cook.

**Kerry Reed** [00:26:40] As a cook?

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:26:40] Yeah.

**Kerry Reed** [00:26:44] Was your mother a good cook?

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:26:45] Yes. Absolutely. Look at us. I'm the king. That's where it came from.

**Kerry Reed** [00:26:52] What was your favorite meal that she would make for you all?

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:26:56] I'm going to say, what was yours?

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:26:59] I have a sweet tooth. She was a really good baker. So pretty much anything she baked was good. She baked all kinds of pies, she made coconut cake. She made an excellent coconut cake that no one has been able to duplicate. Peach cobbler, really good peach cobbler, and that's enough. I've kind of mastered the peach cobbles, but I'm not going to take credit for it. She fried chicken, of course, fried fish, eggplant, eggplant parmesan, she made spaghetti. She could pretty much cook anything. You know how we have the Food Channel and all that stuff? She could've taught them, and like she didn't have any formal training. [inaudible], did she bake bread? I don't, I think she baked bread, her sister baked really good bread. Her sister lived in Cleveland, she made very, very good bread, but yeah. Yeah, she made a good--what was it, was it fried eggplant?

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:28:07] Yeah. Yeah.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:28:13] Fried eggplant was good. And my uncle always talked about the way you had to be messy. And see me I'm the type I'm trying to clean up with me but she was really messy. She would sling flour all over the place. That's what made you good.

**Kerry Reed** [00:28:25] Absolutely. Absolutely the best.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:28:26] You got to sling the flour and like she would, you know, batter up the chicken or batter up the fish. She'd do it on one countertop and then she'd walk it over to the stove--we'd all tell the story--and then you got to throw it into the pan and you got get the flour all over the place. That's what makes it good.

**Kerry Reed** [00:28:48] Absolutely [Laughter].

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:28:48] Yeah, but she could cook anything. She also worked for, she worked for a family.

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:28:55] Yes, she did.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:28:57] She was a cook for--what was it? Several families?

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:29:02] And I remember vividly, one was on the corner from where my daughter Iris is, at the nursing home. Is it Monument? Not Monument, but one of the streets that crosses in front.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:29:19] What is it--that King Street hill?

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:29:20] Yeah.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:29:21] Up on like when you're going up towards Route 7 and those houses up there.

**Kerry Reed** [00:29:28] Okay, okay.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:29:29] Near the Masonic Temple.

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:29:31] Yeah, that's right. I remember taking her. I used to--not take her--but she used to have me come over to help her to walk from... At that time, we were living on Madison Street, so I would walk over to help her, you know, do work in the kitchen at the house on Monument Street. It's the street. The house is still there.

**Kerry Reed** [00:29:58] Absolutely.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:30:01] And my grandfather served up in the Navy.

**Kerry Reed** [00:30:04] Navy. Got it.

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:30:05] I forgot about that.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:30:09] In World War II, on the Pacific.

**Kerry Reed** [00:30:13] Fabulous. You wouldn't happen to know what vessel, would you?

**Speaker 3** [00:30:18] Maybe my uncle Lauren knows that.

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:30:22] No, but there was a vessel, because he has a picture with him, and I'm sure the name of that vessel is in that picture, and [inaudible].

**Kerry Reed** [00:30:33] Absolutely. So, Dr. Dawkins, what did you do for fun as a kid in Alexandria besides the Boy Scouts?

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:30:41] Well, high school was, I guess the main social life because all of our friends we were grouped together. Some of us played basketball. I tried a little bit, and with the church, some of the church had a basketball league. So we did play sports and then, I guess I got, I'm not quite an adult, we had dances. I'm trying to think of, oh, [inaudible]. That's probably gone now.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:31:41] [inaudible] long.

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:31:45] Yeah. The rec center is on Franklin Street, the same Franklin Street here, but I don't, I'm pretty sure it's not there anymore. But we had dances there. And you know, at school we danced that It could quite be a social life. But most of, a lot of our social life was in school.

**Kerry Reed** [00:32:20] Absolutely. When did you start playing music?

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:32:25] I started in the seventh grade, I'm going to say yeah, because I'm thinking about my nephew here now.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:32:40] I thought you were younger.

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:32:46] My fifth, sixth grade teacher tried to convince the band director to let me come in, but he said I was too short and couldn't let me in.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:33:01] Plus, he was younger. He was ahead of all his classmates. Isn't that right?

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:33:07] That's exactly right.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:33:09] He graduated early, so he was ahead of all of his classmates

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:33:14] So height, as far as physical growth, I was a little bit shorter than everybody else, but the band director is not too short.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:33:29] Were you always interested in the saxophone?

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:33:33] Yeah, yeah.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:33:33] What you were interested in even as a kid.

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:33:37] Yeah.

**Kerry Reed** [00:33:38] When did you start playing that?

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:33:40] I'm going to say I was probably 12, 11 or 12, and he gave me lessons and allowed me to play in the band. So I'm going to say about 12 years old and once I started playing I never stopped even after I went to college and my professional life. But I started on the saxophone and later before graduating from high school, my teacher convinced me to start to study the flute, so by the time I finished high school, I could play two instruments. In fact, E. L. Patterson is my teacher, who is one of the people that are included in Robert's tribute celebration.

**Kerry Reed** [00:35:05] Absolutely.

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:35:05] E.L. Patterson was my teacher.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:35:08] You probably know this daughter.

**Kerry Reed** [00:35:11] Yeah, better. So why the saxophone? Why did you start with that?

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:35:18] I don't know, but there was something that attracted me to playing that instrument.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:35:26] Was it Coltrane?

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:35:28] No, that was before Coltrane, that would be before Coltrane. I'm not going to say I existed before him, but that was a whole lot before Coltrane. But no, I would say that was the instrument that I was just naturally attracted to. As opposed to trumpet, I knew that to play the trumpet, you had to have that pressure on your lips to make the sound. That's not the reason why I chose the saxophone. But I would not try to do brass instruments because the people who played them didn't play them very well. So, that has something to do with it.

**Kerry Reed** [00:36:20] Absolutely. Got it. Was there a lot of music in your home growing up? Did your parents play a lot of music or anything like that?

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:36:25] No.

**Kerry Reed** [00:36:27] No. Got it. What about around the neighborhood, around the city? Did you go to any concerts anywhere, any shows, anything like that?

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:36:35] Yeah. The Elks Home was one of the major facilities that had professional players, because the Elks home is on--this is hard to believe--the Elks Home is still on Henry and Cameron Street--not that Elks, but there's a white Elks Home and there's another Elks in the middle of the block.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:37:09] Is it still there? Is it still active?

