William Foster Oral History

The Citadel Archives & Museum

The Citadel, the Military College of South Carolina

Interviewee: William Foster
Interviewers: Tessa Updike and Robert Pickering
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Updike: All right. Thank you so much Mr. Foster for coming here and speaking with us about your brother, about his life and his experience at The Citadel. If it's okay with you, we're just going to start with the questions that we sent you and we'll just go through them. If you need to take a break or anything, just let us know and we can stop and then come back. But if you want to just start by telling us a little about yourself. Where and when you were born and where you grew up.

Foster: Okay. Well, both Charles and I were both born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. I still remember the hospital, St. Luke Hospital in Philadelphia. And our first home was on Front Street. I don't remember the address. My father had - was a veteran. And he'd been in the Korean War. And my mother had just finished Bennett College. She was a Bennett Bell. And so, he convinced her to stay in Philadelphia for a while. But eventually, my mother went out and had - we all moved south when I was four or five years old.

Charles would've been three - he's a [year] and five months behind me. We were very fortunate in our early years. Our parents wanted the best for us. They started us off in private school. We went to Calvary Episcopal, that used to be a private school here on Line Street here in Charleston. And so, I completed the first grade there. And Charles did kindergarten there. And you can tell me when to stop now because I can keep going on and on. But as far as my early childhood … again, we were very fortunate. I never lived in an apartment. We always had a house. We had a home.

And we - my grandmother, which was Naomi DeLesline, my grand aunt, Edna Aiken, and my mother and my father and my brother - our first home was on [Warren] Street. We

rented. And then we were lucky enough, the family pooled their resources and then we bought a home on Wall Street, which was on the east side of town. Where Gaillard Auditorium is right now. It was a three-story house. So, Charles and I had our own bedroom. We were up in the attic. Up to the - and so, needless to say, it'd be very hot in the summer. But we managed. We were lucky because we had our own room.

Like most kids, Charles and I played sports, little league baseball. Charles was always a better athlete than I was. And when I found out that I was not as good as he was, I turned to music. I played the trumpet and the French horn. Charles excelled in football - and he could sing, he had a voice, he could sing. We were - the family was a member of Emanuel AME Church. That's where we grew up in the church. It was mandatory on Sundays that we go to Sunday school. And if I remember correctly, Sunday school started at about nine o'clock.

And church services started - I want to say eleven. I want to say eleven. And we were required to go to church sometimes as well. And back then all families had their own pew. And you came every Sunday, nobody would sit in your seat; they knew that was your spot. And then Sunday was a big day because that was the day that the entire family would be together. We would eat and we would - that would be great because we'd have two kinds of meats. And the food was great. And then they'd do a little baking. And then sometimes the minister would come over. The minister came over or one - a high-ranking person from the church, we had to sit at the card table. And the grownups sat at the big table. And we were not allowed to interrupt their - while they were talking, we couldn't butt in. Even if we got - if we heard something we thought we recognized and thought we could talk about, we were not allowed to. So, I don't again, you got to stop me. Because I don't know where you want me to stop.

Updike: I think that's wonderful. Could you talk a little bit about your grandparents and

your parents - their personalities and characteristics?

Foster: Okay. My grandmother was a very direct and - she was an educated woman. She was the first women in our family to finish college. She went to Allen University. And she was the - and it's my understanding, she was the first black social worker in Charleston. The offices used to be on the green right at the old Citadel, on the square. It would be on Calhoun Street and what's that? Calhoun and - is that King or Meeting? King? Meeting, Meeting. And one of my jobs - she got paid every two weeks, I was to go get her check, and get her check on Saturdays. For some reason, they paid on Saturdays every two weeks. And I would go - she was trying to teach me self-reliance. If I ever lost that check, I would know I was in trouble. But Naomi was the matriarch of the family so to speak. Whatever she said go - went, you know. Even though my mother was my mother, Naomi called the shots in the house. She started a youth organization for girls as the United Order of Tents. She'd teach girls how to properly walk, speak, etiquette, manners, and things of that nature.

They used to meet at the house once a month, and being a boy used to all those girls coming in, I would try to be around. But she would run me off. So, Edna, who was her older sister, was not as educated as Naomi was. Edna worked on the Battery and she did a lot to support Naomi when she was going to school. So, Naomi made a place for her when she got her degree and she started working. And she did most of the cooking in the house. That was her job. And she would babysit for us when my mother and father was working.

My father worked for the Custom House for a while. He worked for a place called Kiefer Paint Company and he had - he could do wallpaper hanging. Unfortunately, my mother and father did not stay together. As I remember correctly, they separated when I was in high school - junior high. He went back to Philly and of course, she stayed here. My mother went back and got

an advanced degree and she taught school for thirty-two years at W. Gresham Meggett High and James Island High when she retired.

My grandmother and my mother were both very active in the church - at Emanuel. And as I said, we all had our - we had that pew, that bench where we all sat. And I tried my best to stay awake sometimes when they had the sermons, but I would eventually fall asleep sometimes. So, that's really about the gist of it as far as my grandmother and my great aunt is concerned. I need to say this, Naomi had another sister, had a twin sister called Ruth, but she died before I came on the scene. I don't really know much about her.

Updike: And you talked a little bit about the house that you grew up in that you moved to. Could you describe the house in a little bit more detail and the rooms? Did you share a room in the attic with Charles?

Foster: Yes, yes, we did. Yeah, we had two beds. It was big enough for two beds. But we shared that room together. It was 16 Wall Street - I still remember the number. And like I said it was a three-story house - green and white. It had a porch. It had a swing - a porch with a swing. My mother could play the piano. So, sometimes on Sundays after church she would play the piano. And we would sing. I played the trumpet and Naomi, my grandmother, would recruit me to play at church teas.

Teas were a big thing in Charleston in the church era. That's how a lot of church people raised money. So, I would have to play a hymn - I was part of the entertainment. And she would drag me along. I couldn't say no. I had no voice. But after a while, I got to enjoy it. But we really had a home. Again, I was very fortunate. I made pretty good grades because I had everything, all the resources. Charles and I both were on the honor society. We had encyclopedias that they bought for us, whereas other kids didn't.

We had a nice yard to play in. And a lot of the kids in the neighborhood would come to our house and play because when my mother would call us in, everybody would eat. I mean, that's just the way it was. It was a small community. Everybody knew everybody. There was Wall Street and there was Minority Street, there was Calhoun Street. There were a lot of black entrepreneurs. You had your black grocer. You had the black - you had the black bus company. You had your black dentists. As a matter of fact, Dr. Pickering was well-known in the community because he used to do things during the summer for us.

And we would go out - I can't remember whether it was a lake that he had out there or what. But that was a fond memory. We used to out there and we used to crab. First time I learned how to crab was at his place. And we were also made to participate in activities. My grandmother and my mother both believed that children need to have some activity. If you weren't idle, you couldn't get in trouble. So, growing up we never gave any trouble. I mean we never, they never had a problem from us. Like I said, Charles played football and I was in the band. And so, we had afterschool activities that kept us busy.

Updike: Did you say that Charles also sang?

Foster: Yeah, he sang in the - they had a choir called the Sunbeam Choir at Emanuel AME Church and Charles sang with that. And he tried to play an instrument, but he was no good. Yeah, he tried the saxophone, but that didn't work out.

Updike: Did you and Charles have - you said you had a piano in the home. Did you have piano lessons when you were growing up?

Foster: I never tried piano. I did the trumpet and the French horn. That was about it for me.

Updike: If you think back to growing up with your brother in the house, how would you

describe Charles as a brother and as a child?

