



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



# Oral History Interview

with

## Harold Hughes

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**Interviewer:** Devon Murtha and Sarah Vonesh

**Narrator:** Harold Hughes

**Location of Interview:** 227 North Henry Street, Alexandria, VA, 22314

**Date of Interview:** 03/05/2024

**Transcriber:** Unknown

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### Summary:

Harold Hughes reflects on his life growing up in Alexandria, Virginia, particularly in the Uptown neighborhood and the Samuel Madden Homes. He recounts his experiences during segregation and integration, describing community life, family life, and the changes in Alexandria's neighborhoods. Hughes also discusses his military service, the importance of the Alexandria Lodge No. 48 as a hub for the Black community, and how urban redevelopment and gentrification transformed the city, often displacing long-time residents.

### Notes:

This recording is part of the Samuel Madden Homes Community History Initiative. This project took place between 2023 and 2026. This interview was completed under the City of Alexandria's Section 106 process. The interviewers, Devon Murtha and Sarah Vonesh, were hired as third-party consultants to complete this oral history.

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| <b>General</b> | Segregation; Integration; African American History; Urban Redevelopment; Gentrification; Military Service; USO for Black Troops |
| <b>People</b>  |                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Places</b>  | Samuel Madden Homes; Alexandria, Virginia; Alexandria Elks Lodge No. 48; Charles Houston School; Parker-Gray School             |

[00:00:00.000] – Devon Murtha

One, two, three, four. Okay, perfect. Have you started? Okay. Can you state your full name and our current location for the record.

[00:00:16.900] – Harold Hughes

My name is Harold Hughes. We are now located at Alexandria Lodge, number 48, 227 North Henry Street, Alexandria, Virginia, 22314.

[00:00:29.680] - Devon Murtha

My name is Devon Murtha. I'm in the same location, and it's March fifth, 2024. So, for our first question, can I just ask how you'd like to be referred to?

[00:00:43.830] - Harold Hughes

Harold.

[00:00:45.830] - Devon Murtha

Harold is fine? Yes. Okay. We'll start with an easy one. So where were you born?

[00:00:49.830] - Harold Hughes

I was born in Alexandria, Virginia, at the old Alexandria Hospital on Duke and Washington Street in 1952.

[00:01:00.030] - Devon Murtha

And where did you grow up?

[00:01:01.850] - Harold Hughes

Right here in Alexandria, Virginia. Went to Charles Houston Elementary School, Parker-Gray Middle School, and I graduated the last class of George Washington High School in Alexandria.

[00:01:14.900] - Devon Murtha

Perfect. Can you tell me your mother and your father's names and if you had any siblings growing up?

[00:01:19.660] - Harold Hughes

Yes. My mother's name, maiden name was Doris Elizabeth Williams. Married my father, Harry Francis Hughes, senior. I had four brothers and one sister. Two brothers are deceased.

[00:01:38.240] - Devon Murtha

Can you tell me a little bit about the house and the block you grew up on?

[00:01:42.880] - Harold Hughes

When I was born, like I said, on Duke Street at the old Alexandria Hospital, my parents lived on Gibbon Street, which was on the South Side of Alexandria. And in 1954, they moved down to the projects. Actually, I was two years old when we moved down there, and I had another brother, well, two brothers behind me and my sister were born there also. And like I said, that was '54. At that age, it don't mean anything. You see what you see, and it is what it is. Didn't know that it was a project. Didn't know anything. All I knew that we had a roof over our head, and that's all I cared

about. And I was there until I graduated from high school. So, basically, saying while we were living there, I didn't know we were poor. See, now we would have to go back to segregation. So, I lived through that, so I have to speak to that because that's part of how we were raised and how we lived during how I went to school and my life was born there through segregation and to integration. When I went to Charles Houston, are we there yet?

[00:03:12.240] - Harold Hughes

Am I going too far for you? No, please.

[00:03:14.890] - Devon Murtha

We're happy to hear the whole thing. Yes.

[00:03:16.650] - Harold Hughes

In 1958, at the age of six, I started elementary school in Charles Houston Elementary School, which is right across the street. I lived 821 North Patrick Street, and the school is in the 700 block of Patrick Street. Well, let me say this. Let me start from the back. Let me back up. When we first moved there, and through my first four years there, it was one street. Patrick Street was going north. Henry Street was going south. At that time was a dirt road, but it was Route 1. It was a highway. Then, later on, I guess I was in Middle School at Parker-Gray, Alexandria decided they wanted to... Well, the road became paved, but it was still one way, Route 1, going north and south. There was a two-lane highway, but one lane going each way. It was known then as Patrick and Henry Street. They decided that they wanted to separate them. So they took the project's housing on the right-hand side, put them on a railroad trestle, turned them around. That's how they separated Patrick Street from Henry Street. And to the day, it's still the same way. And if you look, if you ride down to the 800 block, you see most houses are facing north and south.

[00:05:06.820] - Harold Hughes

Then all of a sudden, you see them facing east and west. Those were the houses that were turned. And that's how they separated Patrick Street and Henry Street. They're two different streets now. So that's how that happened. I saw that with my own eyes. I could not figure out how they dug under the homes. In the center, inserted the railroad ties, raised the homes up, and spin them. They know what they was doing. But it was great. Now, we can play in the street without getting run over. At that time, there were no pole lights, no street lights. That was one of the... Well, for me, was one of the worst things that ever happened when they put them street lights there, because my father would tell us, "you can go out there and play, but you better be home before the street lights come on." My whole childhood was based on a pole light. Now we are talking segregation at this particular time because that's how I found out what the railroad tracks meant. It separated White Alexandria from Black Alexandria, or Colored Alexandria. That's where we were at that time.

[00:06:32.620] - Harold Hughes

So, we never ventured further than Parker-Gray, because Parker-Gray, where the railroad tracks are now, down there on Braddock Road, Braddock and West, that's where Parker-Gray used to be, between Wythe and West Street. That whole area where the housing is now was Parker-Gray High School. That high school used to be Charles Houston. But the only thing about that was, for my mother, anyway, was that it only went up to the eleventh grade. So if you wanted to graduate, you would have to go to Washington, DC for the twelfth grade. So then, as I was saying, there was a railway track. George Washington High School was on one side, and Parker-Gray was on the other.

Don't think I ever ventured across the railroad tracks until I went to G.W.. Actually, my first time even going to school with a white person was... I was in the seventh grade. Before that, all my teachers were Black. Nine out of ten times, they were some kin to you. And so if you messed up in school, you got whipped in school, you got sent home because they have already made a phone call to your parents.

[00:08:14.730] - Harold Hughes

When you got home, you got beaten. Back then, unlike today, there was a respectful thing. When you saw an elderly person coming down the street with groceries or something, you would help them with the groceries. You would get out of the way, you would say, good evening, good morning, or whatever, you spoke to them, you helped them in their homes. These days, man, if you're an elderly person, you might have to fight somebody for your groceries. That's just what I'm seeing today, that respect thing is gone. Back then, what I called was that mother's telegraph system. They would holla your name out, and the next neighbor would hear it. She would look out into the park where we'd be playing at and say, "Boy, your mama calling you." Then she'd holla back and say "he's on his way." Also back then, there were family values. I can only speak for my family. I'm going to do it that way. My father was prideful in being the breadwinner, bringing the money home, the groceries home, and all that. Then we transitioned. Let me say one more thing about segregation versus integration. I noticed that we had our own doctors, our own lawyers, own stores, stayed in your own perimeter.

[00:10:00.240] - Harold Hughes

Once in awhile you would venture out, but mainly you would go in groups or whatever. I remember my first time going down to Washington Street, going down to G.C. Murphy's and Pennys. One was located on Washington Street, and the other one's located on King Street, but it was around the corner from each other. And I was with my mother, and I guess I had to be about eight years old and never realized what segregation really was. So when we went there, they had these water fountains outside the store. One said colored only, one said white only. I couldn't figure out why was it like that? You know. Then we went into the store, and I noticed that Blacks. Colored people weren't...colored people, use the terminology that it was, weren't allowed to sit at the counters or order anything. And it was certain sections you could not go into because... we went straight to the basement and I couldn't figure out why we couldn't shop upstairs. That had a profound...a thing on me, because that's when my eyes finally opened up about segregation. Okay.

[00:11:28.050] - Harold Hughes

So now, as I entered the seventh grade, we started going to school with the white kids. I had no problem with it. I mean, you are who you are, and that's all you are. I treat you the way you treat me. Just because you are white, I had no problem against you because I really never dealt with them. You know what I mean?