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:37:12] Yeah. But they had a professional band coming in, and the place really wasn't that big, but Count Basie came in. I remember seeing Miles Davis at this little Elks on Washington Street. So, I did have access to some professional groups. The other things that were happening was going to D.C., and we took the bus, and that's where [inaudible]. Not only did we take the bus but we had to sit in the back of the bus. And, yeah, I'm going to say that whole situation with segregated buses happened throughout my adulthood.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:38:24] Iris is my sister. Iris experienced some of it, didn't she?

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:38:30] Yes.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:38:31] I don't know if she's old enough to remember.

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:38:34] Yes. The public accommodations law was passed in, like I'm going to say, 1963, no, 1973. May have been, 1973. Until they passed the law, we had to sit in the back of the bus. Robert went to, or someone was in it also, because Robert was only five years younger than I am. But by the time he became an adult, some things he went to that I went to, not as his big brother, but as his guardian.

**Kerry Reed** [00:39:24] Got it. When y'all would take the bus into D.C., where would you go?

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:39:36] Again, D.C. was segregated also, but we went to the Black entertainment center was actually on U Street, it was also on 7th Street. So, we would have to get the bus from Alexandria to go up to 7th Street to U Street, and you could almost walk around it once you got to that point. We took the bus everywhere, including within the city. I'm just trying to remember, D.C.'s, the segregation laws were probably a little bit more...

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:40:34] A little bit relaxed.

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:40:35] Yeah.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:40:38] Not as stringent as Alexandria, I would think.

**Kerry Reed** [00:40:43] When you say the Black entertainment center was at U Street and 7th Street...

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:40:49] Yes.

**Kerry Reed** [00:40:50] Was that a club? Was it a dance hall?

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:40:52] It was a whole series of clubs in there.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:40:55] More than one.

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:40:56] Yeah, right. A whole series clubs.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:40:59] Like Georgetown.

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:41:00] Yes.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:41:04] Live venues, live performers.

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:41:07] That's right. The Alligator was there also. That was in the center, and then everything was all around these streets.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:41:19] And they have revamped it, but it's probably just more glamorous, but the message is [inaudible]

**Kerry Reed** [00:41:28] So do you remember any performances you saw there, any bands that stick out to you?

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:41:33] Yeah, I do. I remember Count Basie and Duke Ellington and at that time the city was, pretty well segregated like everywhere else in this country, but the Black entertainment was pretty much confined, which is hard to believe, to U Street and 7th Street.

**Kerry Reed** [00:42:06] Yes.

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:42:07] Well, the city always had movie theaters and the like. But then until after the desegregation laws were passed, then groups like the Temptations and Marvin Gaye and that kind of thing.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:42:40] James Brown.

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:42:45] James Brown. They could play the Howard Theater, but they also had opportunities to play other places.

**Kerry Reed** [00:42:54] Do you have a favorite player, favorite band that you saw in the district?

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:43:00] I did see Coltrane. I saw Coltrane and I saw Miles Davis and, Charlie Rouse, who was a saxophone player, also played with Thelonious Monk, so I was able to see quite a few.

**Kerry Reed** [00:43:26] Absolutely. So, were you going to see these players, these bands, when you were a young man or when you were still a child?

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:43:35] Yeah, well, I, again, I'm sure I started before I was 21, no, I was 18 when I finished Virginia State University. So, I was still under the age of 21, which I assume is still there.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:43:57] But was that the law back then being going in bars and stuff at 20? Because I thought it was at once 18 at one time.

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:44:09] Yeah, okay, you may be right, but I think it was 21 was the age and again that which kind of threw me out of sync with a lot of my peers was that we started school, but I guess we're telling also, which threw me off all the way through high school.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:44:38] You graduated high school at 16, right?

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:44:43] Right, right. At that time, 16 was because of the older, I mean, young.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:44:49] Yeah, you were still a minor.

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:44:52] Yeah. And the reason why I graduated, it's a primary reason, my mother insisted on talking to the principal into admitting me as a six-year [old]. My birthday is October 15th. So, if your child is born, I hadn't known, because there was no real issue with me, but if your child is born after September 1st, you have to wait until the next year.

**Kerry Reed** [00:45:29] Yeah.

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:45:30] And I'm pretty sure it's pretty much the same now.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:45:33] It's pretty much the same now.

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:45:34] Yeah. She insisted that they take me as underage, because at the time I had not turned 6 yet. I was 5 years old for a few months and then I turned 6. But everybody, the law says that you have to wait next year. So, she managed to convince them. And I do remember that some of the people when I came back to work, they said, your mother gave us a fit. And, you know, I'm sure I was involved with that with other kids in my life, but as far as that, it's not an arbitrary age, you have to be 6. What month are you born?

**Kerry Reed** [00:46:44] March.

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:46:44] Okay. It's only people who...

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:46:51] [Who] were born after the school year, like the school year ends in June.

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:46:55] That's where the problem is.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:46:56] And it's between June and Christmas, because I had a couple of classmates like that as well. So, and some of them did somehow do what you said. And then some of them were like, you said you're like 15 and all your, you know, they went the later years. So, you're 15 and then all your classmates are like 13, because they went the following year. So I think it's something about that second half of the year will kick you in either direction.

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:47:28] Yes, that is exactly right. That kind of haunted me, even after y'all were going to clubs and all that. Some of the people who were admitting me to clubs said, "How old are you?" And I didn't have any way [inaudible] if they force me to show driver's license.

**Kerry Reed** [00:48:06] Were you in the band at Parker-Gray as well?

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:48:08] Yeah.

**Kerry Reed** [00:48:09] How was the band back then?

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:48:11] It was great. In fact, I'm trying to think of the people who went on to--either as a professional or became [a] well-known personality. But it was great, and even the people like General Brooks, his son, no, General Brooks himself, he was [an] outstanding trombone player and in fact, he made it in music just the same as I did, and he could have, I guess, had he not gone to the military, he would probably could have been a musician.

**Kerry Reed** [00:49:06] Yes.

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:49:07] It was great, it's safe to say. It was better than average in terms of talent.

**Kerry Reed** [00:49:15] Did y'all play a lot locally or what sort of performances did the band put on?

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:49:21] Yeah, all right. Well, now, remember, we're still high school, so we didn't, I don't remember us playing in the clubs like [inaudible] did, and because some of the older members convinced the club owners to let us play. But we did have, I want to say, opportunities to play in different places.

**Kerry Reed** [00:49:58] What clubs did you play in?

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:50:00] Well, the Elks Home, that's what, on Henry Street. It was a veteran's center. That name may have changed, but I think the building is still there on Fayette Street, between Queen and Wolf--no, I mean Queen and Cameron Streets. There was a veteran's club there, a VA entertainment club for veterans. And they had entertainment there on a regular basis that we all played in; you know.