Foster: Well, I was the older brother. And so, he took his lead from me in the early years. He started doing things on his own when he - I guess maybe after elementary school. He started getting into his own in junior high. We started thinking differently. But no, we were taught to look after one another coming up. So, that's the way it was. Charles and I were competitors. As a matter of fact, I think when I went to the University of South Carolina, and I discussed it with Naomi and my mother, Charles went through the same thing but he decided - he told Naomi, my grandmother, and my mother, and they told him that he needed to pray about it but if that's what he wanted to do, they were going to support him.

And that was the decision he came up on his own. Nobody planted that seed. No one - that's something, I don't know where he got the idea from, but that's something he came up on his own. And he just told them what he wanted to do. And so, that's what he did. And at the time he did it, there were two other young men that were going to apply at the same time. And I think they did apply. But on the day that he went - and we all accompanied him, myself, my grandmother, and my mother - we all went with him when he came to register - the other two didn't show up. And so, because we would be talking a little differently now had that happened. But they didn't. I think they were granted admission. I'm not sure. I cannot attest to that, but I think they were. Yeah.

Pickering: Where did you go to elementary and middle school?

Foster: I went to Buist School. And I started Buist School in the second grade because I went to Calvary in the first grade. Had some good teachers. I still remember Miss Wilson, which was the wife of the only black pharmacist we had in town - Dr. Wilson. Miss Wilson was my third-grade teacher and she was an excellent teacher. I learned a lot from her. Miss Garrison. I

still remember some of them. But we stayed - I stayed at Buist until seventh grade. And they had a graduation then we went to Simonton. Simonton, uh-huh.

And that - when they came up with that idea, they put all the kids from the entire city went to junior high at Simonton. So, I met a lot of people I had never met before. Met a lot of people from the west side of town. Because the city was divided. You had the east side of town and the west side of town. Even when we played athletics, it would be the east side against the west side. And then later on when the - when urban renewal started, and they started Gaillard Auditorium, they bought our house. Eminent domain. And we bought the house on Fishburne Street. And I went - I started at Burke and then after C.A. Brown was built, as a sophomore I transferred to Brown, and I graduated from Brown. Charles went - never went to Burke. He went straight from Simonton to C.A. Brown.

Pickering: And were you zoned to go to C.A. Brown? Or was that a choice?

Foster: It was a choice. Because I'd already moved on the west side of town. But I wanted to be with the people I grew up with. People that I knew. And I played in the band. I played in Burke's band my first year as a freshman, which was unheard of back then. They didn't let you come in the band. But I was pretty good. I was a pretty good player. And I played under Melvin Hodges. And then played under George Kinney at C.A. Brown. All great experiences. Learned a lot. Learned a lot about music that I didn't know anything about. About George Gershwin and just showtunes and things of that nature, yeah.

Updike: So, you said when you were growing up, the kids in your neighborhood would play at your house. Are there any specific playmates and friends of yours and your brother that you remember, that stand out to you that you'd like to mention?

Foster: Yeah. Louis Lucas, who lived on Alexander Street. He and I both went to

Carolina together. His brother, Clinton Lewis. Jack McCray, who is deceased now. Terry McCray, which is his brother who died in a car accident coming back from college. That really hit me hard. That was the first person of my age group, and he was a year behind me, two years. That it really bothered me because when you're that young, you don't contemplate death, you know, and that - when he died in a car accident, when I heard about it, that took me for a loop. That really got to me.

But getting back. There's a guy named Joseph Holmes. We used to play a lot of marbles back then. People don't play marbles anymore. Everybody had their marbles and their special marbles. And you tried to win each other's marbles, you know. We would skate during the winter and when Christmas time came, you'd get your - either your Union or your Streamline. Everybody tried to be as prolific as they can and show off how well they could skate. And doing different tricks. And we called - they called it jumping the dream. Jumping it backwards, sideways, and things of that nature. And of course, your bicycles - riding your bikes. And everybody in the neighborhood had a bike. And we enjoyed each other's company.

Updike: Did you and Charles have any favorite radio programs when you were growing up that you listened to together? Did your family have a TV when you were growing up?

Foster: My father - when he was with the family, he started me on baseball. We would listen to the Washington Senators. And who else? He would have me listen to baseball games at night. Baseball was his game. And so, like father I was doled to son. I would listen to baseball games with him. Charles would not - Charles would sometimes do it, but sometimes he didn't. Again, we were fortunate. We got our first TV in 1954. A lot of people didn't have TVs then. But we got our first TV in 1954.

And like I said, my mother was teaching then. And both my father and my mother were

working. So, they bought a TV on time. You had to pay so much a week or a month, I forget how it went. And we had a black and white TV. We had - I still remember the brand name. We had an Admiral. And it was made like furniture. It was like - just like the furniture you have in here. Part of it was a cabinet, and the other part was the screen. Then we had a Philco, which was a big name at that time. And we watched a lot of TV together. Ed Sullivan program, of course. Everybody at eight o'clock on a Sunday night, everybody was in front of their TV watching Ed Sullivan.

And the reason being because Ed Sullivan was one of the few people in the entertainment industry that would put on blacks that were up and coming. And that would be - and we would find out who was doing what, and things of that nature. And the other way we got information is we got Ebony magazine. And we got Jet magazine. Jet was more gossip. Ebony was more factual. But if you wanted to find out what was happening in the community … those were the things that we got.

Pickering: Of you and your brother, who got into the most mischief?

Foster: Charles did. Charles did, yeah. Charles was a little more outgoing in the beginning than I was. And he was always doing things. I'll never forget ... I don't know how it started, but when we were living on Wall Street, we had a hamper. And I was as complicit as he was, I didn't stop him. He had a rubber band. He said, "Let me try this match here, let the rubber band burn." And it caught the hamper on fire. Had to call the fire truck. And I'll never forget that as long as I live, yeah. And like I said, I didn't stop him. [*laughter*] So, you know, I was just as - I was as much to blame as he was, yeah. Yeah.

Updike: Did you have any family traditions growing up that you'd like to talk about for holidays or for birthdays?

Foster: Well, Naomi being the matriarch of the family, we had to - every Sunday everybody at the dinner table. There's no excuse. You had to be at the dinner table. You could not schedule any activity or anything like that. You had to be there. Holidays, we had the traditional holidays. And I'll never forget when I found out that there was no Santa Claus, I was very upset. But they - we had a good childhood growing up. I mean, I had some happy days, you know, I didn't get everything I wanted but I got a lot of what I wanted. And Charles as well. The one thing that I remember, and I passed onto my family is they would not let us celebrate Halloween. And I didn't let my kids celebrate Halloween because it was - the way it was said to me was that, what you're doing is you're worshipping a Satanic type holiday and you can't do that in this house.

So, I never did do Halloween. And, you know, a lot of times when you're taught something, and then you dig in deeper into it as you get older, you either make a decision whether I'm going to continue doing that or not. When I read up to it and I saw why they did it to me, then I understood. And my daughter got angry with me when I wouldn't let her have fun - but I had to sit down and explain to her why I did what I did. Because I didn't even answer the door to give candy. I didn't do it. I wouldn't do it.

Pickering: Who was Charles' best friend growing up if you recall?

Foster: Charles had some pretty good - several buddies. Most of those guys were on Columbus Street. Columbus and America. I'm trying to think who - they would've been people that were on the football team with him, yeah. Yeah. Mm-hmm.

Updike: Do you remember going to his games?

Foster: Yeah, mm-hmm. Well, I had to be there, I was in the band.

Updike: You said that it was Edna, your grandmother's sister, who cooked a lot. Are

there any old family recipes or favorite dishes that they used to make a lot for you when you were a kid?