[00:11:55.060] - Devon Murtha

Which school was it?

[00:11:56.580] - Harold Hughes

That was Parker-Gray Middle School.

[00:11:57.580] - Devon Murtha

That was Parker-Gray Middle School. And what year was that as well?

[00:12:01.280] - Harold Hughes

That would have been 1964. I had a couple of white friends there, you know, because I remember, I believe it was 63 when Kennedy was killed, am I correct? Yeah, I think it was 63. I remember sitting in the classroom and the teacher told us that John Fitzgerald Kennedy was just killed. So I do remember that. And yes, then we went to Parker-Gray. That's the beginning of integration. I didn't have a problem with it. As a matter of fact, when I did two years, the seventh and eighth grade was in Parker-Gray Middle School. Then...then we went to...then they were opening up T.C. Williams. So they were basically, well, let's see, like this. They closed down Parker-Gray High. They closed down Jefferson High. So that left Hammond, G.W. and T.C. Williams. But T.C. Williams was a senior high school at that time because it was not fully built. Okay, so the only eleventh and twelfth went there. The eighth, and now the ninth and tenth went to Minnie Howard. And that's, that's basically what happened because, as I said, now we talking about these sections we're talking about...

[00:13:34.290] - Harold Hughes

we call them South Side. That's everybody who went to T.C. Williams. Then you had the Berg, okay? One side of them went to T.C. Williams and one side of them went to G.W.. And of course, we were considered Uptown. That's how we played sports against each other, coming up...recreational leagues - 70 pounds, 90 pounds and 110 pounds. We played Berg and we played Lee. And if you just, like I said, the Berg had their football teams. Southside is Lee. They had their teams and we had our teams.

[00:14:17.500] - Devon Murtha

Could you describe the geographic boundaries of those three neighborhoods?

[00:14:22.300] - Harold Hughes

Yes. On the South Side it would, it would be, see, because it's kind of different now. The arrangements of the other houses are different. But I just use what's there now, and I can tell you basically what it was. The Lee Center on the South Side off Jefferson Street. They had all that all the way down to King Street. Once they cross King Street, they in trouble. Okay? And, and we had the Monroe Street bridge, which is gone now, okay. It was a bridge. So we had all that all the way up to King Street. So you would say that Alexandria Furniture Company, which was 1000 King Street, and the Masonic Temple and all that, that was actually a cut off. So when you leave South King. Well, actually, we're talking, it would have been a South Henry or South Patrick on that side. And you, and you hit the north side, see, you belong to us. Okay? Now the Berg would be from the river all the way up to Washington Street, you see. So you got that area, Washington Street and King Street. Those were the boundaries. So you know what side you on and we know what side we on.

[00:15:58.800] - Harold Hughes

And that's how we play sports. We played everybody on the South Side. We played everybody in the Berg. Okay. Most of the time we won, by the way. Let me get that in there. Okay? So then, now we are in high school. And one of the things... we couldn't lose to T.C. Williams, which is the South Side, G.W. [George Washington Middle School] now is Uptown. See, wherever you go, that's the area that you take with you. Okay. And Hammond, nobody wanted to lose to Hammond because

was predominantly white, okay. Nobody wanted to lose to Hammond, but Hammond beat everybody. Okay. So four years, four years of that was pretty good. George Washington Presidents, T.C. Titans and the Hammond Admirals. That's, that was Alexandria. That was all the schools in Alexandria. Just, just so happened in my senior year, I was in the Black Student Union. Remember going on... we, we got all the kids in the school to go on strike at the cafeteria because they were using plates and the food was not necessarily portioned out. It was placed on your plate, you know, and you had enough to go around.

[00:17:36.800] - Harold Hughes

They decided they was going to remove the dishes and things and do a better thing. They put this compactor in the back of the cafeteria and they went to paper plates. You know them old Dixie plates where you got a little bit here and a little bit there. Well, nobody liked that. And we had...and at that time, you could go off campus to buy lunch. So when we decided we was going to strike against the cafeteria, the principal locked down the school. You were no longer allowed to go off campus to buy anything now, because it was a Burger King right across the street and a 711. And then about two blocks down was the best cheeseburger in the city of Alexandria. Okay. And he locked that down, but that didn't work. Then T.C. Williams and Hammond, they had the same problem we had. So all the schools went on strike and we just marched regardless what the principal said. Okay. So after all that, they decided they were going to bring in the K-sixth two, two, one plan. That's. That's, K-sixth, kindergarten, six schools. Middle School, two schools.

[00:19:16.200] - Harold Hughes

Junior high, two schools. One high school, T.C. Williams. So you had T.C. Williams, the high school, or the senior high, whatever you want to say. Then you had Minnie Howard, which is ninth and tenth, until they decided to put everything over in T.C. Williams and make Minnie Howard the school board. The school board used to be down here at the Capital Center, down here on Washington Street. So then you got. So you got T.C. Williams, you got G.W. and Hammond were at ninth and tenth. You had Parker-Gray was still seventh and eighth. Then you had Lyles-Crouch and Charles Houston. And before they tore it down, what was that down in the Berg? I forgot the school that was down in the Berg. But that's how it was. After that, I'm glad I graduated. And I went on to St. Paul's in Lawrenceville, Virginia, with a full scholarship in football.

**[00.20:31.] – Devon Murtha**

And congratulations.

**[00.20:32.] – Harold Hughes**

Yeah, thank you. And didn't stay. Didn't take advantage of it. So I came home. I wrote a letter to my father. My father carried me down and I, and I recall him saying, because they just had a tornado there and had devastated the campus.

[00:20:51.310] - Harold Hughes

I ain't want to stay nowhere. I was mama's baby, so I ain't want to go. But it would have been my first time away from my mother. Hey, everybody got one. So I wrote a letter, jumped on the... what was it, the Greyhound bus? Came back to Alexandria. I beat the letter home. So my father took me aside, and we went back down to G.W.. We went back down to G.W., talked to (inaudible name) who had graduated from Virginia State, and he talked to his coaches up there. So I got a full ride to Virginia State, went up there, didn't stay, came back home again. Rolled out and came back home

again. True story. When I got home, my father called me. We sat down, we talked, or he talked, I listened, and then he...the only thing that I got out of that was that you was a mama's boy. You only go places where you know you can lead. So, he said, well, you grown man in here. Have a drink. I had that drink, and I do remember that he told me come on, take a ride with him. And he took me down on Washington and Duke.

[00:22:25.910] - Harold Hughes

That's where the Army Marine Corps, they were right there on the corner. And I woke up the next morning, I was in Baltimore, Maryland, standing on yellow footprints. I was in the Marine Corps. So we did, I did 15 years there, went around the world twice, enjoyed it. Okay. But it changed. So I got out. When I got out, I had a family. I had a wife and three kids, all daughters. So, right after I got out, I got out in '85, and me and my wife separated. I wasn't what I was supposed to have been then, because I no longer the Marine Corps, and she was not getting that benefit that she was used to. So I played a part of that also. So when I came back home, I got a job at...what was it...People's Drug Store? Yeah, People's Drug Store.

[00:23:45.090] - Devon Murtha

When you came back home, where did you live?

[00:23:48.180] - Harold Hughes

I lived on. I lived at Cameron Valley. In Cameron Valley. in the projects there, okay. That's when I came into the Lodge. Came into the Alexandria Lodge 48. I joined that Lodge. I joined the Lodge in 1992, okay. Right after that, they started giving me jobs to do around the Lodge. And then I would get up with the older guys and just listen to the history at large. Then when they started dying off, I started writing it, what they had told me. And that's why I come up with this, the history that I have now that I know about, but most people don't. Okay. Like, I can tell you that this Lodge, here, started around the corner on Fayette Street and Cameron at the Art Fellows Hall. When that became too small because they were getting members then, okay. And this is also segregation then, because we're talking about 1903. Okay. Then they kept saying, we need a home of our own. Okay. So right here on this property that we are now we're two farmhouses, 225 and 227. They bought both farmhouses. They've been real close. They're almost connecting anyway. But I have.

[00:25:42.910] - Harold Hughes

We have a picture of it. But. But that's why when you came through this door, you see two spiral staircases going both ways. One was going to 225. That was their side of the house. And 227 was on this side of the house. If you go to the basement, you can see where they came together. Okay. The area you're sitting in right now, which is the auditorium. I'm sorry, people, y'all can't see it. So you just have to follow me and imagine it. This was built in 1935. Above here, you saw the large room. That is the only large room in Elkton that is dedicated to meeting room itself. Everybody else has to pull in chairs and make a meeting room, and then they have to put it back after that. Ours is there, and we don't do anything. It's always there. So it's dedicated strictly for that. Right next to that, it was another room, and it's the...used to be called the band room. Okay, let me go back. I mean, let me digress. Okay. And this. And this is why this became what it is today. In 1942, Fort Belvoir was segregated Army base.