**Kerry Reed** [00:51:06] Absolutely. So, you graduated high school early at 16. Did you immediately go to Virginia State University?

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:51:14] Yeah.

**Kerry Reed** [00:51:16] And you majored in music.

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:51:24] Yeah.

**Kerry Reed** [00:51:24] Why did you want to major in music?

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:51:26] I guess mainly because of the influence of Mr. Patterson. He had prepared me and several others, as far as the entrance exams. Although we didn't have SAT like we have now, but we still had to pass some kind of qualifying exam. So, he's a great influence on me, going to Virginia State University, being sure that I was ready in terms of academic requirements. But he had, I'm going to say, he was probably the most significant reason I went to Virginia State University.

**Kerry Reed** [00:52:19] Absolutely.

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:52:21] And he had--because he went there also--had a connection with the school. So, that had a great influence on me.

**Kerry Reed** [00:52:36] 100%. So, did you play in a band while you were at Virginia State University?

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:52:46] The band, at the time, the bands at Virginia State University were really mostly country, European style bands, but we did have a...

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:53:03] You had classical music?

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:53:05] Classical music yes. That's about all the formal training you could get there, but we did play, I mean, those of us who were quite interested in something other than classical music. We were self-taught. We played our own gigs and sort of worked autonomously from the department. And it was strong enough to prepare me to, when I left Virginia State University, to have a little skill.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:53:56] You played gigs.

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:53:57] Played gigs, yeah. Right

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:54:00] Tell him about UVA, they, the kids hired you.

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:54:04] Yeah, that's right. That's right, that is right. We were colleges, Black colleges, but the white kids at UVA used to hire us to come out and play at their party. That's okay, because apparently, they paid us well. But they were the same age as we were. [Laughter]

**Kerry Reed** [00:54:29] How often would y'all go to UVA to play?

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:54:31] I think we did enough that it wasn't every week, but we played there two or three times a year. And when the white fraternities had parties, they would hire us to come. I think they still do that. Reason why I'm saying it now, man.

**Kerry Reed** [00:55:06] So your major in music at Virginia State University then, they were only teaching European classical. And then you were playing at clubs around Virginia State University at UVA, and that was jazz.

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:55:19] Yes.

**Kerry Reed** [00:55:21] So in your band, how many players were there?

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:55:25] Oh, four or five.

**Kerry Reed** [00:55:28] Four or five? So, you were on sax?

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:55:30] Yeah.

**Kerry Reed** [00:55:31] Who else?

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:55:32] At drums, bass, and piano. And sometimes guitar. But it was usually just those two. Now, mind you, I'm the youngest one in the Virginia State University Band, too, just like I was here. And apparently that 16-year-old thing stuck with me. And in fact, I was kind of self-conscious about it because I didn't want to be teased about being the youngest.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:56:08] He's always looked younger than his age. It works in your favor because he always looked younger than his age. You see pictures of him at 20, he still looks like a kid.

**Kerry Reed** [00:56:21] 100%

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:56:26] But we did play. There was a club that was in Petersburg--I'm not sure if it's still there. But almost my whole four-year period as a student at Virginia State University--It was a jazz club too, that was a different club, I mean a different thing about that. And the people that I played with were all very seasoned players and taught me a lot.

**Kerry Reed** [00:57:03] Absolutely. Absolutely. So, what did you do when you graduated from Virginia State University?

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:57:09] When I graduated from Virginia State University, I guess one of the best breaks I had in life. Mr. Patterson came to me--this is the year I was supposed to graduate--and he said, "I want you to come up and take my place as band director."

**Kerry Reed** [00:57:32] At Parker-Gray.

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:57:34] At Parker-Gray, yeah. And he was still the band director when I came here, and he convinced me, and I was very self-conscious about, first of all, being from Alexandria, being not too much older than most of the students that I would be teaching. So it worked out, but it took some, I guess, politics in life. But I was 20 when I came to

work at Parker-Gray.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:58:24] I love having that young teacher, you've been there, and you're just like us.

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:58:32] Yeah, yeah.

**Porsha Dawkins** [00:58:35] Did you teach Uncle Robert? You taught Aunt Romain. Aunt Romain is my Uncle Robert's wife. You taught her; didn't you teach [inaudible] was in your class?

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:58:44] And no one was in the band.

**Kerry Reed** [00:58:55] That's funny. You took Mr. Patterson's place as the band director of Parker-Gray.

**Arthur Dawkins** [00:59:00] Yeah. It wasn't immediate, but it was enticing for him to ask me to come to work here because Alexandria paid more than any other place in the metropolitan area, I mean, in the state of Virginia, put it that way. Alexandria always paid teachers more than most of the places in the state. So, I had a possibility to get a job in Richmond, band director, but he taught me. I mean, I felt very assured that that would work. And I stayed the whole time. When I say stayed the entire time, I stayed 13 years because he was still the band director, my first five years under him, doing other stuff. So by the time he, Mr. Patterson retired and became assistant principal and then later principal, I took over the band, so it worked out just fine.

**Kerry Reed** [01:00:19] Got it, got it. So then, so you were the band director at Parker-Gray when Parker-Gray closed?

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:00:28] Yes.

**Kerry Reed** [01:00:29] Okay. So when Parker-Gray closed in, what year was that?

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:00:36] I'm gonna say...

**Kerry Reed** [01:00:38] I should know this. I don't know why.

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:00:39] Are you from Alexandria?

**Kerry Reed** [01:00:42] Yeah, yeah.

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:00:42] Are you born [here]?

**Kerry Reed** [01:00:44] Yeah, I was born. Yeah, I was born up in Alexandria Hospital. My parents lived on the west end. And then when I was about five, they wanted my sister and I to have a have a bigger yard.

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:00:56] Okay.

**Kerry Reed** [01:00:56] So they moved out to Annandale.

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:00:58] Okay.

**Kerry Reed** [01:00:59] Yeah. But I'm from the city. Yeah

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:01:03] What, what, what was the question about the...

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:01:09] When did Parker-Gray close?

**Kerry Reed** [01:01:10] I want to say it was 1963 [1965].

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:01:12] That sounds right.

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:01:13] I think it was a little later. I knew a woman who was one of the last classes there and I don't

know, it was in the mid-sixties.

**Kerry Reed** [01:01:26] I'll put a note in the transcript to make myself look less foolish. I was curious, so once Parker-Gray did close, did you move over to GW or move over to T.C. Williams to be a band director? What did you do after Parker-Gray closed?