Foster: Edna was very good at making bread pudding. Excellent bread pudding. She would put raisins in it and, you know, a lot of butter. Bread pudding was - bread pudding and banana pudding. Those were here two things. She could - and I would just, be just bothering her to no end to make it. Yeah. And we were lucky because the house we bought on Fishburne Street used to belong to a doctor. And in the back of the house was a banana tree that still bloomed. We didn't take care of it. It bloomed for two years and then I think it died because we didn't know what we were doing. Then we had a peach tree. We had pecans. And we had an apple tree. So, we had a lot of good stuff, you know, coming up in the backyard.

Pickering: What was that like moving from the east side to the west side? Especially during the high school years.

Foster: It was a change, but I was - by then I was a sophomore. And I had already had some good friendships. And I'm a pretty loyal person. If I'm your friend, I'm your friend. So, I still went back to the neighborhood to see a lot of the guys that I knew. And that's why I made the decision to go back to C.A. Brown. Now I - then but in the meantime, I met some people at Burke that I liked as well I was in the band. And so, I kept up with them even through graduation until I went to college. But yeah, I enjoyed my time living on the east side of town. A lot of good people. And back then, a lot of people didn't have a lot. But what they did have, they were a little more sharing than people are today. If somebody was not doing well, they didn't make it as a negative. But people would pitch in and help. It was just what people did, you know? And I'll tell you another thing and I'm sure you've heard this before - back when I was growing up, people didn't lock their doors. You can't do that now. But I remember growing up, we didn't

lock our doors. I think things started changing in the sixties. In the beginning, we didn't.

Updike: Do you remember if Charles had favorite subjects or favorite teachers before he got to high school and then middle school?

Foster: Charles really - he's a congressman now - and it was Mr. Clyburn at that point. He had an impact. Charles - I was in Clyburn's homeroom with Charles. Clyburn actually taught Charles. And Clyburn was - had an impact on a lot of males, young males. He took time with people. And he - I don't think he had been out of school that long when he started teaching us because we were very lucky at Brown because a lot of teachers we had had been maybe a year, two years out of college. So, they weren't that far removed from what we were, you know. From kids that are fourteen, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen years old. So, they understood, and they could identify with us.

Whereas other teachers might not identify as easily as they did. But Clyburn was a force. On the football field, the coach - Kenny. He's deceased now. I can't think of his name. But he - it's in the yearbook. He was one of his favorites. And then he had a - he took a course in - not home economics, but in - it was ... I'm trying to think of the term they used back then. But anyhow, it was a teacher there that taught this course. Like home mechanics and stuff like that. And he was ...

Pickering: Industrial arts?

Foster: Industrial arts, exactly, yeah. Yeah, he was - he liked learning from that particular person. And then he had, there's one other guy that taught psychology that Charles was - Charles liked as a person. And I think he went to Allen University. Again, the name escapes me. But it's in the yearbook, yeah.

Pickering: And who was the principal at that time?

Foster: Mr. Mannigold.

Pickering: Mannigold, okay.

Foster: Mr. Mannigold was an interesting man. He was - he had been a captain in the Army. And he had all kinds of credentials. But he - the school was in a rough area on Drake and America. Tough area back then. And he would tell - he said, "You know, I've been in the military." He said "If I have to, I'll bring my weapon over here to get things done." Of course, he never did, but that was the threat. Yeah. But he made sure that we had, I don't know how he did it, but he could go and talk to the powers that be to get the resources that we needed for the school. He did things that no one else I think could've done at the time. Yeah, I always remember him. He was a good man. I'll tell you another thing - now Charles helped me in some things I did. I ran for president of the student council. And I won because of Charles; because of his popularity and mine. And I don't think they were sure who was running - whether it was me or him. So, the school voted for me. So, yeah. And I took it.

Updike: What were some of the other activities that your brother participated in while he was in high school?

Foster: He was in the social club. Again, that's in the yearbook. I don't remember the name of the club, but they would give dances. And they'd raise money and then they'd split it at the end of the year. Again, like I said, he liked sports. I remember Clyburn used to bowl a lot. He was a good bowler. We would go down to the bowling alley sometimes to watch him bowl. And Charles and I used to try our hand at it, but we never were any good. And as I got older, I got better at bowling. But back then, I wasn't very good. Charles played a little basketball. Not good enough to get onto the team. But, you know, on the playground. I ran track. And that's pretty much it as far as the sports is concerned, that's about it.

Updike: Do you have any more questions about high school?

Pickering: No, I think we covered everything.

Updike: So, let's talk about - so, you had mentioned the other two African American students who applied to come to The Citadel at the same time as your brother did. When did your brother first tell you and your family that he was applying to the Citadel?

Foster: He told me when I came home from break. I came home from Columbia around - just before Thanksgiving. And he said that he was going to - he had applied and that that's where he wanted to go. He had some - couple other applications in but he said he didn't care what happened, that's the decision he had made. He was going to do it. And he really thought the other two were behind him. You know, that they were going to go as well. But the one thing that I can say about it, once he made his mind up to do something, he did it. He didn't wait - just because they didn't go, he wasn't going to base his decision on them. He did it because that's something he wanted to do. So, yeah, as I remember it was my, on my break coming home. My first break. That was my first break.

Pickering: How'd you react to that?

Foster: Well, I knew he was competitive. I didn't know whether he was doing it because he was competitive. Because I had gone to Carolina. When I went to Carolina, there was only eight blacks at Carolina. So, I don't know whether he was trying to outdo me or he had other reasons, I'm not sure, I can't say. But I know that he was a very competitive person. He had good grades. Like I said, he was in the honor society. We both had good grades. He probably could've got a scholarship somewhere else. So, the family just wanted to know that he was committed because they would have to come out of pocket. They'd have to borrow the money for him to go to school, you see. And they would have two of us in school in at the same time.

Yeah.

Updike: Was your mother supportive?

Foster: Yeah. Yeah. In our family, education was important because like I said, my grandmother went to Allen University. So, she got her degree back in the thirties. And then my mother got her degree in the forties, in the late forties. No. It wasn't that late. In the middle forties. Yeah, middle forties. Then my mother went to Avery, too. Avery was a school that - they still have archives here about Avery. But my mother went to Avery. And so, to answer your question, the family believed in education. So, if he wanted a Citadel education, that's why we all went - when it was time for him to sign up, he asked us all to be there with him. And we were. That's where you see the picture of him standing at the table. We were in the background in the back. And I had a picture with my grandmother, and my mother, and myself - I asked somebody to take it. But I don't know whatever happened to it.

Pickering: What was your perception of the Citadel at that time?

Foster: Didn't have one, really. I knew about the football team. I didn't start researching their history until Charles said he was going to go. Then I started finding out the history. It was an interesting history because The Citadel was created because there were more slaves than there were whites in Charleston at that time. And I said, well this is interesting. That's why I asked you when it was created. I thought it was in forty-fix, but you told me it's forty-two. And, you know, you had the Denmark Vesey uprising and all of that. So, that had a lot to do with The Citadel being started. So, as I got to doing my research, I just became more aware of what The Citadel was all about. And I knew that if Charles got his degree from The Citadel, he should do quite well. Unfortunately, it didn't work out that way. But that was the plan.

Updike: Had you ever, or do you know if your brother had ever been on campus before

he applied - on The Citadel's campus?

Foster: Yeah, he had been on the campus. The three of them had been on the campus before. Now to what extent? I don't know. But I know that prior to making the decision, he had been on campus, yeah.

Updike: And do you remember talking with your brother about the institution's history before he started as a cadet?

Foster: No, I didn't, no I did not. I did not. I did that for my own information. Yeah. I was not going to rain on his parade. That's a decision he had made, and so I was fine with it. I just wanted to know more about it myself, yeah.

Updike: Do you remember the day he got his acceptance letter?

Foster: I was away in school. But my mother called me and told me. Yeah. She had to track me down because that was the days before cell phones. So, you - I had a dorm phone and she had to find me.

Pickering: Did your mother ever seem apprehensive about his decision?