[00:27:26.820] - Harold Hughes

The colored troops that were stationed there had nowhere to go. Remember, Alexandria is segregated also. The bus system, which was the AB&W – Alexandria, Barcroft and Washington ran up and down Washington Street. It had, if I'm not mistaken, they had one that ran straight to Fort Belvoir, all the way down George Washington Parkway. That's what the troops would get on to come here and go back. But you must remember, we talking about Alexandria. So if you was not back on base by 12:00am, you were going to jail. So, the brothers here decided, since these troops didn't have anywhere to go for entertainment. They weren't allowed in the bars or lounges surrounding Fort Belvoir because they're white and we talking about segregation. It is what it is. So they came here and, upstairs, they turned it over into a USO (United Service Organization) room. In their records, if you look it up, will tell you that this was the first USO room on the east coast that was for colored troops.

[00:28:58.170] - Devon Murtha

Wow.

[00:29:00.130] - Harold Hughes

When this one became too small, because now you got everybody coming, the people who live in the area and the soldiers. So this, this what, this is what happened. They...I was told this. Anyway, the brothers decided that when the troops came, the men in the area couldn't. So your wives, your girlfriends, and all the females came here for the dance with the troops. Let me tell you. Let me show you something. If you look around, do you see the light swiT.C.h right there? You see that panel? Used to be a window that had a window. That had a window that had a window and that had a window all the way on the same side, all the way across. What the women would do, they would get milk crates, look through the windows to see what their husbands were doing or what the...oh, now, the men would do it, see what their wives were doing. Forgive me. Okay, true story. So when this place became too small for them, they built Pendleton Street, which was also built as a USO. When things started changing around, becoming integrated, you no longer needed it. So they turned it into a recreation center.

[00:30:38.730] - Harold Hughes

So now I lived in the projects, went to Charles Houston, went to Parker-Gray, went to G.W., went to college, went to the Marine Corps, come back, Alexandria done changed. Okay. Why is it changed? Oh, and then we not only did we have recreation centers, we had a bowling alley down in the Berg. We had a skating ring down the Berg. We had, we had four theaters. The State was on King Street. The Carver was across the street, which is Antioch church now. You had one down on...off of First Street all the way down in the Berg. You had one there, and then you had one down here by the train station down here. It was also a theater.

[00:31:37.620] - Devon Murtha

Before you tell us about how it changed, can you tell us a little bit more about what Uptown looked like when you were growing up?

[00:31:46.990] - Harold Hughes

When you say Uptown, what do you mean Uptown? This part here, what I call Uptown. Where we lived at.

[00:31:53.490] - Devon Murtha

Yes, where you lived. So you referred to it earlier as the projects. Yeah. Can you talk to me a little bit about what your house looked like and what the area around it looked like before we talked about how it changed.

[00:32:06.000] - Harold Hughes

Yes, as I said, projects. Well, on, on the end, there was four houses. There was a, there was a fence area where we played in. Then there were five houses. Then there was another gap, and then there were three houses. And then across the street was the school. Same thing on Columbus Street. On this side was projects. Same thing on this side was projects. Then they built the new projects, which was the 900 block, because there was no 900 block at first. They built the 900 blocks. And now they became arch enemies because we. All we had was sports back then. That's all we did. Football, basketball, go bowling, go roller skating. That's what we did. You ended up at the recreation center, and of course, it was the 800 block versus the 700 block, versus the 900 block or Columbus Street. So each block had its own teams. Okay? So that's what we. That's. That's how. That's what we did. That's how we play sports. That's all we did, you know?

[00:33:39.250] - Devon Murtha

Did your team have a name for the block?

[00:33:41.390] - Harold Hughes

The Patrick Street Devils.

[00:33:42.950] - Devon Murtha

The Patrick Street Devils?

[00:33:44.130] - Harold Hughes

Yeah, I do remember that because we...that name stay with us even in school, you know, So, so it. My. My perimeter consisted of Jack's Store was on the corner of Madison and Patrick. Charles Houston was on Madison and Patrick Street. My church was St. Joseph. We are Catholics. The church is right there also on Pendleton Street. No, it's Wythe Street, St. Josephs. We had a place where everybody went to eat, buy food, was called Little Gems. Best fish boxes in the world, okay. And besides that, then you had... after St. Joseph, you had nothing but...nothing but housing. And each one of the projects had a field, okay? It was about, maybe about 30 yards, 30 by 30. We were tearing that into a football field or a baseball field. Kickball. And then. And I guess when we were coming up, let me jump back again, okay, because I would have to. You know, there was no pools for colored people, no swimming pools. We weren't allowed to go to the white swimming pools. So they would go swimming at the Potomac River. After, you know, I think. I'm not sure, three people, three of them drowned.

[00:35:47.070] - Harold Hughes

Well, they had been drowning the whole time. Let's put it like this, the colored kids were drowning down in the Potomac River. And then this one time, I believe it was three of them drowned at the same time. This city decided we going to have to...I don't know whether it was forced to do it, but they did it. Okay. I'm pretty sure they were forced, because we're talking segregation. No one cares. So they built Johnson Memorial Pool. Johnson Memorial Pool sits right out, well, sits in the back of Parker-Gray. Now, mind you, Parker-Gray had a railroad track that separated the school from the

housing. So, behind the school, where the stadium is, there was a swimming pool, a lumber yard, and the train tracks, okay. In front of the school, were some woods, a lady who owned a candy store, a Masonic Lodge, which is just a house. I think there might have been three houses there in front of that school. Now, it's all projects. Okay. So that's what, that's basically what we look like. Okay. Then there was some...then there were some government, GSA, has had some buildings right there for years.

[00:37:41.130] - Harold Hughes

For years. And they finally moved. And. And then there was the refrigeration place. And when they moved, that was on, that was on Madison and Henry. Yeah, I think that's what it was. Yes. And now, now

[00:38:04.520] - Devon Murtha

It was the Bel Pre was the ice place?

[00:38:05.790] - Harold Hughes

Yeah. Yeah. Yes. Now, right now, if you know Alexandria. Right now, there is a shelter on the other side down there. What street is that? What street is that? That would be First Street. Okay. First and Henry is a shelter for... a homeless shelter. Now. Up on, up on Madison and Henry used to be a shelter. That's called the Carpenter's Shelter. It was a great big red brick building. Okay, everybody. Well, all the homeless would be there. And across and across that was Riggles Restaurant and Bar. Across from her...on the other side of the street was projects, but on the other side of the street from the projects was Al's radiator shop. And everybody in the world would be there taking their radiators. Because when you got a hole in your radiator, you take it out, you take over the Al, he would dip it into that voss, bring it back out, gave it to you, worked like a chap. So Al was Al's, the radiator shop was right there on the corner of, like I said, Madison and Henry. Next door to him was the place called Permaline.

[00:39:35.780] - Harold Hughes

That's the company that was the company that was putting these descriptions in the streets. Okay, next to the Permaline was a... was a little club. It's called Gentlemen's Club. It was the guys from the 900 block. They were the singing group or whatever. And the bands played in there. Right next to them was Jack's store. So now that's the whole block.

[00:40:06.190] - Devon Murtha

When you say. Sorry, when you say the 900 block of...

[00:40:19.510] / 00:40:11- Harold Hughes  
of Patrick.

[00:40:06.190]/ 00:40:12 - Devon Murtha

Okay, so then north of where the Samuel Madden homes that we're talking about.

[00:40:20.040] - Harold Hughes

Right, right.

[00:40:20.390] - Harold Hughes

All right. Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes. Right. Samuel Madison. The Samuel Madison homes are 700. No, 800. 800 block up and down. So the. I lived there from '54 all the way up to '70, '71.

[00:40:50.980] - Devon Murtha

Oh, and you guys never called it the Samuel Madden home? No, it was just projects.

[00:40:55.040] - Harold Hughes

Yes. They didn't know who he was.

[00:40:55.850] - Harold Hughes

And, and till the day did never realize that each one of those sections had a name.

[00:41:09.020] - Devon Murtha

Of the different projects you mean, like Ramsey...