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:01:44] That's the logical movement from Parker-Gray, because that's what I expected. Well, once desegregation happened, then a lot of us took on abilities and attractiveness that we didn't know we had. Now all I knew about myself was teaching music. And the political system here, Mr. Patterson--and I used to call him Mr. Patterson--and he used to say, he used to ask me, "don't call me mister." They saw in me, not movement as a band director. The logical movement was to be a band director at GW or somewhere else. Well, I think at that time music was more important or looked on as more. It's more important than a job they had for a Black administrator. We have a job for this person, and that job is to be an assistant principal. It didn't have anything to do with music.

**Kerry Reed** [01:03:14] Got it.

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:03:15] And it doesn't have anything to do with preparation. So the preparation I had to go to Parker-Gray was nowhere near what I had to go to T.C. Williams because my movement for Parker closed. I moved from Parker, and I worked at least three years as a middle school--same building--as a middle school band director. At least three years there. And in my third year, because at that time I was already planning on preparation to leave the city because with the politics and the racial...

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:04:13] It was in the 60s [1960s], right.

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:04:14] Yeah, this is in the 60s [1960s], exactly.

**Kerry Reed** [01:04:18] Yeah, of course. You move from, really quick. So when you were band director or assistant band director under Mr. Patterson, what kind of music were y'all playing? Was it jazz? Was it classical marching?

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:04:36] Mostly classical and marching, yeah. But I did have, and that was a good thing about what it was then, he was liberal in his thinking, Mr. Patterson.

**Kerry Reed** [01:04:48] Yes.

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:04:54] About including jazz in his curriculum, for his high school students.

**Kerry Reed** [01:05:02] Got it.

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:05:03] So I had some of the, some of my, I was [inaudible], too, took lessons with me playing jazz.

**Kerry Reed** [01:05:09] Oh, okay. Awesome.

**Kerry Reed** [01:05:11] That was different. It was primarily classical and marching.

**Kerry Reed** [01:05:22] After Parker-Gray closed, you moved to be an assistant principal at T.C. Williams.

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:05:25] Yes.

**Kerry Reed** [01:05:26] How long were you assistant principle there?

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:05:29] I was there for one year.

**Kerry Reed** [01:05:32] One year. What was being an assistant principal at T.C. Williams like?

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:05:36] It was more demanding, much more highly visible than I was as a teacher.

**Kerry Reed** [01:05:51] Yes.

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:05:52] I thought, this is kind of hard to explain, is how someone turned down being an administrator to be a teacher. But that's what I wanted. All I wanted was to be teacher.

**Kerry Reed** [01:06:09] Yeah, yeah.

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:06:11] But more money as an administrator.

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:06:13] More money oh, twice as much. In fact, [inaudible]. The year that I was at T.C. Williams from 1970 until 1971, I made twice as much as my salary as a band director.

**Kerry Reed** [01:06:34] Oh wow. So why did you why did you give up the money then? Why did you stop?

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:06:36] Well, there were other things that there were, because I was, I'm gonna say I was the second assistant principal, Black. And this job, was a job, and it probably still is, a job set aside for a Black man, well, women now. So. Herman Howard, who was our neighbor, this is our neighbor.

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:07:16] We were in south Alexandria, and he was our neighbor.

**Kerry Reed** [01:07:20] Herman Howard.

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:07:21] Yes.

**Kerry Reed** [01:07:22] Got it.

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:07:22] And he was a superintendent?

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:07:24] Yeah. Superintendent.

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:07:27] Well, he had T.C. Williams.

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:07:28] T. C. Williams. Yes. Before me.

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:07:31] And then he became a superintendent. But superintendents involved? No, not superintendents. Fairfax.

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:07:38] Fairfax, right. You're right.

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:07:43] That's what he said.

**Kerry Reed** [01:07:44] Yeah, of course. Okay, so you wanted to go back to teaching music, so you left the administration. Got it.

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:07:53] And then I got the opportunity to be a part of a new program, music program, at Federal City College, which later would become University of the District.

**Kerry Reed** [01:08:08] UD.C..

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:08:09] Yeah, so I got the opportunity to join that faculty after the one year at TC, and that's why my salary dropped 50 percent.

**Kerry Reed** [01:08:29] So now you're a faculty at Fed City College, UD.C.. So, you were a music educator again. What were you teaching at Fed College?

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:08:41] That was the thing that attracted me there. At that time, Federal City was one of the probably most innovative universities in the country in the sense that they recognized jazz as a legitimate discipline. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Kerry Reed** [01:09:09] Got it.

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:09:10] A lot of people did not.

**Kerry Reed** [01:09:14] Yeah. Gonna get to that.

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:09:15] So you could get a degree, I mean get credits for jazz courses. There was no other school offered that. No, of course the UD.C. offered a lot of other things that were, you know, very heavily Black oriented, that many people, and I'm sure that many kind of looked at that as something negative, but it was one of the few schools. It was the only school that offered a degree in jazz. In fact, they offered a jazz degree before Howard offered it, who enticed her to come to do the same thing at Howard. But UD.C. had the first one.

**Kerry Reed** [01:10:14] So I'm curious about the jazz education because I mean, admittedly I'm a layman when it comes to jazz music. But my understanding is that jazz is always like impromptu. It's always, you know, how you feel in the moment, you're in rhythm with the other players and everything like that. So when you were, when you started teaching jazz at Fed City, what did your curriculum look like? How did you teach your students?

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:10:43] Well, it was taught the same way I was taught here. The people who taught me jazz in Alexandria was not Patterson, but it was Courtney Dean, whose son went on to be a very successful jazz musician, and Charles Jackson who was also with the Navy Band, who was a veteran from the Navy Band. So these people taught me the essence of the music, and elements of the music. So, I was able to carry that over. And so, well, we came, you know, again, because of its innovative philosophy, it did more than many people want to get them credit for it, but that was that was why I went to them.

**Kerry Reed** [01:12:03] Absolutely. So, how long did you stay at Fed City?

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:12:06] I stayed there ten years, and part of that ten years I was teaching part-time at Howard. During that ten year period, I completed my Ph.D. at Catholic U [University] during that ten year period.

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:12:33] [Inaudible]

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:12:39] You're right; she's right. So I did all of that right after I was finished teaching in Alexandria and the one year administration.

**Kerry Reed** [01:12:51] So you got your master's and Ph.D. from Catholic?

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:12:54] Yes.

**Kerry Reed** [01:12:55] Was that musical theory, music education?

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:12:57] No, it actually was in music education.