Foster: She was in the beginning because she didn't know just what all - like I said, but my grandmother was like, no, if that's what he wants to do, let's let him do it. She was behind him all the way. My mother was like, she was still teaching. She was wondering if that was going to impact her in any way. Because she felt like there was going to be some resistance. And being a state employee, she didn't know how it was going to affect her. Because I remember I had to be very careful. You know, I did some things in demonstrations. She said, "Now you need to be careful. If you get caught, it happens. I said, we still got to pay your bills and I can lose my job." And so, I was very mindful of that. And I think that's the only thing that really ran through her mind, yeah.

Updike: You said you participated in some demonstrations? Do you know if Charles participated in any in Charleston around that time?

Foster: Not to my knowledge.

Pickering: I heard that the folks at C.A. Brown were very supportive of his decision, is that the case?

Foster: Yes. All the instructors. Everybody. Yes. Mm-hmm. He had full support. All his friends, yeah.

Updike: Were you home the summer of 1966 before Charles started at The Citadel? Were you home from college that summer, do you remember?

Foster: Mm-hmm.

Updike: Do you remember anything about that summer that stands out to you before he started as a cadet?

Foster: No. He was working. The good news was that he didn't have to have - he'd have uniforms. He didn't have to have clothes for school. But he had a - he had a job in the north area somewhere. Some kind of woodwork shop. I can't remember what it was. But he had a job and he was saving his money. And I was working, too. I was saving some money. I was trying to buy a car. And ... I don't think I got the car until the next year. My first car. I bought a GTO, my very first car. It was a used GTO. And I was very proud of that car. And then my mother said, "You need to let your brother use the car one time." And I let Charles use it, and he wrecked it. He wrecked my - he wrecked my car and I was so upset. [*laughter*]

I didn't want to drive it anymore. He wrecked - he wrecked the right side ... And he didn't come home until late because he was afraid to show it to me. But I think he finished - like I sold it. I was so disappointed. Because I used to work with - you know how you get your first

anything. On Saturdays, you used to get out and wash the car and wax it. And my - and it was a convertible. It was a nice car. So, anyhow. You know, we talked - we had some cross words about it. But then we got over it, you know, it was all - it already happened, so what can you do?

Updike: So, you said that your family went with Charles on Matriculation Day to The Citadel. Could you describe that day?

Foster: Well, it was kind of apprehensive because we didn't know what to expect. Yeah, we had never been to anything like that. No one, we didn't know anybody that could tell us anything because no one else had ever done it. We had people like the McCrays. And people from the church. And they were all supportive. And actually, some of them - they were there as well. But we just - and then when he got up to the table, I guess maybe they had told him what to expect. They made him stand at attention. And then they asked him some questions. And he had to sign some papers. And that was it.

Updike: Did you see his room? Did he go into the barracks at all? Were you allowed to with the family?

Foster: No. No, I was not, no. No, they didn't allow us to do that.

Pickering: Once he started, was there any communication? Did you guys write each other?

Foster: No, we never wrote - I talked to him on the phone several times. But no, never no correspondence. No, no. And it's a funny thing, when I went in the Army, I started writing. But I didn't write him, I wrote my girlfriend. And it's - because you know, I was in Germany for two years. And so, you know, you learn that, you know, you like to get mail. So, to get mail, you got to send mail out. So, yeah.

Updike: So, after Charles started at The Citadel as a freshman, do you remember the next

time you saw him? Was it over Christmas break?

Foster: It was on a break, yeah. Mm-hmm. On the break. The whole community was behind Charles because when Charles came out, and it was getting - he would tell him, he would be visiting people and having a good time. They'd say, "Okay Charles, it's time for you to go." And he's leaving. He'd walk - from my house, it's almost a straight shot. But when he got closer and they thought that he was going to be late, somebody would pick him up and drop him at the gate. I mean the community took care of him. And well I have to say, because everybody knew him. On this side of town, everybody knew him. And sometimes he would get some demerits because - I don't know what you call it, but you have to do the [shirt] tuck. You have to have somebody to help you do that. And you have to have somebody who knows what they're doing. Who has to - has to be another Citadel person that knows how to do it. And a lot of times when he was going back, he would get demerits because he wouldn't have his shirt properly tucked. So, he had some situations.

Pickering Did he ever describe what life was like in the first couple of weeks?

Foster: He said he had his first roommate called him out of his name, and he had a fight. And he got a new roommate. That's the extent of what he said to me. He said it like it was no big deal. He said, well he's not my roommate anymore. Yeah. And the next roommate he had, he said he got along fine. He didn't have any problems. And he said that he had - he got a lot of silent treatment from some guys. I don't know whether they were legacy people who had - they were questioning why he was there because they come from generations of people who had been there. You know, like their father's father and that type of thing. But he said, "I can, well I can handle that." He said, "I don't have a problem with that." He said, "If they don't want to talk to me, I don't have to talk to them." So, and the one thing about Charles is that once he made his

mind up to do something, then nobody's going to stop him from doing it. He was very focused. You know, I like to say, one is the purpose. One is the purpose, yeah. So ...

Updike: Did he talk about - other than his roommates, did he talk about any other friends that he made during his first year there or any of his teachers or classes?

Foster: He brought a couple of people home with him. I don't remember. But he introduced them to my mother. He ... they were - I remember two. Two people that he told me that he brought home. And he said one of the reasons he did that, because well, he said "Well I got somebody else with me, I'll get back on time." So, he was just taking care of himself.

Pickering: Get that shirt tucked right.

Foster: Get that shirt, there you go. Yeah, mm-hmm. Yeah. So, he made some - he had some friends. Because, you know, they'd had intramural games and things like that. When you play team sports, you're going to develop some friendships. You have to if you're going to be on a team. If you're going to play team sports. So, he did develop some friendships. Not a lot, but some.

Updike: Other than getting the silent treatment from some other students at the Citadel, did he ever mention any kind of hazing or race-related incidents?

Foster: Well, he said he was called names a lot. He said that behind his back, he said - you wouldn't know who it was. And he said, "Well I can't fight everybody." But he went through a lot of that. He thought that things that would get a little easier after his first year. And he said it did get a little bit better, but not a lot. He said because as you move on - he was in Golf Company, so as you move on with your class, the same people in your class still don't like you. They don't care for you. So, you got that to deal with for four years.

Pickering: Is there ever a point that he mentioned to you about possibly leaving?

Foster: No. He never said that to me, no, mm-mm. That was never a thought. And maybe he might've felt that way, but he never said that to me.

Pickering: I think every freshman feels that way at some point.

Foster: Yeah, yeah.

Pickering: Usually you get over it and push on.

Foster: Push on, yeah. Yeah.

Updike: When your brother started at The Citadel, there weren't a lot of media reports or stories that came out about integration of the school. And part of that was because the school's administration asked the local media not to report on it. Did that strike you at all that there weren't stories in the local paper coming out about desegregation of The Citadel?

Foster: It did. It did. But I found out later on that even the governor, Governor Hollings at the time, had said that he wanted it to be quiet as possible. He didn't want any interruption at the school. I think they were following his lead. He had seen what had happened at Clemson and the other schools in the area, so he didn't want the same thing to happen at The Citadel. That's according to his reasoning. I don't think it was fair, but that's the way he did it. And I think that after Charles was accepted and more people started coming in, I think that there was a concerted effort to make sure that he didn't get hurt. I think that there was an effort for that. I think that whether Bubba Kennedy was the only one helping, I don't know. But I really believe that it was a - because that's what I heard - that they didn't want anything to - that would be the worst thing that could happen for the school. It would really mar its history. So, for their own reasons, they didn't want anything to happen to him. So, nothing did. Yeah.

Updike: Can you talk a little bit more about Bubba Kennedy because you mentioned that he was a friend of Charles, and that he was looking out for him.