[00:41:10.770] - Harold Hughes

Right. Right. Then we just didn't know. That's why we go by, you hear me say 800 blocks or 900 blocks even today when they have reunions, it's the 900-block reunion today. To date. They just had one in here about two months ago. Anybody who lived in 900 block come in and come on to the reunion. Didn't know about no names. I don't think my parents knew the name, you know? So it's, it's no different because I, until I got older, didn't know who Charles Houston was, didn't know who Parker-Gray was. You know, of course you're reading your books. You talking about George Washington? You, you hit edit. Oh, you know what that is.. But later on, Parker is Parker and Gray. And by the way, and they're two different. There's a woman and a man, okay? And Charles Houston was a lawyer. But I read about all this. I was an adult, you know, I I'm just going to school and, and when I mean go to school, we went to school. Today, if it's 100 degrees outside, the kids don't go. If they threaten the snow, they don't go. We walked to school because we didn't have buses, okay?

[00:42:42.880] - Harold Hughes

We walked to school in blizzards. We didn't have air conditioning in our rooms. We had, if you were lucky, if that room had a window fan and you were lucky that the window opened, okay? When I, when I started, Charles Houston, in the first and third; in the first, second and third grade, they didn't even have a cafeteria. They bought a bus, first time being on a bus, and they bused us to Lyles-Crouch, Lyles-Crouch didn't have that brick building that y'all see today. The front of Lyles-Crouch or the side of Lyles-Crouch is on Gibbon, if you go down to the opposite end of that whole field, there was an old wooden, green structure that may have had three classrooms. That's where they put us. We would go there, and somebody was designated to go to the commerce building, which was across the street, to buy milk for your lunch. Okay. There was no refrigeration. Like I said, you're lucky that you had a window fan. And we got bused there my first three years, we thought we were special, you know, but we weren't. They just, they just did. They was building a cafeteria, and I guess we were the youngest ones, so that's why we got bused.

[00:44:37.300] - Harold Hughes

Okay. So then we, then we came back in the fourth, fifth, and, at that time, Charles Houston was 1st through 8th. Then Parker-Gray was 9, 10, 11, 12. When they closed that down, they moved the 7th and 8th to Parker-Gray. That left one through six at Charles Houston. So my brothers, I had two in

front of me, they went to Parker-Gray. One of them went to Parker-Gray in the 9th grade, and the other one, they moved to 8th grade over there with the high school students. And, you know, that didn't work out because now it's 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12. So, when they closed down Jefferson, Jefferson on West Street, because that used to be a high school also. And Parker-Gray, it basically left G.W., Hammond and T.C. William (halfway built). Okay. Of course, then you have Minnie Howard. That was always there for years. Lord have mercy. Then you had the recreation. During recreation, they... once in a while, they let us play the white kids, but most..most of it was just Charles Houston, John Madden (which is the Berg), Lee on the South Side, Cora Kelly. Then we started playing Ramsey, Mount Vernon, and Robert E. Lee, you know, so that's the way that went. But as I was saying, I'm old enough and I can look back and I can see the difference between integration and segregation. Segregation had its good parts and they had his bad parts. If you didn't know, you didn't know. Like I said, I didn't know we was poor. Everybody lived in a project that I knew. My father worked in a furniture store. My mother did...she cleaned other people's homes. Okay. They treated her good.

[00:47:17.880] - Devon Murtha

What was the name of the furniture store?

[00:47:20.650] - Harold Hughes

Oh, my father worked at. It was the Wellington House. Yes, he worked at the Wellington House, which was on. It was a higher end store. It was up on South Side, Washington and Wolf, used to be right there. It's a restaurant now. Kind of funny, though, because as I got older, I went and worked at a furniture store, which was Alexandria Furniture, which was on King and Henry. So, I guess I was following him. I just didn't know it. But anyway, what I was saying was that we were lucky that we had decent furniture. Not saying it was expensive but, like anything else, it only lasts the way you treat it. You know, my father, strict. If one of us got in trouble, he beat all of us. I never understood that. When I was young, made us go to church. I used to hate going to Catholic Church. All they did, as far as I was concerned, was stand up, sit down and kneel. Okay. They...when I went, of course, they were speaking Latin. We had to learn it. I don't know it to today. Wish I had.

[00:48:51.520] - Harold Hughes

We were altar boys in the church. Got baptized first holy communion, and then we did novena every Monday. Hated that. So, as I was saying, our family was rather on the small side compared to a lot of other families up there. They had a whole lot of kids. I'm talking about one family had 13, one family had eleven and united and they were living in what... we had three bedrooms in our... at 821 North Patrick was three bedrooms. My mother and father had one room and my oldest brother, he had one room, and then it was me. Three of us had the other room until my other brother came along as a baby and she put him in there with us. All he did was cry. Couldn't stand it. Then, of course, as we got older, my older brother moved out. Then my other brother got put out. He thought he was older than my father. As my father say, "you're smelling yourself." So, you know, they never got along. So, I guess they were just like each other. So, and I, and I do remember those whoopings that we got, you know, as I said, sometimes I never even know why I got whooped, because somebody else messed up.

[00:50:21.230] - Harold Hughes

And so I got two brothers older, and I got two brothers under me. So I'm observing, so I'm gonna see my older, my oldest brother, he got to go first because my baby brother messed up. My father

hit him about two times because he's special. You know what I mean? He's the first one, so he didn't cry. So then my next brother is his turn before he even get to get hit, he crying already. So my father beat him because he's crying. And he would say, I'm a whoop you till you stop crying. That didn't work. So me being smart, so I'm going to take it and I ain't going to cry. So then he would tell me, oh, you ain't gonna cry. So, but he.. but he'd whoop me and I wouldn't cry. I guess, I guess he got tired and I could never figure that out. And later on, like I said, when we had that talk before I went in the Marine Corps, he had...I guess he was living his life through me and I never knew it. Okay. And I thought he was cruel to me.

[00:51:49.310] - Harold Hughes

That's what I thought. And. But when I. But when I got older and I had those three, my three daughters, Jada, Joy and Jocelyn, now I got four daughters, 21 grandkids and eight great grandkids. Yeah. When you have...when you got four daughters, Lord have mercy. I didn't understand till I had my own kids, what he was talking about. God forbid that they grow up just like me. And to be truthful with you, all I wanted was one son. I guess God said, no, boy, we ain't gonna do that with you. But I got four daughters, and I'm proud of every last one of them. One is in Fort Dixon, New Jersey. Her husband is at gunnery, just retired. Her son is in the Army. Her daughter married a captain in the Air Force. Her daughter is in Texas because he's a cap, he's a captain in air force. So they're in Texas. And I got one that lives, bought a home out there in Fredericksburg, and the baby lives in Washington, D.C.. I see all of them. Most time when I get a phone call, it's about money, you know. Daddy, can you do this, can you do that?

[00:53:20.110] - Harold Hughes

You know, and having 21 grandkids, you, everybody want cash out. So, it works that way too. But as I said, I don't have any regrets. I don't have any regrets. Like I said when I came into the Lodge, well, let me say this about the Lodge. Remember I told you since 1942 the colored troops were coming here? This is the place that everybody came for dances, in concerts. They remember. Maybe I didn't tell you all, this was part of the children's circuit right here. They had people like James Brown here. Ray Charles stayed here all the time. Little Jimmy and all that. That's why they stayed. I've got pictures of this place during this heyday. During this heyday. I don't want to turn that on. During this heyday, there were 300 brothers and 300 daughters in this building. So that's 600 people working. This was the hub of the Black community.

[00:54:42.540] - Devon Murtha

Were the members pretty much Uptown neighborhood residents?

[00:54:46.930] - Harold Hughes

Yes, okay. Yes, yes. Everybody, everybody lived in Alexandria, okay. Most of them came out. 99% of them came out of the projects.

[00:55:01.530] - Devon Murtha

Did you know growing up, any members of the Lodge when you were living?

[00:55:07.070] - Harold Hughes

Yes, yes. My father, my grandmother was a daughter, my great aunt was a daughter on both sides. My father's parents were members, my mother's parents were members. My mother was a daughter for 60 years. My father was a member for 30 years. He died in 1983. After that, they had us in the

juvenile, and the juvenile is from 6 to 17. Once you turn 18, you can join the temple or the Lodge. Well, you can join the temple because they took you in at 18. You had to be 21 to be a member in the Lodge, but at 18, you're no longer in the juvenile. So, like I said, my grandparents, my mother, my father and myself, and I had a daughter that was a member. Okay. And here, like I said, it was the, this is the last venue of Black Alexandria. The... the schools are gone. Charles, Houston and Parker-Gray gone. The stores, gone. The recreation centers - Charles Houston, Pendleton, gone. The theaters, gone. Now the projects, gone. When I got out the Marine Corps, I was in California and I came back, couldn't recognize the place. Especially today. If you left here any part of the seventies and just coming back to see Alexandria, you could not find your way around.