**Kerry Reed** [01:13:00] Okay.

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:13:02] And in fact, my dissertation was on teaching kids how to play by ear. And it's on file at Catholic U because most of that stuff is so deep in the weeds, you know, but that's what it was.

**Kerry Reed** [01:13:24] I'm sure I can find it. I'm pretty good at research.

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:13:26] Yeah.

**Kerry Reed** [01:13:29] So you said that, so you're doing a lot at this time. So you're teaching at Fed City, and then you're also teaching at Howard a little bit too.

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:13:37] Well, yeah, at that point I let one of those go and I became full-time.

**Kerry Reed** [01:13:43] So when yeah, when did you transition fully to Howard?

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:13:52] 1972 or 1973.

**Kerry Reed** [01:13:56] Okay. Got it. And what was the appeal about going to Howard?

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:14:00] Well, although the sophistication at Howard was far less in knowledge, and appreciation, and Howard was far less than what I found at Federal City. The potential was quite a bit more that attracted me, and I got to quickly, very quickly get to do research. It wasn't you. Who was it? Who just got a job to masters there at [inaudible]

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:14:53] Mike [inaudible]

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:14:59] Mike. Howard, at that time, I was attracted to Howard because of the possibilities and most of it worked out.

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:15:07] But they did not have any jazz programs?

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:15:10] No, none. None. None.

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:15:16] What about Donald Byrd?

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:15:18] He was before me, but they didn't give me a chance to finish, you know, to complete the establishment of the program.

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:15:30] But he was doing some things...

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:15:32] He was doing some things, right. But in order for this thing to be credible, it's got to have some structure to it, and I'm not saying Byrd didn't have structure.

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:15:49] He just didn't get to finish it and take it.

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:15:52] Right. Right. That's right. That is right.

**Kerry Reed** [01:15:57] Got it, absolutely. So how long were you at Howard before you started the repertory orchestra?

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:16:06] Well, that was all during my turn at Howard. I started that, along with my colleague, Reverend Stone, we started that about my fifth year. For my fifth year and for the next five years, we kind of put that in form, and it was in pretty good shape when we finished it.

**Kerry Reed** [01:16:42] Absolutely, absolutely. So, were you guys the only jazz orchestra in the area when you started or was there anybody else?

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:16:54] When we started, yeah. Yes. Absolutely. There are plenty of them now, but when we started...Where did you go? Where'd you go to college?

**Kerry Reed** [01:17:02] I went to Indiana University of Pennsylvania that's outside of Pittsburgh, and then I got my master's at George Mason.

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:17:09] Okay, well, George Mason--she went to George Mason--they didn't have jazz, then.

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:17:16] Oh, no, he does. What's the guy's name? I think he's jazz.

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:17:19] Carroll.

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:17:19] He added some classes

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:17:22] Oh, oh, okay, okay.

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:17:25] But it's slow. I mean, that's in later years that they had a jazz ensemble and NOVA [[Northern Virginia Community College] has an ensemble as well, but I think in later years.

**Kerry Reed** [01:17:39] That all started after Dr. Dawkins.

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:17:41] Exactly.

**Kerry Reed** [01:17:41] So, you and Reppard Stone started the Repertory?

**Daughter** [01:17:46] Reppard. Yeah.

**Kerry Reed** [01:17:47] Reppard?

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:17:48] R-E-P-P A-R-D

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:17:52] Oh, okay. Reppard Stone.

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:17:57] That's an odd name.

**Kerry Reed** [01:17:57] Yes, it is.

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:17:58] It is. [Laughter]

**Kerry Reed** [01:17:59] I'm sure I can, I'll figure out how to spell it. Reppard Stone. Interesting. So you and Reppard Stone started the jazz repertory orchestra. How many people were in the orchestra when you first started it?

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:18:14] It was a standard big band, I'm going to say, 15 to 17 instrumentalists, and it stayed pretty much that size unless we did something that required a smaller group, you know, like Thelonious Monk or one of those other kinds of artists that should visit.

**Kerry Reed** [01:18:52] Absolutely. You mentioned Thelonious Monk. Did the orchestra play with other players?

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:18:57] Yes. In fact, we often had, I'm going to say, the vast majority of them were from outside of the D.C. areas, most of them from D.C.--I mean, from New York and the like...

**Kerry Reed** [01:19:20] Absolutely, that's incredible. That's amazing I still want to talk more about the jazz program at Howard, but I'm curious about your playing. So while you were teaching at Fed City and also at Howard were you playing in any bands or what are you doing?

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:19:36] I played with the Smithsonian, which is still in existence, Smithsonian Masterworks Band. And I also played a concert of my own with other local people and national people at the Kennedy Center. You'll find my name listed in a few places for the Millennium Stage.

**Kerry Reed** [01:20:20] While you were playing, you mentioned you played the saxophone, of course, and also the flute. So while you were while you're playing, were you more saxophone or were you more flute?

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:20:28] It depends.

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:20:30] And clarinet.

**Kerry Reed** [01:20:31] And clarinet.

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:20:33] He plays all of them like alto bass. He plays them.

**Kerry Reed** [01:20:37] All the winds.

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:20:38] All the woodwinds it's the single reed, not the bassoon and all that.

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:20:44] She knows that.

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:20:49] So piccolo, alto flute, you know.

**Kerry Reed** [01:20:54] That's incredible. That's incredible Dr. Dawkins. I can't even play one.

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:20:58] And plays perfectly, flawlessly.

**Kerry Reed** [01:21:01] Of course.

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:21:02] All of them. Some people's like well, I can't play this one as good as I can play another. He plays all [inaudible] and he plays any music. Any type of music, it was what's his name, he said he's the only person I know who can play classical, then funk, then jazz, then Broadway, he plays it all.

**Kerry Reed** [01:21:25] Oh yeah, that's amazing.

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:21:27] Dad, y'all girls said that.

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:21:29] Oh, okay.

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:21:33] R&B, he's done R&B.

**Kerry Reed** [01:21:40] So you're playing locally, and you're teaching at Fed City and Howard. And then you and Reppard Stone start the...

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:21:45] Stone. S-T-O-N-E.

**Kerry Reed** [01:21:45] Start the repertory orchestra and the orchestra is backing up players from all over the country. Was there a venue at Howard that you all would play at?

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:22:07] Yes, mostly at the Cramton Auditorium.

**Kerry Reed** [01:22:10] Okay, mostly at the auditorium.

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:22:13] Yeah.

**Kerry Reed** [01:22:13] Got it.

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:22:14] In fact, that's the only place they played.

**Kerry Reed** [01:22:16] Okay.

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:22:16] That's the main auditorium.