Foster: Yeah, Charles told me that he was a friend. He didn't - but he didn't say much more than that. He just said that they were friends. He didn't go into detail. He just said that, "Yeah, I got a couple of friends," and Bubba Kennedy was one of them. And so, that's all he said to me.

Updike: And this is actually something that was in Pat Conroy's book as well - so Lt. Courvosie, who was a staff member on campus, was called the Boo. It was reported by a lot of people after your brother graduated that Lt. Courvosie was looking out for your brother on campus and making sure that nothing happened to him while he was a student there. Did you ever hear anything about that?

Foster: Well, I did hear there were others. I didn't know his name. But I did hear there was - there were other people that were making sure nothing happened to him. Because when you have a population this large on a campus, they are going to be people that have - come from different parts of the country that have their own way of thinking about things. And so, I think that the school wanted to make sure - and they probably told some people that, you know, I want you to make sure that nothing happens to Charles. And he probably was one of those individuals. Although I didn't know anything about him.

Pickering: Did your mother or anybody in the family have any correspondence with the school administration at the time?

Foster: No, no.

Pickering: So, he just came in like everybody else?

Foster: Yeah, he came in just like everybody else. Yeah, no special favors. Nothing special. He came in like anybody else. Yeah.

Updike: Did he ever talk about - while he was a cadet here, did he ever talk about the

stress of being here?

Foster: He started - in his sophomore year, there were some courses that were starting to give him a little bit of a problem, and he spoke about that. And, you know, he felt like he needed some help, but he didn't know where to - he didn't where to go to get that help. But he had a couple of courses that were giving him a tough time. But I guess he must've overcome it because he graduated. So, but he did have some courses that bothered him.

Pickering: At what point did you go in the Army?

Foster: I came out of school because both of us couldn't be in school at the same time. My mother couldn't afford it for both of us. My mother and father were separated. So, I came out and started working. And then I went - I didn't go into the Army until 1970. And I'll never forget, I think Charles was a first lieutenant then, and he came to see me when I was at Fort Jackson. He said, "You going to salute me?" I said "No, hell no." [*laughter*] But yeah, that's what it was. And I went back in the Army and I went and got my degree in the Army. But, yeah.

Pickering: Is that - is the Army something Charles knew he wanted to do when he came to The Citadel? Or did he decide on that?

Foster: I think he decided on afterwards, yeah, mm-hmm. Because he was at Aberdeen Proving Grounds, that's where he was.

Updike: Do you think your brother's experience at The Citadel changed him as a person?

Foster: Yes, it did. He was a different person when he got out. He was a different person. He - Charles was kind of a fun-loving kind of, most of the time happy person. He wasn't as happy anymore. He was different. He was different. That experience changed him, yeah.

Pickering: Did you notice that after graduation or after a certain point at the Citadel?

Foster: I saw it happen while he was at the Citadel. Yeah.

Pickering: Did he talk to you about what life was like after Joe Shine came in and some of the others?

Foster: Yeah, he and Joe used to talk from time to time. He'd tried to tell him what to expect. And what he needed - he used to tell Joe not to - don't ever give in. I'm trying to think of the term he used to use. But I don't know whether he said, "Don't let them break you" - I don't - something to that, something to that effect he would tell Joe. But a lot of people - not a lot, but quite a few people came to him to ask him about his experiences and he would share what he wanted to share, yeah. He'd tell them what they needed to do to get through it. What I found to be interesting, just like you said earlier, a lot of people in their first year, they're about on the edge of going home. But once they make that first year, they feel a certain pride that they got through it, you know.

Pickering: Yeah, they got tough part behind them.

Foster: Exactly.

Pickering: Everything from there should be a little bit easier.

Foster: See, because if you quit in your first year, then for the rest of your life you're going to be labeled - that's going to be it in your mind. I couldn't cut it. I didn't make it. And Charles was not going to let that happen to him. He's never - he always finished everything he started. He would - that was not an option.

Pickering: So, he had the competitiveness. Did you ever get that sense that since he's from this area, you know, I can't let the community down. So, no matter how bad it gets, I got to push through this.

Foster: Yeah, that was part of it. And I'll tell you, then the other thing is, I'll never forget when he was playing football. He played guard. And he played Bob Wilson. And he played

against Shell. He said, “Man, I blocked Art Shell.” He talked about that for years, years. And Art Shell went on to be a pro ... pro football player. One of the best. So, he was very proud of that. So, yeah, he was very competitive.

Updike: Do you know if other African American students in the area, in the community, would ask your brother for advice about maybe going to the Citadel? Do you know if he was approached by anyone who was thinking about going and wanted to know what the experience would be like?

Foster: Well, I don’t know whether Joe Shine talked to him about it, before he went, I don’t know. I know he knew of Joe Shine. I don’t - I would think that at some point he talked with him. But I couldn’t tell you for sure. Yeah.

Updike: Is there anything else that stands out to you that you remember your brother talking about his time at the Citadel?

Foster: I think you guys covered it pretty well. I do remember he liked the different intramural sports. Because he liked athletics. And he liked the water. He got a chance to do that while he was here. And he took care of his body. He was in excellent shape. So, when he got his commission, he was very proud of that. I don’t know why, but for some reason he had a girlfriend, but when the Citadel had different affairs, when he had to bring a date, he would never bring the same girl. He’d always get a different girl - I don’t know why. He ...

Pickering: So, he did attend the Hops and ...

Foster: Yeah, he went to some of them, yeah. Mm-hmm. Yeah, because a lot of the parents that had, you know, like you’d had back then, you used to have a cotillion. He would get his choice. Some of the best women in the area. Their mothers were like, “Yeah, he’s going to the Citadel, you need to go out with him.” You know, so he had his choice of ... But he would

never take the same girl. I don't know why. Then he had a girl that was in college. And they were off and on again, off and on again for a while. As a matter of fact, when he went to Texas, she followed him out to Texas, and she got a job out there. And I don't know how long she stayed out there with them. But he decided he didn't want to get married - for whatever reason. And I think that's what he - he wouldn't give anybody any commitment. And most lady folks at some point want some type of commitment. And he wouldn't do it.

Pickering: You said your brother changed after The Citadel.

Foster: He did.

Pickering: What kind of led you to notice that change?

Foster: Like I said, he wasn't as happy. You know, Charles would laugh a lot. You know, he'd have funny stories and things. All that was gone. He was a little more dark because of what he had been through and what he had to accept, you know, to get through it. And I think because of that experience, it bothered him. Because he didn't think it should've been that way. Because he didn't see the others that came in class with him, he imagined himself … everybody should have had the same experience, and it wasn't that way, yeah. Yeah, so.

Updike: Did you go to your brother's graduation at the Citadel?

Foster: No, I was not here. No, I was in Germany. I think a few things happened that I couldn't - my grandmother had died. And Charles graduated. I couldn't make either one.

[BREAK]

Updike: So, obviously, it took a lot of determination and courage for your brother to come here and to stay for four years and graduate. I know that you've already talked about the fact that when your brother made a decision to do something, he stuck with it. Where did that come from do you think? Is that just the way he'd been his whole life?

Foster: You know, I think there's a part of my family on my mother's side - that would be Naomi - she was the matriarch. And she - she went to school back during the time when very few African American people were getting degrees. They were barely - some of them weren't even finishing high school. So, I looked at some of the things she did in her life. She had her own newspaper. She had one of those things, those little things you turn out. And I kept it for a while, and I got rid of it, I don't know why. But she had one of these little desks. Charles picked up a lot of stuff from here. Because he - she would talk with all of us about having goals and doing things.