[00:57:22.890] - Harold Hughes

Well, I'm just going to say it like this. In my opinion, I never existed in Alexandria because my whole childhood, whatever I remember about it is no longer here. This is the only building that is left standing. And as you know, it needs help from elected.... As I said, in 1968, there were 600 members here. This is, this is 2024. Well, let's go back to 2022. There's 80. Okay. And now let me, now let me move forward with this. Let's see now I'm going to, I came into this Lodge in 1992, I've been the Tyler, the Innerguard, Esquire, the Leading Knight, and I spent five years as the Exalted Ruler. I just gave it up December. Okay, I got this place on the, that sign you see outside the Virginia Preservation for historic buildings or endangered buildings. I had a hard time getting that done. Why? Because I started in Alexandria. I went down to city hall to see about this place. It's not on the land of deeds in Alexandria. And I, so I, it was not on the land of deeds. So, you can't even find it. It didn't exist. But now you got to remember that we talking, now we...this goes back to segregation.

[00:59:25.180] - Harold Hughes

It's why it's not in the land of deeds. Okay. So, I called Richmond, and when I called Richmond, the historic preservation society, they told me, said, "Mr. Hughes, we see that there's a 227 Henry Street, but we don't have an idea what's in it." Now, mind you, this building, now, this building now was built in 1903 and we're talking 2022. They don't even know what's in the building. And this Lodge has been here that whole time, never moved. Okay. These houses around here weren't here. We were here before the eagles were. I'll get into that, because there is some litigation that I'm trying, that might be starting because they have encroached on this, on our property. We'd only have a right-of-way... we can...these windows that you see right here on the back part is a bigger part I can't even get to from the outside because you see that, you see that brick wall there in the basement? I have a basement below that basement. Okay. Whether we had to. We had to cover the windows up because they paved that parking lot all the way up to the building. So the only gap in there is the one where our windows were.

[01:01:10.900] - Harold Hughes

So all the water runs from off the pavement down into the window well. And so you know what that does. That's a whole 'nother story. Yes. So, we finally got it on the historic preservation for endangered buildings in 2019 in the midst of COVID. Wow. Yeah. So, they were supposed to have recognized us that year. You know, they're supposed to come down here and, you know, do a, you know, a dog and pony show is what I call it. Bring that press here and all that, which would have been a avenue for donations and stuff. Never happened. Thanks, Covid. But we did. So, it didn't stop me. So, I went down there, and God bless them, the Historic Alexandria Resource Commission. They've been great to us. They gave us funds because in 1903, when the building was

first built, there weren't any laws from the fire department, the health department, where you had to have a industrial stove with a fire retardant hood. So, when you...when you come down here, you see what they had. When they had it.

[01:02:56.800] - Harold Hughes

And there was no...there were no codes, so we had to get rid of the stove. And for some reason...for some reason, one of the Exalted was back then, I don't know who, decided that they no longer needed the hood. It wasn't a fire retardant anyway. But you can see where the hood was because the fan is still in the window and it still works. So, what we did, we got rid of the stove and stuff, and because of the HARC Committee, we were able to buy convection heaters, ovens and burners. All that came from them. Then they also gave us enough funds to get the roof fixed. The bricks pointed. The gutter system was because of them. And Fannon, bless them, they came over and they donated a hot water tank, put it in for us, hooked it up, no cost, you know.

[01:04:23.630] - Devon Murtha

What year was the renovation?

[01:04:28.400] - Harold Hughes

Fannon? This was about three years ago.

[01:04:32.180] - Devon Murtha

Oh, really recent.

[01:04:33.090] - Harold Hughes

Yeah. But I was the Exalted Realtor. I've been the Exalted Realtor from 2018 to 2023. Like I said, I just gave it up because I got tired of bumping my head against stone.

[01:04:44.230] - Devon Murtha

Cn I ask? You said your father was a member before you.

[01:04:46.750] - Harold Hughes

Yes.

[01:04:47.150] - Devon Murtha

Is he from here?

[01:04:48.870] - Harold Hughes

My father's from Leesburg. My father was born in Leesburg.

[01:04:53.290] - Devon Murtha

How did he end up in Alexandria?

[01:04:56.330] - Harold Hughes

Good story. Okay. My father's father and his brother. John...John Hughes and his brother decided they're going to come to Alexandria. And you know what? I know, I know how they got here. His mother and her sister and his father and his brother. The two brothers married the two sisters. Okay. They were all from Leesburg and they came to the big city of Alexandria.

[01:05:50.530] - Devon Murtha

This is your father or your grandfather?

[01:05:53.050] - Harold Hughes

This is my grandparents. Grandmother, grandfather, grandmother, grandfather. Okay. Two brothers married, two sisters.

[01:06:02.930] - Speaker 3

My grandpa did the same thing.

[01:06:04.230] - Harold Hughes

Yeah. Yes. (Excuse me. They...turn off. I'm gonna throw this away in a minute.) Yes. That's how they got here. Of course, my mother, on her side, was born here, on the South Side on Gibbons Street, right by Lyles Crouch. She comes from there. My...my grandmother was born here and my grandfather was born here. So that's how that family got here. And they met each other at Parker-Gray.

[01:07:00.070] - Devon Murtha

Your parents did?

[01:06:04.230] - Harold Hughes

Yes, yes, yes. My. My mother played basketball, my father played football and baseball.

[01:07:00.070] - Devon Murtha

Sports family.

[01:07:00.560] - Harold Hughes

Yes. So that's how they met. And of course, my father had one brother and two sisters. Now, my mother had three sisters and a brother. Okay. He died in 1931. He buried out here in Douglass. That's what the other part that we're discussing was Douglass Cemetery.

[01:07:35.570] - Devon Murtha

So, do you have a lot of family that lives just in Alexandria? Like cousins and your whole extended family?

[01:07:42.720] - Harold Hughes

I'm glad that...I'm glad you asked that question. Then we go. Let's go back to the projects. Okay. In the projects, there is Patrick Street. We coming left now. We're going down towards the river. There's Patrick Street and Wythe Street. And then there's Alfred Street. My grandmother and great aunt lived on Alfred Street. My brother...not my brother. My father's brother and five girls and one boy lived on Madison Street. My father, five boys and one girl. Now, we are named Hughes. The girls are named Hughes. So they live on one side of the project, and we lived on the other side of the project. They lived on the Madison...yeah, the Madison Street side. We lived on the Patrick Street side, but it's the same block. And across the street from there was my grandmother and great aunt. So, basically, that whole family was right there in that one section. And of course, my aunts and uncles, they lived on the South Side, all of them down Gibbon Street. Okay. My mother...no,

my grandmother, there was eleven of them. Okay. Eight girls and three boys lived in the same section as adults.

[01:09:25.600] - Harold Hughes

So, yes, my whole family is in one area. And then, of course, the other cousins and everything, everybody. And then my mother's sisters lived on Montgomery Street right behind us. And then her other sister lived on Columbus Street. So everybody's in that one section.

[01:09:51.730] - Devon Murtha

Do they still live here?

[01:09:54.770] - Harold Hughes

No. Well, yes, most of them...most of them are deceased. Like I said, I live in Dumfries now. My sister lives up on the west side of Alexandria, and my brothers live in Dumfries. The cousins live out...she got through the seven winds. Of course, they can't be down here in the projects anymore. There's no projects. So it's like this. In my whole life, Alexandria has been a circle. The white people lived in the suburbs. And the coloreds, I can't say Black, but I talk the way it was. And the coloreds live in the inner city. And they, their parents or grandparents left homes. And I'm just going to...I'm going to give it to you straight, I guess...you buy a home for maybe \$25,000. You got that home. They pass. Siblings can't get a loan. They argue about their home. I ain't gonna live there. I want my money. They end up selling their home, and what, what happens? Let's just say you've been there, but you don't want to take care of your mother. All these years you've been taking care of your mother when she's been sick or whatever. Nobody...you know already "how she doing" but...

[01:11:41.700] - Harold Hughes

They don't come. They don't spend the night. They ain't taking care of her. They don't bathe her. You understand? They don't feed her. They ain't there when she crying. And you crying because...because you're tired, but you love her and you ain't going nowhere. Now, they come back from California or whatever...They want to...they want my share of the house. They ain't thinking about you. So then when they share the house, you got to find someplace to go because you was the one living in the house. They got houses. So now you got to find an apartment to go to. Now, you sell that house and the white people come back and they take that \$25,000 home that you bought, that you paid for, that you pay for, and they... They go and they remodel it. Now it becomes \$50,000 home. You can't afford to come back because all the homes now that we had...They have out priced you.