**Kerry Reed** [01:22:23] Okay. So, when did you, when did you start the graduate program at Howard?

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:22:30] Reppard Stone knows quite a bit about it. He was one of my colleagues and close associate. We started the graduate program at Howard in 1975.

**Kerry Reed** [01:22:51] Were there any of the graduate programs in the country at that time doing jazz?

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:22:55] At that time, not many, I'm going to say, because we were the first in the region to have an undergraduate program, and I'm including Maryland, GW, and George Mason, and all those schools. When we started our program in 1973, we were the first.

**Kerry Reed** [01:23:22] Yes.

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:23:23] It was two years later that we initiated--Reppard Stone and I--initiated the graduate program.

**Kerry Reed** [01:23:35] Absolutely. So how did the curriculum change then from the undergrad to the graduate program? What was the difference in application of study I guess you could say?

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:23:51] Actually, both of them contain most of the same common areas, like improvisation and arranging and composing, both of them. But at the graduate level, students are expected to produce professional pieces. And they're expected to actually to manage the production of jazz, [inaudible] composition and that kind of thing.

**Kerry Reed** [01:24:30] Absolutely, so how many how many graduate students did you have initially?

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:24:37] I'm going to say, over the years--I was there for 20 years--and over the years we averaged about 15 or 20 a year.

**Kerry Reed** [01:24:50] That's a lot.

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:24:50] Yeah, for a school the size of Howard. But we averaged about 15 to 20 students.

**Kerry Reed** [01:25:05] Wow. That's really incredible. So, did you have any notable students, any national players that came through?

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:25:16] Yeah, Geri Allen, Wallace Roney. Davey Albor is retired now, but he's a teacher at Ellington School. That's quite a few.

**Kerry Reed** [01:25:41] Absolutely, absolutely. And then when did you start the Jazz Oral History Project?

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:25:50] I thought of that, actually my first interviews were done in 1984 and it lasted about ten years and we did, I don't know if you're familiar with it, but the scope of it is quite large.

**Kerry Reed** [01:26:14] Yes.

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:26:15] Over the next 10 years, I collected interviews and videos, and I stopped. It ended when my funds got, of course, gone, so from 1985 to 1995. In 1995, I started to collecting--that's when Lopez Matthews--I keep thinking that you talk, you and... Michael are the same person as you are that same person. But Michael...

**Kerry Reed** [01:27:04] My fault, yeah. [Laughter]

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:27:07] He was talking about Lopez Matthews, who was a curator at Howard, that made it possible that we could, in fact, I had retired and most of the raw material was just sitting there. Luckily, he took it and it's what it is now, 120 interviews, videos, and other stuff that we've done over the years.

**Kerry Reed** [01:27:49] Absolutely. At the time in 1985, why did you think it was important to start the oral history project?

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:27:57] Yeah, okay, that's a good question because we had, in the introduction to that website at Howard, I indicated that this idiom, the jazz idiom, has less resources and interviews than any other medium, that might be a strong question, but there was no other place that this would happen.

**Kerry Reed** [01:28:37] Absolutely. So, did you do any interviews yourself or was this a collecting?

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:28:46] Well, actually I did some and I'm identified on the few that I did, but it was done by professional interviewers and jazz scholars, Bill Brower and Ron. I can't think of the name, but Bill Brower was the main interviewer. So, we did those over a 10-year period. And then from that, after we collected all the material, we began to put it in the form.

**Kerry Reed** [01:29:34] Absolutely, yeah, I think that project is amazing. I took a look at it before I interviewed you today. Yeah, that's an incredible piece of work. Like scholarly, you know, culturally, it's fabulous. So, thank you so much for doing that. When did you leave Howard?

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:29:53] I left in 2005

**Kerry Reed** [01:30:02] 2005. Okay. So, you start at Howard in the early 1970s. You leave in 2005. How big was the program when you left?

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:30:15] Ha, ha, ha. [Laughter]

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:30:18] Yeah. I mean, it grew during my lifetime.

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:30:22] Right, right. She's right, she's right. When I came, we gave the first degrees.

**Kerry Reed** [01:30:30] Yeah, yeah.

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:30:31] That's the first time to get a degree in that field. I mean, you can get degrees in other things at Howard. And there have been plenty of other tries to attempt to offer degrees and the like. So, like you say, it started from zero to what it is now, and we've awarded more than 1,000 degrees in jazz and master's and bachelor's. We were always at least 1,000.

**Kerry Reed** [01:31:22] That's incredible. I'm also curious, because around the same time that the jazz program was starting at Howard, was the gospel program starting around the same time as well?

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:31:41] Yeah, the gospel problem was there, and it's still there. The only thing is that it doesn't get the same publicity that jazz got. And although they have their own setting, they have their own system and supporters. But it doesn't, no, but I think it was, no. It was there when we came.

**Kerry Reed** [01:32:13] It was, okay.

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:32:14] Yes.

**Kerry Reed** [01:32:14] Okay.

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:32:15] It was part of the program.

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:32:16] But even that had sort of evolved as the gospel choir sort of evolved.

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:32:22] Right, did you sing, you ever sing in there?

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:32:25] No.

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:32:25] That's what I thought.

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:32:26] But, you know, they do more of the classical, spirituals, the classical. But then, like, now they do the gospel, the modern gospel, and that. And they're excellent. But I don't know if that was always there or I think maybe in the beginning maybe it was not.

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:32:48] Yeah. I don't think it was jazz.

**Kerry Reed** [01:32:55] You were living in Alexandria during this entire time, right?

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:32:59] Yeah.

**Kerry Reed** [01:32:59] Where were you living?

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:33:02] On Shiver Drive where I am now, where she was born.

**Kerry Reed** [01:33:05] Got it.

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:33:08] But they also, before they moved in, they lived in Arlington, North Arlington.

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:33:15] Yeah, yeah, yeah. That's right.

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:33:18] Near Ballston.

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:33:19] That's right [inaudible]. They call it [inaudible].

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:33:25] So my sisters grew up there in Arlington and then when they became teenagers they moved down to South Alexandria before I was born.

**Kerry Reed** [01:33:41] How have you seen music in the city sort of change, I guess, over your lifetime? So, you mentioned at the beginning, you know, the playing at the Elks Home or Elks Lodge, excuse me, and also at the VA club you mentioned.

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:33:56] Yeah.

**Kerry Reed** [01:33:57] Are there any music venues or clubs like that left in the city that you know?

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:34:03] I think so. I haven't been to any, but I'm pretty sure that they're on King Street there because I do know some of my former students who work quite frequently and so I can't tell exactly which one.