You know, my mother's right there. But she was busy going back and forth to school. My grandmother Naomi was the one that was putting the information in our heads. And that's where he got it from. He got it from her. Truth be known, that's it. And she would have just quiet time. She would say, you know, "Come on up and talk with me." As she got older, she couldn't walk as much - as well as she wanted to. But she'd say, "Come into my room and sit down and let's talk." And she'd ask you how your day was. What'd you do in school. And that type of thing. So, to answer your question, he got that from Naomi. And the family - my family is a family on my mother's side that always had some people striving to do things.

So, I think that was in the genes for Charles. That's something that he - that was just in him. And see, we were lucky coming up because we were never told we had limitations. That was never put into our mind like some people were. We were told we could do anything we wanted to. You come from an educated family, that's what we were told. So, I didn't have those - he didn't have that limit. That's why he didn't have no fear coming to the Citadel. He didn't think that was - oh, I can do that. Anybody else - I mean, I can do it. So, that comes from the gene pool on my mother's side and my grandmother's side.

My grandfather was Charlie Norther. He had a farm. Over forty acres, fifty acres. My cousin Galloway, which is - I'm started to find out more things about him. They can trace the heritage back to Northers. Charlie Norther's grandfather was a white man. And that land that he got was bought by a white man and given to him. So, my point in telling you all that is that there was always a can-do type attitude in the family. Just nobody ever told us we couldn't do anything. And if you said that to us, we were not going to listen to you because we already made our mind. That's - we were told we could do anything we wanted to.

So, I think it - that's why it's so important for when the kids are coming up, that their parents instill in them the belief that they can do what they want to do if they fix their minds to do it. Because that's really where Charles got it from. He had no fear of coming here. He had no fear at all. That's why you see the picture of him standing up there saluting, he's by himself. People have comfort in numbers. It would have been nice for the two other people to be with him, but he said "You know what? If that's not what they want to do, that's fine. I'm going to do what I want to do." So, yeah. That's where that comes from.

Updike: Do you think his Citadel experience was what he expected?

Foster: No. He thought - now this is what he confided in me. He thought that after a year, that they would be more like smooth sailing. He thought that once he got through the - he knew that the first year was going to be tough. He got his mind prepared for that. But he thought that things would get a little better after the first year. And when he got into his third year, things did get a little better. Things were not quite as bad. At least that's what he told me. But his first two years were really tough. They were really tough. They were - he went through more than I think than any other cadet that was here. I think that's fair. So, that's the way it was.

Pickering: He ever talk about his senior year?

Pickering: No, he didn't say a lot. He just said that, he said, "I think I - I think I got it made," because I'd asked him, I said "You going to graduate?" He said, "Yeah, I'm going to make it." He said - he said I got the ... He said, "The biggest thing I got is I got a lot of demerits against me." He was concerned about his demerits. He was always getting demerits. He was always getting - he was getting, he was coming in late. And part of that was his fault. But part of the other thing was not his fault was ... he had a problem, like I told you, with the tucks. And they made him walk a lot, you know, and you got certain - well, you understand how that worked. Yeah, he - but like I said, after the first two years, the third year became better. And he was on track to graduate right on time senior year. So, yeah.

Pickering: And you weren't in the country for his graduation?

Foster: No, I wasn't.

Pickering: Did you hear anything about any type of celebration with the community, the family acknowledging the fact that he was the first ...

Foster: Oh, yeah. Yeah, there was, yeah, they had a get together. My mother had a get-together at the house. Yeah, mm-hmm.

Updike: Do you know what your brother's opinion of The Citadel was when he graduated - after he was finished?

Foster: In the beginning it was, "Okay, I'm finished. Everything's good." But after a number of years, he felt like that his ring should get in to open some doors - that didn't happen. And he got - he was a little bitter about that. He saw other people that he felt were not as talented as he was doing things that he felt he should've been able to do. And he was - he was upset about that. He was upset about that. Because I have seen myself - people with Citadel rings, I've seen that ring open doors with the different companies I worked with. I've seen guys - I met one guy

back in the middle eighties. He graduated from The Citadel and I wasn't with Transamerica then, I was with a large company. And he became a regional vice president, which is a big deal. He was, he had the car. He had the six-figure - excuse me, salary. He was doing quite well. All because he knew the president of the company who had gone to The Citadel as well. Now of course, you know, when those doors are open you have to perform. All he wanted to do was the chance to get in the door. He didn't feel as if he got those opportunities.

Updike: And he felt those opportunities were denied to him because of his race?

Foster: Yes. Yes. Yes.

Pickering: I've heard some other graduates who graduated in the timeframe say the exact same thing.

Foster: Mm-hmm.

Pickering: What was the experience like for him in the Army?

Foster: He excelled at what he did. You know, they had him doing explosives. He was blowing things up. So, he enjoyed that. [*laughter*] He was at Aberdeen Proving Grounds and he ... that's right down his alley. Yeah. So, he got rid of a lot of the stress. But he was very good at his job. He was excellent, yeah.

Pickering: Do you know why he opted not to stay in or ...?

Foster: He did not share that with me. I thought he was going to stay in, too. For some reason he decided to resign his commission. I don't know why. I think eventually he would've - something good would've happened. He just had to find the right niche. And I think that he had done - he had been through so much. I think that he had just gotten tired. I really believe that that was it. That was - he was like, you know, I think I'll just go to the civilian side and see what's what. Yeah.

Updike: How long did he stay in the Army?

Foster: I think three years.

Updike: Three years. And did he move to - he moved to Dallas straight after the Army?

Foster: Mm-hmm. He was in Dallas. And then he was in - back and forth between Dallas and Texarkana. And now during that period of time, that's when this young lady was in his class, and I cannot remember her name, I know she became a schoolteacher. And she moved up there with him for a while. But they would have disagreements about how things should be. So, she would stay for six or seven months and then she'd leave. Then she'd go back. And she'd leave. So, that was really the extent of that. Yeah.

Pickering: Did he ever talk about coming back to Charleston? Or did he plan to stay in Texas?

Foster: He planned to stay in - he came back to visit a couple of times to see our mother. And, you know, he would go over on Columbus Street and play ball with some of those guys over there. And he would never stay more than two or three days. He'd stay two or three days and then he'd leave, yeah.

Updike: And what can you tell us about his life and his work in Texas?

Foster: Didn't know a lot. I know he was managing a, what'd he tell me he was doing? He was managing, what was it? What type of store was it? Moving - I think it was a moving company, if I remember correctly, yeah. And he was in charge of everything. He said he was making some decent money. But he said that's not really what he wanted to do. He was looking for something else. But that's what he was doing at that point.

Updike: Did you visit him in Texas?

Foster: No. I never did go to Texas. At that time I was living in Atlanta. I'd gotten out of

the service, and I had - and I was chasing a dollar. You know, like a headhunter would call me and they'd say they have this type of opening. And they would pay a fee for me and then I'd go get the job and I'd stay on a job maybe a year, two years, and the headhunter would call me again and I'd go somewhere else. So, I was chasing a dollar. Yeah. But I stayed in Atlanta for nine years.

Updike: And what can you tell us about the fire in 1986 when your brother died?

Foster: Well, my mother called me and she was crying. And she told me that Charles had died in a fire from smoke inhalation. And he died in his - he was asleep. So, I left Atlanta and came home. And then we had to work towards getting his body from Texas to Charlotte, I mean to Charleston. And when we had the funeral, we did not open the casket because we didn't want people to see him that way. But the community really - his friends and people that he went - people like, I don't know if you remember Jack Daniels, he's the guy that was on the radio. Yeah. Jack Daniels was in that class. And he asked me for permission. He called somebody and they got a flyover for Charles at the funeral. They had three jets to fly - was it, no, it might've just been one. I'm thinking three. What they did do is they got somebody to fire three shots. And then they gave the flag to my mother. It was a beautiful service. My mother never got over that. That really - because no parent likes to see their child die before they do. Yeah, so - she never got over it. Yeah.