[01:12:47.130] - Devon Murtha

Were the homes...was there no will? Is that why all the homes were, like, divided by shares?

[01:12:54.880] - Harold Hughes

There were wills now, because they. What they...What the parents did? I think what my parents...What they did was you got four kids, everybody get 25%. So that means everybody has a share into that home. Instead of it being a homestead, that means that nobody can sell it. It always remains in the family. She's gone, he's gone. I want mine, and I'm gone.

[01:13:22.590] - Devon Murtha

Yeah.

[01:13:23.490] - Harold Hughes

So now they come in, they. They remodel. People buy into it then. And then they move out. So it's a big circle. They were from the suburbs come to the...come back in town, remodel and rebuild, and then go back to the suburbs. That's the...that's the big circle. Okay. Until to day, it's the same thing. That's how now everybody that was in the projects that lived in Alexandria when they were. When they...when they made that promise that we're going to remodel these, are we going to tie this down and we're going to put these subsidized homes up and y'all can come back. It ain't gonna happen. And it can't happen, because if you only putting in 21 homes and these...these new homes that they're putting up, these are condos. And then now they put you on the west side. They know already they can do the same thing on the west side. So they do things like Section 8. You see. Now you take your Section 8, then you go to Woodbridge somewhere and go out there. Now. Now you get back into rentals again. They gonna subsidize. Yeah. They're gonna pay portion of, but you got to pay the rest.

[01:14:44.960] - Harold Hughes

But now you're no longer Alexandria resident. You got to remember that.

[01:14:49.440] - Devon Murtha

So I just want to clarify. So I understand. So the Section 8 housing people were really tied to Alexandria because they were in Alexandria projects. But now with the Section 8, more mobility to move elsewhere.

[01:15:01.460] - Harold Hughes

Yes.

[01:15:02.020] - Devon Murtha

Okay.

[01:15:02.400] - Harold Hughes

Yes, yes. So. So I guess the thing was, the first person that got on, the first person that had Section 8 moves...moved somewhere, moved to one of them homes up there that somebody owned. They had the right person, that had a home, went out there. But after a while, you know, you get these families that just don't care. They tore it up. You know. Now the people who own these homes aren't accepting Section 8 because the ones ...because the ones that they had, they tore the home up. So it becomes costly to you as a homeowner. And of course, now here's the big thing. Voting, district lines, it plays...it plays a role now because you got, okay...I old Alexandria, when I was coming up, there's a pocket of colored people there. There's a pocket, you know where they are, you know how they're going to vote. So if you always lose to these people because of this pocket, you got to break the pocket up. Okay? That's what they did with the K-6-2-2-1 plan. That's just another way of saying it, that we're going to separate them.

[01:16:31.030] - Harold Hughes

So if I'm from the 8th ward or whatever, and I keep losing to the seventh ward because of all these colored people, if we break them up, I won't have a problem anymore. I don't lose anymore. Most of them don't vote. No way. Okay? So that's how that, that's how that goes. I mean.

[01:16:56.620] - Devon Murtha

With integration with the projects that we're talking about. When was it? Do you remember the first white person that moved in the neighborhood or...

[01:17:05.200] - Harold Hughes

Yes.

[01:17:05.710] - Devon Murtha

Okay.

[01:17:06.320] - Harold Hughes

Yes. And it just so happened, as I said, I worked at Alexandria Furniture store. The first white family that moved in was one of the guys that worked at the Alexandria furniture store. He worked with me at the store. Matter of fact, they moved two doors down. Okay. Now, at that time...

[01:17:31.500] - Devon Murtha

What year are you? What year about?

[01:17:33.250] - Harold Hughes

I went there. That would have been '70, '70 or '74, because I went in the Marine Corps, '75. I was working at Alexandria Furniture Company, which is a subsidy of Hopkins Furniture. Okay. Hopkins sold to the white people. Alexandria sold to the Blacks or coloreds, whatever. Okay. So that's how that worked. Okay? Yes. Now, at that time, now mind you ain't never seen a Hispanic, okay? When I...my childhood does not consist of a Hispanic or Latino whatever. No, I think I was in the Marine Corps, and down in Parris Island was my first dealing with them. So, you know, white and Black. Yeah, that was it. That was it. That was it. And then, of course, when I went to Marine Corps, I got. I spent boot camp there, graduated from there, got stationed there. Everybody else was getting these big checks going home... to PCS somewhere.... They gave me a check for \$1. True story. To do the sea bag drag across the street I was stationed at on Parris island. Then about four months later on, I got. I was PCS, the permanent change station, PCS to Cherry Point.

[01:19:07.550] - Harold Hughes

Cherry Point, North Carolina. Havelock, Newburn. Every day I would get on a get on a bus. No, not a bus. What I'm talking about, we would get on a deuce and a quarter. It's a truck. Yeah, yeah. It's a big old truck. It's like a dump...Okay. We would call them dump trucks, but it has...don't have the dump truck part in the back. You'll see them. They be carrying oil and everything else down the streets, but they have a cover over them, like...like the...in the old days, a wagon train or whatever. Have you ever seen a military truck, that little green truck with the...with the brown cover over top of it? That's a deuce and a quarter. Yeah, that's it. That's a deuce and a quarter, because the five ton is bigger than that. So we take that deuce and quarter, and we go to Bogue Field. That's for ten years. Bogue Field...okay...during those days, if you remember the Falklands, that war, the Falkland Islands, the British, they had this thing called ah Harrier that would come down and land like this and take off like that.

[01:20:20.580] - Harold Hughes

Well, America was just getting them. Bogue Field was the same. Bogue Field was strategic because it's the same size of an aircraft carrier. So they would...they would do touches and goes. In other

words, they would come down, they touch and take off again. Congress hadn't even seen them yet, so I remember they had that dog and pony show. They brought all the congressmen down to the field and showed them that. Harriers come down vertical and land, touch and go. That's how they got brought into the US military, those...those Harriers. That's why I got no hearing today. Cause I was on the, on the, on the...in the jeep talking to him with the headphones. We didn't know anything about earplugs back then. They didn't have them.

[01:21:14.570] - Devon Murtha  
It's pretty loud on there.

[01:21:15.790] - Harold Hughes  
Yeah. Oh, it's loud now. When them Harriers come down on the vertical and land, and you...It will come down right there where the middle of the floor is. And you'd be right here where we are right now. Yeah., because you have to talk to the pilot. Okay. So, I spent ten years doing that. Then we got orders to Okinawa. We flew from Cherry Point, because Cherry Point is an air wing. It's an air base. Okay. Now, and Camp LeJeune is foot soldiers, okay. Because the Marines, as you know or may not know, it's just close air and ground combat, okay. So whenever you see a marine like LeJeune. You'll see San Diego, okay, and El Toro, that's going to be land. That's gonna be a military base for foot soldiers. And it's going to be an air wing because they're going, eventually they're both going to get together to do their deployments and do their practicing. So we left, we left Cherry Point on a Flying Tiger, which nothing but a long plane. And we flew into Alaska, Anchorage. And it was summertime here, so we had on shorts. It was dead winter in Anchorage.

[01:23:04.400] - Harold Hughes  
So when we landed for it to be refilled, refueled, and one of the tankers hit the fuselage, then, they never lost any fuel or anything. But of course, now the plane is grounded because they got to check it. Mind you, we're still in shorts. They wouldn't let us get our seat, get our bags. So they had us go into the terminal on the floor. And with that was, we had a 24-hour delay. So, you know, Marines, we decided that we gonna get up, we gonna go downtown to the, what...We call it package store. You all call it ABC stores. So we marched down. We didn't march well, we walked from the terminal. It would be like from here to D.C. in our shorts in mid-winter in Alaska. And we left there. We landed in Okinawa. It was even hotter. Is hotter over there than it is over here. Okay. Now we spend six months on Okinawa, and now we got to go to Korea for cold weather training for six months. So, of course, you know me, I'm from Alexandria. You know me, I'm a sergeant, by the way.

[01:24:42.960] - Harold Hughes  
And see, I've been on the George Washington, up and down the Potomac River going to Marshall Hall on this, on this boat. You know what I mean? Do you know about that? About the USS George Washington goes to Marshall Hall? Do you remember that? Do you know what I mean? Well, Marshall Hall is an amusement park. Okay. So the USS George Washington was a dinner boat. Used to go down to a Marshall Hall. You get off, you go into the park.

[01:25:15.720] - Sarah Vonesh  
Where was it?