**Kerry Reed** [01:34:22] Yeah.

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:34:22] Yes, I do believe that they have they have continued to to attract. Alexandria is a very unique place, and this is that it attracts its own audience. So it might not be very popular, but I know several of my former students who work right now at some of the clubs on King Street. Do you go to. the clubs?

**Kerry Reed** [01:34:55] Yeah, there's that one on lower king. It's the numbers. It is like 389 or 289.

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:35:00] Yeah, yeah, yeah. That's still there.

**Kerry Reed** [01:35:02] I go to that one fairly frequently. There's another one on Duke Street that plays some jazz. So I know there are a couple. But I guess what I'm curious about is, you know, from your time growing up in Alexandria, the music scene then, and the music seen now, how have you seen it change? What are some differences?

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:35:37] Well, think we have generated quite a bit of beneficiaries, who probably would not be still interested in music if they had not had some kind of exposure, like Paul Scheuer and that group, and her group, and the people that you hear down at the club on King Street [219 King Street]. I'm thinking that many of those, because jazz is not exactly the most popular idiom, it has to have people who was thoroughly interested and motivated. So, I think whatever motivation is still there. You know, that's how people like you can go to those clubs.

**Kerry Reed** [01:36:39] Absolutely.

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:36:40] But it's influenced countless genres.

**Kerry Reed** [01:36:44] Oh, of course.

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:36:45] And hip-hop, a whole different vibe, and of course R&B. It even goes into some of the rock music, it's been very influential. Like me growing up in different types of genres, and now we're spinning into these hybrids. But there's jazz influence. And also, you know, now the schools, Fairfax County Public Schools has really gotten into the, you know they have jazz programs, South County is excellent.

**Kerry Reed** [01:37:25] Really?

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:37:25] Very excellent program.

**Kerry Reed** [01:37:26] Interesting, it wasn't aware of that.

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:37:29] I just went to a concert on the fly, and I was impressed. And like I said, NOVA has one. I know it's because of him. So we still have the classical jazz where it started at its roots, but it has evolved into all kinds of, you know. And I have seen live performances that was not jazz, but it was jazz influence. So that's my little take of growing up in this area of what the contribution that jazz has had. That maybe I wouldn't have seen in my younger years, but in my older years, I see more of it

**Kerry Reed** [01:38:17] Absolutely. Do you play any instruments, Miss Porsha?

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:38:20] I played the piano. I played violin for a couple of years. I still have the violin, but I didn't touch it after I stopped playing it. I still play around with piano and I was teaching myself guitar. I hadn't done it yet, but I was interested in the bass. But I had, you know, just raised it like that for the contra bass, but the [inaudible] but I haven't gotten around to it. Yeah, but one day.

**Kerry Reed** [01:38:54] Did Dr. Dawkins ask you all the or require you all to play an instrument growing up?

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:39:01] No, I, I wanted to play.

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:39:03] She did it on her own.

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:39:04] Yeah. I did it on my own. I can't say about my sister.

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:39:07] Iris never was that interested, but she has probably had more records than I have, as far as recordings of various artists, including jazz and the like.

**Kerry Reed** [01:39:23] Absolutely.

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:39:24] But we had, what about Bryan, one of our neighbors?

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:39:28] That's Herman Howard, this would be his son, and we grew up together, and he's a very successful musician in Georgia. His name is Bryan Howard, and I believe he is in, I want to say Rome, Georgia, I think. If you look him up, he's very successful.

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:39:52] Where in, from, Georgia? Is that, uh, I can't, I don't know.

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:39:56] I don't think that's near, I always want to say Athens or Rome, I'm going to say he's in Rome but if you look at Bryan J-A-Y Howard, you'll see he's very successful and we grew up here together.

**Kerry Reed** [01:40:13] Absolutely. Well, Dr. Dawkins, we've been talking now for about an hour and 45 minutes.

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:40:21] Well good.

**Kerry Reed** [01:40:21] It's been an absolute pleasure. Before we wrap up, I just have a couple of closing questions for you, if that's okay. So you know, jazz is certainly a unique art form, but it's also quintessentially an American art form. So I was curious. What do you think is the importance of jazz to the history of the country?

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:40:54] Well, it's beginning to take a little bit more important place than I think it has in the past, that people are going to be becoming more aware of it now than maybe because the music itself has been around since the early 1900s and the late 1800s. But I think that it's encouraging that we're getting more and more people involved in it young people, and schools and the like involved. In fact, I think there's more involvement in the city now than when I was teaching here. So it's increasing and I think it's going to continue to increase.

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:41:51] And plus, the kids enjoy it. I mean, it's good to be, you know, set just on classical. Classical music definitely has its benefits because it teaches you theory and patterns and rhythm and stuff like that. So, there is the benefits of that, but the jazz is more enjoyable.

**Kerry Reed** [01:42:12] Of course.

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:42:14] When kids start an instrument, they want to play like him. They just started out, you got to do a "Little Gray Goose" or whatever it's called. "Mary Had a Little Lamb."

**Kerry Reed** [01:42:25] "Hot Cross Buns," yeah.

**Daughter** [01:42:27] Yeah, "Hot Cross Buns." That was a recorder I played that one too. But yeah, you know you want to start out playing like him or like [inaudible] and you want start out like that. It's like but you got to start somewhere.

**Kerry Reed** [01:42:44] Absolutely.

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:42:45] But this definitely makes the kids excited because you see him work with the kids because he used to do a jazz camp out in Colorado every year. So, my mom and I would go along, and kids are excited to be there, and you know, it's, you know. They get to participate, they get to meet other kids that, you know, are also participating. So, I'm not saying in classical music there isn't that same thing, but I'm going to say that jazz is a little better because it introduces you to a whole other realm.

**Kerry Reed** [01:43:26] Yes.

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:43:27] Of possibilities with music.

**Kerry Reed** [01:43:30] Absolutely. 100%. I guess I can ask you both this question then. Dr. Dawkins, do you have a favorite jazz artist that you prefer to listen to?

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:43:46] No, I really can't zero in on. I don't have a favorite because I like a whole group of people. I like Coltrane and Thelonious Monk and Wynton Marsalis, who has a Lincoln Center series on. I guess it's on, it's not a network, but it's from the Lincoln Center. I like that. And all the things that he does. And it's a very vibrant, open field to listen to that.

**Kerry Reed** [01:44:41] Absolutely. And you, Miss Porsha, do you have a favorite artist?

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:44:46] I like Donald Byrd, he's one of my favorites. Cannonball Adderley, Stanley Turrentine. Coltrane is good, of course. Miles Davis. I'm like him. I have too many. I really into more of the like the fusion like Donald Berg. That's one of my favorites.