Pickering Anybody from The Citadel at the service?

Foster: I don't remember. I don't remember seeing anybody from The Citadel. There were a lot people there, so I can't - I don't want to say just - I think because I was with my mother, I don't ... Let me think for a minute. Somebody had to be present. Yeah, it had to be somebody there because somebody had - somebody presented the flag. Had to be an officer. Is

that an officer that presents the flag when they fold the flag up?

Pickering: Yeah, unless that was just a strictly military detail. Because he had been in the military.

Foster: But that might have been it. Because I don't remember anybody from the - nobody from The Citadel came up to talk to me, so no. Uh-uh. No. I don't remember that.

Pickering: And that service was at Emanuel?

Foster: Yes. It was Emanuel. Yeah. Then we went to the gravesite. And ... That was it. I think that was it. Yeah, but the class - his class was quite a class because that class had a lot of strong people in it. A lot of people contributed to the community. Like I was telling somebody earlier, in that class you got a person that became an ambassador. I don't if you remember him or not, a guy named James something or another. And the class of sixty-nine, he was an ambassador. He became an ambassador. He died not too long ago. But I remember a lot of people went up to D.C. from the class to honor him. You had Dawson, who became - who went to an ivy league school. And did real well in D.C. I think he's back here in Charleston now. Ralph Dawson. Yeah, Ralph Dawson - he's got a sister that got her PhD, Barbara. Her name is Barbara Dawson. Yeah.

Pickering: Is she still Dawson?

Foster: No, she got married, you're right. You're right. You're right. You're right, yeah. But then you know who I'm talking about?

Pickering: Yes sir.

Foster: So, it was a very strong class. That class was a very ambitious class. And they got things done. And that's why I said, this guy Jack Daniels was on the radio, he's deceased now. He asked for me permission, he said "You mind if I try to see if I can get some things done? Get

the military to do some things?" And he did. I don't know how he pulled it off, but he did. There were other members of the community that - they came by the house after everything was over with. I will say there's people even after a week or so, people still come by. You know, usually when you have a funeral, everybody's there in your moment of need so to speak. But then in that quiet time about two or three days later when everything, everybody's gone - that's when you really kind of need somebody, you know, to talk to sometime.

But people kept coming by. They didn't do that. They kept coming by and talking with my mom. Talking with me. Because I stayed - I was working in Atlanta, but I stayed here I think for about a week before I went back. And that was very reassuring because that meant that people loved him and cared about him. And they wanted to see that the family was okay. So, yeah. I'll always remember that. People were very kind. Brought a lot of food. And their well wishes as well. Mm-hmm. Yep.

Updike: Let's end there for today.

End of recording.

Session 2: June 13, 2019

Updike: Okay. So, we are going to start this portion of the interview by having you talk about what it was like to live in Charleston in the late fifties, early sixties as a young black man in a segregated Charleston.

Foster: Well, first let me say that my parents did a good job of kind of insulating Charles and I from the reality of the times. In that making sure, that we felt we could do anything we wanted to through education. We felt safe in the borders of our home. But when you went out - they prepared us for the realities that - living in a separate but unequal society. And, you know, all over Charleston you would see signs saying whites only. You'd see water fountains for colored. They didn't use the term black then, it was colored. Or some that thought they were liberal, they would say negros. But the term most often used was colored. For colored only. For whites only.

There were restaurants that would not serve you. There were some restaurants that if you wanted to really eat, they'd tell you to come to the back. We never subscribed to that. We never felt like we were second-class citizens. So, we didn't … you know, how you think about things is how your parents prepare you, is how you go on to life. That's why I think it's so important early in children's lives that they have a good foundation. Because the foundation they gave us prepared us for the rest of our lives. And that's what Charles took with him when he went on his journey. And that's what I took when I left the house and I decided to strike out on my own. We really had no fear of not being successful because we felt like if we were given the opportunity, we were going to do what we needed to do.

And that's what Charles and I shared coming up in the fifties and sixties. We were like a

- I guess now that I know where I come from, we were like a lower middle-class family. We had all the modern conveniences of the time. We got - I think we got a TV set in fifty-four. TVs hadn't been out that long. There was a store called Vance on King Street where people who didn't have TVs would walk by in the evenings and watch the TV. They'd leave the TV on, you know. And back then, you only had three stations - in the late fifties and sixties, you only had three stations. You had the national station, ABC, NBC, and CBS. And at the end of the night, they played the National Anthem and they'd have a pattern with an Indian on it. And it would be all over with.

Yeah, I think they usually signed off between 12:00 and 1:00 every night. Like all children when we were growing up, we watched the *Howdy Doody* programs. Again, like I said, we had a good childhood coming up. Even though we lived in segregated times, we were just very mindful what we were dealing with as our parents prepared us when we went out and we left the borders of our home. But the strange thing that happened when we were growing up, we lived in a neighborhood that was mixed. There were white families and there were black families. In that same - on Wall Street when we lived on the east side there were ... if I remember on Wall Street there were like three white families.

Everybody got along. And then you go further around, you go to Anson Street and you go to Alexander and all those streets, there were people of - people that were of different nationalities, black and white, in those neighborhoods. And so, even though it was a segregated time, it was strange now that I think about it, it was integrated as well. So, that's, you know, that's what I remember now that I think about it. And also during those times, I remember before we - a family thing before we had the TV - there were certain shows on the radio where we'd all get together and listen to. Everybody would gather around the radio and just listen to certain

shows. You had stuff like the *Wuthering Heights*. The *Lone Ranger* would come on. *Lone Ranger* and *Tonto*.

I can't remember all of them now. And my father was still in the house at that point. And he would listen to baseball. I'd listen to baseball with him. He was a big baseball fan. In addition to that, we would have people that would visit from time to time. That was a big thing back in the fifties and sixties. Families would visit families. And the day that people visit was generally either a Saturday or a Sunday. And you would go visiting and it was always some type of food, some type of light refreshment. And if you had - other family had children, you'd play with their children. Like we would go to the McCray's, Jack McCray's mother was a school crossing guard. She went to school with my mother.

Then there were other people in the area. I remember Brooks had a restaurant, it was a black restaurant, and they were very successful later on and built - they built a motel. Well, we were friends with the Brooks'. We would go to the house, which was on Rutledge Avenue, and my mother went to school with Albert's - it would've been Albert Brooks, Albert Brooks' wife. They had two children and we would go and play with - yeah, they had a boy and a girl. And we'd go - we would go with them and play. And so, that was a big thing back in the fifties and sixties. You would go and visit each other. They'd sometimes, they'd come - we went to them more than they come to us as I remember. They had this big house. And we had a nice house, but our house was not nearly as nice as theirs. Because the Brooks' were in business and they had money.

And so, and they would always - I think every two years, they'd be painting the house or doing something to it. He really kept it up. It was like a showplace on Rutledge Avenue. Really nice. So, people supported one another, whatever endeavor that you striving to be. And if you,

there was - your church was backing you. Emanuel was a great church, had a lot of great ministers that came through there. And they made sure that - the church family made sure that if something - if you were attempting to do something, that they supported you. So, you had the whole community behind you. And like I said earlier, my grandmother was a woman ahead of her time.

She had this organization for young women to teach them how to behave and how to walk and how to talk. And how to do different things to enhance their growth. And she had a little newsletter she printed. She had a little printer. Crank it out. And she also did something that I'm familiar with. Her United Order of Tents had a little insurance that they paid something like a dime a week if they passed. And they would give out so much money for what they had paid into it. So, like I said, she was a lady ahead of her times. I remember she didn't buy her - she bought her clothes out of a catalogue. I thought that was so cool. She didn't order clothes. She didn't go to the store. She went through a catalogue and bought her clothes. And when she was working, she made sure that my mother got a good education.