[01:25:16.680] - Harold Hughes

What's that? It's in Maryland. Yes. Fort Washington, Maryland. Yes. So, you would go to, you would go to the...To the wharf. And, once in a while it was, it was stopped down here in Alexandria at the wharf, down here. But you would go to. Go to Pier Six and D.C., get on the boat. They'd have music and stuff. You know, you party all the way down to Marshall Hall. You get off Marshall Hall, you go in and you enjoy the amusement park for about two hours. You get back on the boat, go back to D.C.. Then they started closing Marshall Hall down. But the boat kept going. So, the boat would go all the way down, go all the way down to Marshall Hall, sit in the water for about an hour, turn around, and come back. So, I'm ready. See, I. That's what I've been doing all my life. So, I've been on that. On that boat going to Marshall Hall. So now we're in...we're in Okinawa. So, we got to go to. We have to go to Korea. So, we...we take our jeeps, put them on this LPD (landing platform deck).

[01:26:33.320] - Harold Hughes

Okay. And I'm at the bottom of it sitting in my jeep. And, you know, LPD is flat. It doesn't come down to a pīT.C.h. It's a flat bottom. So it's fighting water. So I'm all right, I'm at the bottom of the. I'm at the bottom of the ship because that's where the vehicles are. So I come up because the Navy just said it was dinner time, and this boat is doing its thing. These waves are beating this boat to death. Of course, instead of going with the boat, I'm fighting it. Now, I'm seasick. When I go to the chow hall, they got Black eyed peas and polish sausages. Makes things worse. So this...this seaman, he saw me. He said, Sarge, listen to me. He said, "go in there, tell them to give you a...never forget this. Tell him to give you a grilled cheese sandwich." He said, "put it in your back pocket for about 2 hours, then eat it." Well, it brings up everything that you got. And so after a while, you learned to stop fighting that boat. And you learned that being on that USS George Washington going down to Marshall Hall, it ain't it.

[01:28:10.630] - Harold Hughes

Especially when you get out in the middle of the ocean, you don't see nothing but water. So now we hit Korea. We went to the docks in Busan. Winter time. You know, jeeps ain't got no heat. Okay. And those plastic doors don't always fit. You know, you put plastic, military jeeps, you know, they got...They don't have much glass. So you put plastic where the windows supposed to be. Well, you know, you got a gap like that in between the door and the frame because they are not made for that. They're made to escape if something happens. So we talk about three days like that. So you feel you're driving from Busan to Suwon to Incheon to Seoul. When we get to Seoul, we had to give our ammo to the Army. So you will walking around with an M16 with nothing in it. And on top of that, we outside this Air Force base. So we think we are going to be sheltered pretty good. They had us put up tents. We stayed in the tent for six months outside of our Air Force base, outside our Air Force's NCO club. They are drinking, having a good old time.

[01:29:48.380] - Harold Hughes

But we're not allowed in.

[01:29:51.420] – Sarah Vonesh

In the cold.

[01:29:52.440] - Harold Hughes

Yes, because you can't go in with your canvas. We don't have...we don't have clothes. All we got is canvas because we bivouacked outside of the club. Now you got to bring in those ten...those ten.

[01:29:52.440] - Harold Hughes

That's military life. And I came back got for that, and Alexandria had changed. Just that simple. You know, I can go on and go on and go on and go on. I mean, you know, like I said, I live this so I can talk it.

[01:30:34.930] – Sarah Vonesh

Well, one of the things I was curious about is where you grew up. Were there certain aspects of the community that were, I don't know, important or really, like, helped? Well, made your life good?

[01:30:48.190] - Harold Hughes

Yes. Yes, yes.

[01:30:48.190] – Sarah Vonesh

Physical aspects I mean and general community.

[01:30:48.190] - Harold Hughes

What made life good for us or for me is the part of not knowing. Not knowing you're poor. Not knowing that's a project, to me was just a house, a home. I thought my parents may have owned it. You know, it like everything else. You. How you take care of it, you know, get your hands off the walls. You didn't put your hands on the walls. One of the first Black families that had TV. My father...we had one of them. Well, we had two TVs. One had sound and one had picture. So, we stacked them on top of each other. My father, somehow, somewhere, I don't know, y'all may be too young to see this thing. It's called a film. It was green at the bottom, clear in the middle, and blue on top. A film. You take that film and you place it on the TV. Now you got green grass and blue skies, okay. But everything, even the water now is green. You understand what I'm saying? But that was color TV back there. Everybody didn't have TVs. You know, everybody had radios, Armed Forces Radio stations and stuff. That's what they listened to.

[01:32:25.360] - Harold Hughes

And then, you know.

[01:32:28.000] – Sarah Vonesh

Sorry. We heard there was maybe a radio station in the community?

[01:32:32.320] - Harold Hughes

Yes. Oh, everybody listen to the US Armed Forces station. Because everybody had somebody that was in the military. That's how they listened to the fights, the ball games, and everything was on. I still remember that. That. That radio, it was all of them would look the same way, like an old grandfather's clock. And it had the dials, they'll go until you got to where you were going. And. And then, of course, you would hear the fights, the games and everything else - Armed Forces station. That's what I. That's how I considered it, you know. And the most, like I said, most important thing was that seemed like everybody was on the same page. I never heard anybody talk bad about the president of the United States. Everybody loved John Fitzgerald Kennedy. You know, it was good

times. It was good times. I remember it was chicken every Friday. Now it's chicken every day. And, you know, and like I was saying, my father used to get home at five. So, everybody had to be at this table by 5:30 because he would come down at 5:31 everyday to say grace. If you ain't there, you ain't eating.

[01:34:07.650] - Harold Hughes

And whatever my mother prepared...it wasn't everybody had a different meal. Now, every had one meal. Whatever she prepared, placed on the table...If you didn't like it, he would always tell you, go to bed and dream about what you want. Because tomorrow, and he meant it, when you come down, it's going to be right here until you eat it. And he would not give you, mind you, my mother may have prepared another meal for everybody the next day, but you got that same dinner that you didn't eat. And he was serious about that. And I remember that we used to sit up and waT.C.h television. He had all these encyclopedias that the people would come around, the Britannica and all. They used to come around and sell them. And he always buy 'em, you know, so he would sit there and he would test you. He'd tell you. He'd give you an encyclopedia. He just picked one. Gave everybody encyclopedia. I might have had 'W', then he would test us to see if we read it because he had opened up and turned to a page and asked you something about it. And if you didn't know what he was talking about, then you didn't read it.

[01:35:36.000] - Harold Hughes

Then you got punished. I remember one year we got punished for the whole summer. All we could do was look out the window. You know, the guys would come in and come down. Y'all coming out, we gonna play football. Oh, you know what I mean? No. Then he tell you to get out the window, the whole summer. He was strict. He didn't play. He did not play. And of course, mom's, when he go to work, she let us out. But you better get back in here before 05:00 and, you know, your daddy coming home, I admire him. There's always one. My father was coming home from lunch. He drove a truck because he delivered furniture. And like I said, Jack's Store was across street from Charles Houston. So, like I said, they only one way in, one way out. So my father was coming down the street because he worked with the other two guys lived on the same road that we did. There were all three of them. They worked at the same place. Mister Lloyd Diggs and Clayton Thompson, all his sons are firemen now, so. But he was coming home for lunch, my brother ran out in the middle of the street.

[01:36:48.210] - Harold Hughes

Guess who almost hit him? My father. So we know what time that is, you know, we just throw the line, you know. So, yeah, that's those, those were the good times. We are, like I say, everywhere we went, there was somebody there that, an older person that we respected. Like I know, at [inaudible] Street...sitting there was Mr. Morris. Morris Syrie. At Charles ...at... also Mr. Buddy Ford, okay. At Charles Houston it was Jackie Mason and Lucky Elliot. At G.W., it was the great Mr. Freer, the president, I mean, the principal. Man, that was the man there. I mean, every Friday there was a stock, a sock dance, you know. You know nothing about that. That means everybody in school, you take your shoes off and you go into the gymnasium and they play music and you just dance. You had a good time. Prep rallies every Friday. You know, that was the life. Sports was the life, you know. Cause I was, I was the running back. I was the running back for G.W. for four years. Then I had wrestling. I went to the state championship for wrestling and ran track.