**Kerry Reed** [01:45:08] Absolutely.

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:45:10] One of my favorites. And Stanley Turrentine. Those are like my favorite genres of jazz, But I do like the classical as well. And of course, vocalists Sarah Vaughan, Ella Fitzgerald. I enjoyed them. Who's the other one? Ella Fitzgerald, and it's one of those two are by favorites.

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:45:38] Ella and who else?

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:45:43] There's a little more I like. I think it's not coming.

**Kerry Reed** [01:45:47] That always happens.

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:45:48] But yeah, those two I do. So, I, you know, Billie Holiday, of course. You know, then the standards.

**Kerry Reed** [01:45:55] Of course.

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:45:56] And them. But part of my favorite figure I like more of the you know the later, Donald Byrd and the ones that were popular in the 60s [1960s] and 70s [1970s], those were probably my all-time favorites. And a lot of artists, you know, took things from them, took styles and stuff from the current artists from the 70s [1970s] and 80s [1980s] and 90s [1990s] and so on, from those, I'm really more into those.

**Kerry Reed** [01:46:26] Yeah, 100%. So, two more questions, Dr. Dawkins. Do you have a favorite place you performed, a favorite venue that you played at, anything like that, a memory of any times you performed?

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:46:44] I could say, I guess in one place, but it seems like a few times that I played at the Kennedy Center, it was always something that was something that I would remember from either the size of audience and the orchestra that I was in, but I guess that would be one of my favorites.

**Kerry Reed** [01:47:17] Absolutely.

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:47:19] He was a musical contractor between the stage, so while all that was going on, he was musical contractor there. Then he was doing things like working with Wolf Trap, like he played with Aretha Franklin, Dionne Warwick, Johnny Mathis, so, while all of this is going on, he's done a lot.

**Kerry Reed** [01:47:48] Yeah, absolutely. You've done an incredible amount, Dr. Dawkins. And then lastly, if you could hold on to one memory forever, what would it be?

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:48:06] I'm sorry. No, [inaudible], but... Porsha did not, I didn't think I was going to cry.

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:48:27] You ask loaded questions.

**Kerry Reed** [01:48:31] Yeah, I know. We always end on a happy one. Sorry about that.

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:48:38] This Dawkins family started with my mother, had this whole intense interest in education. So all of her, my mother's sons and daughter, graduated from college every last one, which is a lot to say now, coming from Madison Street.

**Kerry Reed** [01:49:05] Yeah.

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:49:06] That's where we started.

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:49:09] He was first in the family.

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:49:13] Porsha was the last one, the last one to graduate from college, with a degree.

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:49:21] There were my cousins.

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:49:21] No, no, in the family, I'm doing it in the Dawkins family.

**Kerry Reed** [01:49:24] Absolutely.

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:49:28] I'm a late bloomer. I think I told you that on the phone.

**Kerry Reed** [01:49:30] Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:49:32] I started out at Howard, I didn't start out at Howard and then--and don't make me cry either. I started at Howard, then I took a break, then went back to NOVA, I didn't know where I was going. And then, I always had interest in communication, doing this right here, so I said, well, I was in my 20s, late 20s at the time, and I said this is something I really wanted. I kind of know where I would like to go with it, but at the time, I just knew I wanted to be in that field, because I like to write, I like to record. I don't have any projects. I've tried other disciplines and I have art under my belt. I have always been in creative endeavors. And so that's why I like music. I wanted to play, but you know I also had so many spans of interest. I wanted to play, like I went up to my parents and said, I want to learn an instrument. So they got me into piano. And then when the school came along and said we're having a band and orchestra; you guys want

to play? So, I picked the violin for that. And so that part. But I've always had creative endeavors where I like to be creative. I like making things and doing things. You know, I said, well, I just want to be interested in going back to, you know, just, you know, you, I was at NOVA. I was finishing up. I didn't know which direction I was going in. And then I said well, let me, I'm going to go with the communications. Didn't know what I was going with it. I said I'm gonna get it, so eventually I got it.

**Kerry Reed** [01:51:24] Yeah. Yeah.

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:51:25] I got in and I got my degree in 2010, so, but it was a rough road, it was, it was a rough road. My sister Iris, she graduated, she got a degree in accounting.

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:51:42] She also went to George Mason.

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:51:46] I kind of just kind of landed there, but with her, you know, she made an active decision to go there.

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:51:52] Plus, at that time, George Mason...

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:51:55] It was tiny.

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:51:57] And no Black folks.

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:51:59] Yeah.

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:52:00] And especially Black women. That's totally how it was

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:52:04] And she got into the tech field and you know this was a small commuter school at the time they didn't have dorms and all that stuff. But she went out there and she was, you know, she got her degree in Accounting and Business Administration, Accounting, but she ended up going into the tech field. Like, and like what she was doing, she was taking electives in tech, you know, the beginning of IT and all that stuff. She was a programmer. And so she was taking classes in that. So, for me, interestingly, my mind was in electronic journalism. At that time, the 2000s, we knew print media was going away. And so the teachers were like, you guys are going to have to start thinking of other things. And I said, I'll probably work for a paper or something.

**Kerry Reed** [01:53:05] Yeah.

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:53:06] So, they said well print media, don't look to work for a magazine, don't work to look for a newspaper. What are we gonna do? So then, you know, the guy said, you know what, we got electronic, this is like the beginning of it. Now, it has evolved, as you know it, to a whole big animal. And so, it's nothing like what, you, you know, but he said it's going to go in a million different directions.

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:53:35] It sure did.

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:53:34] And so I minored in electronic journalism and majored in media production.

**Kerry Reed** [01:53:43] Absolutely.

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:53:45] So I'm the last, but like I'm thinking of my Uncle Nolan's girls. It seems like Kelly got her degree after mine. She got her master's after me.

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:53:57] Yeah. Yeah. I think that I was still probably part of it.

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:54:08] Mine was a challenging path, but I made it.

**Kerry Reed** [01:54:14] Yeah, that's what counts, perseverance, absolutely. I don't want to take up too much more of y'all's time today, but it's been an absolute pleasure hearing about your career, Dr. Dawkins. Thank you so much for speaking with me today.

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:54:30] What, what?

**Kerry Reed** [01:54:31] And thank you so much to you, Ms. Porsha, for bringing your father and for telling me about your experiences as well. This has been beautiful.

**Arthur Dawkins** [01:54:36] What are you going to, what will this be ready for?

**Kerry Reed** [01:54:42] So what I'll tell you that in a minute. Just again, thank you guys so much

**Porsha Dawkins** [01:54:47] Thank you. Thank you