[01:38:23.410] - Harold Hughes

So those were the days, you know, I don't know what the kids do these days, like I said, because wherever we went, there was a basketball court. We got, we played football in the morning and played basketball in the evening. That's what we would do, you know. Then, of course, we, like I said, when I, when I started going to G.W., had some white friends and they lived over here, off of like you're going to D.C.. What's that area up there? I forgot what it's called. His name is Raymond, Raymond Greer. So we, he would get his friends, bring down the G.W., Saturday mornings, 08:00, rain, snow, sleet or hell. We'd be on one side, they'd be on side. We playing football. The best time to play football back then was when the field was real muddy. You know how you hit somebody and they just slide across the field, you know what I mean? Oh, those was the days. Because when the field is hard. It hurt, you know. But that was all good times. It was all good times, I tell you, because the same guy we played against, 08:00 in the morning in football, we went around to the back where the basketball court were at G.W., and we played him in basketball.

[01:39:45.720] - Harold Hughes

And that's all we did in it. We just made a day of it. Just made. Of course, you go home and your mama, she hot now because you got mud all over the place, you know. So.

[01:39:58.090] – Sarah Vonesh

Probably no laundry machine.

[01:39:59.890] - Harold Hughes

We had a washing machine.

[01:40:01.120] – Sarah Vonesh

You did?

[01:40:01.660] - Harold Hughes

We had one of them things. She had to do the wringer on it.

[01:40:06.330] - Devon Murtha

Like a hand crank.

[01:40:07.950] - Harold Hughes

Yeah, it had the two rollers on top.

[01:40:10.500] – Sarah Vonesh

Is that something that came in the unit or is that something your mom bought?

[01:40:13.620] - Harold Hughes

No, it was a. It was an old one. It was a...I know it to today. It was a round white tub and it had... When you...When the clothes washed, when they finished washing, you had to take the clothes out of the washing machine. In order to get the water off of them, you had to put...they had two rollers with a chain on it. You put your clothes in between the rollers and it would ring them out and you get your clothes on the other side. Yes. But us being bad, one day, my father cut the hose off the washing machine and whooped us with it. Seriously! Yeah. And then, see, we was getting up in age then, you know, we big then, you know what I mean? I weighed about 140 pounds at about

15 years old, you know what I mean? Little swiT.C.hes ain't hurtin no more, you know, because I remember my...seeing my grandmother used to say when she's the babysitter, she say "when you be bad", she tells you, "go outside and get swiT.C.hed." You know, you go out there and find the smallest thing you can get and she would use it, and by time she hit you one time, it would break and she finished anyway.

[01:41:23.490] - Harold Hughes

So my grandmother, I guess when I was 15, she was what, about 80, you know. Yeah. Because my father. Yeah, my mother died at 94. She was 94 years old. My father died, he was 53, you know, so I thought I would never. So when he died at 53, I had a hard time reaching 53 because I thought, I'm going to die at 53. You know what I mean? Right now I'm 71. So I got past that. Yeah. But that's another thing, because when he died, I had a problem. I stayed in the house a whole year. I didn't come out because I thought something bad was going to happen. So seriously, true story. Stayed in there for a whole year, I quit my job and everything else. You know, people thought I was crazy, but I don't know if I got over that. Thank God, you know, like I say, he puts no more upon you than you can handle. But that's my life in Alexandria, Virginia. Yeah. Been around the world twice. Been Torres on Spain, Istanbul, Turkey, the Azores, the Philippines. I've been around. I've had. I've enjoyed my life, you know.

[01:42:53.030] - Harold Hughes

Should have stayed in school, but, you know. But if I'd stayed in school, I'd never been a marine, so what can I say? And if I've never been a marine, I would never have my daughters. So it's all hands of the Lord. He had a plan for me, so I'm just following his script.

[01:43:11.200] - Devon Murtha

That's a great place to end, I think, in the Lord's hands.

[01:43:16.280] - Harold Hughes

Yes. So that's. That's about it. You know, I bought you here from 1952 to 2023. I mean, you know, that is Alexandria. It is what it is. You know what I mean? I've seen segregation. I've seen integration. As I say, they both had their points. People were more together during segregation than they are during integration. With integration came big government. As far as the Black neighborhood is concerned. We're talking about the welfare checks. Girls sitting back having babies to collect welfare checks. Here comes Judge Pancoast, which...she was the judge right there that everybody went to. She was juvenile law. She was strict, but she was fair. I remember that I was in the boy scouts, and we was acting up over there in the school. The school was closed on the summer, and we was running down, knocking over globes and everything. The scoutmaster caught us, and, well, we ended up in front of Judge Pancoast. It was December 23, 1962. She told us, and I told. I told her what happened to "my younger brother doing it? He turned everything up. It wasn't us." But she didn't believe him because he was a little thing.

[01:44:51.520] - Harold Hughes

Then she said, that little man can't do this \*\*\*\* by himself. So it just so happens...in school the guard works again. You see what I'm saying? Judge Pancoast told us,

[01:44:51.520] - Sarah Vonesh

Can you spell her name, sorry?

[01:44:51.520] - Harold Hughes

P a n c o a s t. Judge Pancoast. Yes, Lord. Right there on Patrick Street, 400 block. It's the same place that they...that the kids go now for the...if you...what the...you have a mental problem right now. You might know where that's at. That little brown building up there used to be the courthouse. So she says, this was the 23rd now, this was the 20th. "You're gonna come back on the 23rd and you're gonna recite the Gettysburg address. If you miss anything, and she meant it, you're gonna spend Christmas in jail." I'm only 15 years old. Scared devil out of me. But it just so happened that in school we were learning the Gettysburg address. So as a youngster, I had a speech impairment. I used to stutter. And if I say, are you ready to do it right now? If I start talking slow, you will hear me do a lot of stuttering.

[01:46:30.380] - Harold Hughes

So now, sometimes I regret it because I just speak before I think sometime. And sometimes things don't come out right. Or some words that I shouldn't be saying come out. So I was standing in front of her because I had to go to...when I was younger, they put me in speed reading classes. That was their antidote to my stuttering. It was...that doctor told me that I was, my mouth was moving too slow from what I was thinking. So they put me in speed reading. So I talk fast now, you know, and so I stood. It was my turn. And I stood before and I knew it. Front, back and front. And I was talking fast and I was saying it. And she stopped me, said, "Mister Hughes, I know that you know what you are saying, but I can't understand a word. Said it slow." Man, and I'm talking, and I'm stuttering and I'm crying. I think I'm going to jail. And she's sitting up here like this. She said, "that's enough. You go home with your mama." Whoo. I ain't got in trouble since. Yes, but yeah, that's, that's the days. That was the days.

[01:48:14.650] - Harold Hughes

That was the days. There a lesson to be learned. And if you didn't learn that lesson, there was a price to be paid. Yeah. So I'm here today.

[01:48:27.040] – Sarah Vonesh

Well, thank you so much for.

[01:48:30.880] - Harold Hughes

I don't have a problem. You know, I got testimony. That's just saying, you know what I mean? You know, lived it, seen it.

[01:48:37.500] - Devon Murtha

Yeah.

[01:48:37.960] - Harold Hughes

And did it.

[01:48:38.950] - Devon Murtha

It was amazing. Yeah, that was very cool. Um, we gotta keep it. I want to listen all day, but we gotta keep it under 2 hours.

[01:48:49.150] - Harold Hughes

Yeah, we good? I mean, I'm good. I missed after twelve now.

[01:48:52.130] – Sarah Vonesh

All right.

[01:48:52.740] - Devon Murtha

Do you have any photos from when you lived in the Samuel Madden homes?

[01:49:00.350] - Harold Hughes

At home? At home. I do. I got, my sister is, what is she 66 now? And I got a picture of her in the yard when she's about three years old. I got, I got pictures. I can get them to you. We have anything on here? Wait a minute. Hold up.

[01:49:17.650] - Devon Murtha

I think we have your email. Do you use email? Yes, if we, if I send you an email and you think of any pictures that you have from when you were like from back in the fifties, sixties, seventies, in the.

[01:49:33.130] - Harold Hughes

No, they would have been polaroids if that. I mean, you know, I can, I can snap them off the... Yes I do. I got pictures when I was teenager and stuff. Yes I do.

[01:49:46.100] – Sarah Vonesh

If you're willing.

[01:49:47.000] - Devon Murtha

Yes.

[01:49:47.490] - Harold Hughes

Yeah I can. If you send me your email, I can snap them and send them to.

[01:49:53.230] - Devon Murtha

You and then before I forget too, we need a picture of you...to go with the interview if you're willing.

[01:50:00.960] - Harold Hughes

Not a problem.

[01:50:01.620] - Devon Murtha

Okay.

[01:50:02.240] – Sarah Vonesh

All right, I'm gonna stop recording. Yeah, we're all good.

[01:50:04.540] - Devon Murtha

All right, well, thank you so much. Yes.