She went to Avery. And then you went from Avery to the school in Greensboro, Bennett College. She was a Bennett Bell. And so, I remember all those memories. I remember all those things that we did. I remember my mother teaching at W. Gresham Meggett. And she - as a twelve and thirteen-year-old, she would take my brother and I to the football games. To the homecoming games. And the people oohing and awe, "Oh, those are your children?" All that kind of stuff. You know, we would get to meet all the faculty. And the football players. And the people that made up that community. My mother was well liked as a teacher. My mother had a very kind spirit. So, you'd never see her get really too angry.

She could be that way when we got out of sorts. But she just had a good spirit. She had a

good spirit about her. And so, I'm sure if you talked to any of the people that she taught, they would tell you good things about her because she was not a negative person. Also, during that period of time during the sixties, there were a lot of things that were happening on the national scene. And having, you know, a TV kept up with it. But the joy for the family was on Sunday evenings we would sit and wait on the Ed Sullivan program to come on at 8:00 o'clock. I still remember the time. And that's because a lot - each Sunday he would have at least one black person. It might be a person that could tap dance. Might be a person that could sing. It might be Nat King Cole. It might be Ella Fitzgerald. It might any number of people. Moms Mabley. Pigmeat Markham.

And those are the people that I grew up remembering. And again, if I wanted more information I would go to the Ebony. We subscribed to Ebony, that would come to the house. And you - and they would tell you people that were up and coming. And they would tell you blacks that were eligible bachelors. They would tell you the people - the black corporations that were doing money, that were making money and doing a service to the black community. They would - now Jet was a little pocket-sized thing. Jet was more of a … how should I put it, Jet dealt with a lot of rumors and innuendo. And a lot of things that were happening that were not so nice.

They would tell you about the people that had done - gotten in prison or did something strange. That's the type of news that they ... So, you got the best of both worlds with the two magazines. There was another magazine called Supple. But that was not as big as the others - as the Jet and the Ebony. And then there were, those were things of our childhood that we … you know, I remember my parents gave me an allowance when I turned ten or eleven. And I'll never forget, my father had a forty-seven Chevrolet. And he asked me to wash it. And I broke the aerial for the radio. And I was afraid to tell him. And when he found out, I got a spanking. Because we

did get spankings. They believed in that. My father would say, "Go in the yard and get a branch and bring it to me. If it's not the right-sized branch, I'll go get it and it's going to be worse for you." So, you had to get a branch. You had to find branches with lumps on it. And, you know, you'd get your spanking and you took it. And you made sure that you didn't do that again. And you know what, as I think back on it, that was a positive influence because what happened is, you were rewarded for good things you did, but you were punished for things that were not so good. And we've gotten away from that. Right now, if you do that now, they'll call the child people on you. And they'd want you to get locked up. Yeah, you can't do that.

So, as I remember back in those days, ten or twelve, I wanted - they used to give me like three dollars for an allowance for putting out the trash. We had to mop the floors. My brother and I, we would have to mop. Every Saturday morning you had to mop the floors in the house. We had linoleum in the kitchen. And we had hardwood floors through the rest of the house. So, we had to mop all those floors. And you had to mop it well. You had to - you put the water down and suds it down. And then you had to ring it out. And then you had to dry it out. And that had to be done every Sunday. And then every - just before the holidays, all the pots and pans had to be cleaned. And then we had silverware, too. All the silverware in the house had to be polished.

And those were jobs that we had to tackle, we had to do. But they kept giving me that two and three dollars, and I said "This is not enough." [*laughter*] I saw the other young men in the community, they would go out to the store and buy these nice sweaters, and shirts, and slacks. And I didn't have enough to do that. So, I said "You know what? I'm going to get me a job." I went and got me a paper route because I had a bike. I had a Schwinn bike. And I got this paper route. And now, I'm earning twelve, fifteen dollars a week. I thought I was doing something big then. And I was able to go buy my slacks. I didn't have to get an allowance

anymore. I would go on King Street and emulate the bigger guys that were buying these nice things.

And, you know, once a week, I'd go buy something nice for myself. So, those were good times. And that's where I got the work ethic. That's one thing that my father did do when he was still - my mother and father were together. He instilled a work ethic in us. He pushed that hard. And I actually started working at eleven. And I've been working ever since. I have never been without a job. Never in my entire life. I wouldn't know what to do if I didn't have something to do. I would go - just go nuts. I think that I'll live a long time because I will continue to work. I think the body was meant for you to keep moving. And so, that's my philosophy. So, I'll always be doing something.

I remember quite well that going up until my - my father bought me a ... in the fourth grade, I decided to get into the band at Buist School. And the principal was - he doubled as principal and band instructor. And that's where I learned how to play the trumpet in the fourth grade. And I had one of the - used one of the ones that the school. And it was an old one. And my father said "You like it enough, you going to stay with it?" And I said, "Yeah." So, we went down to the music store, it was Fox on King Street, and he bought me a trumpet on time. And then when he moved back to Philadelphia, he bought me a second horn which was a newer model. And I kept those for a number of years. And then while I was in the Army someone stole both of them.

And I knew who the guy was, I just couldn't catch him. I knew who he was. But music was my big - my passion then. I really enjoyed playing. Charles could sing, and he sang in the church choir and that's about it. He didn't take it any further. I think some of the guys would do - you know, they would get together and sing as a group. But he tried the saxophone, and he didn't

- he could never master it. So, he finally left it alone. We had, I'm trying to think of the person at the church that was over the choir. She married - he married Scott that used to play the organ at the church. And he went into politics.

Pickering: Floyd Breeland.

Foster: Floyd Breeland. Floyd Breeland was our instructor, the Sunbeam Choir. He could sing. And I was on the chorus, I can't really sing, I had no voice. But he knew how to make you carry a tune or certain note for the group, you know. And we would practice on Saturdays and we would - we had a certain Sunday where the Sunbeam Choir would get up and the church would cheer you on even if you didn't sound as good as you thought you sound. They made you feel good anyhow. [*laughter*] So, those were recollections of my early childhood, along with Charles'. Floyd became - when I joined the church, he was ... You were given a class. And he - I was in his class. Floyd Breeland was a part of my life for a long period of time with the church.

Charles went to another class when he joined the church. It was a lady, I don't remember her, I don't recall her name. But there were a lot of positive people in Emanuel. Emanuel was a large church, so we had a cross section of people from all over the city. A lot of prominent people in the sixties that were doing things. That had good jobs. Had homes. Contrary to the belief during that time, there were a lot of people that owned homes. That were blacks that owned homes. There were people that lived in the projects, but there were a lot of people that owned homes as well. And they were well-cared for. They would take people - like I said, all over Charleston you'd see on Saturdays and Sundays, people would be scrubbing floors, making sure to get the house ready for Sunday. And so, that, you know, because Sunday after church, people would visit on Sundays. They would come by your house and sit down and ... And a lot of times, when you were at church, people would say, "Well you know what? I want you to

come over to the house." You would invite a person over to your home and you'd sit down and have a good conversation and a good meal. So, close family ties in the fifties and sixties brought us through that period that was segregated. It wasn't that bad for us. We had our own bus line. We had a gentleman that was from the island, and he had his own bus service that he provided for people. We had somebody that created their own credit union, which I think is still around. What's that, Canal Street?

Pickering: On the corner and ...

Foster: Yeah. That was here back in the sixties. You had people that had their own grocery stores. The black community had their own economy. When integration came, you know, it changed things because the people that were making money off of just blacks all of a sudden discovered that there was a different world out there. And so, they started going outside the community to do things. So, a lot of the entities that were big in the fifties and sixties started to disappear. So, I hope that kind of shed some light what you were asking.

Updike: That's great, thank you. Could you talk a little bit more about the Emanuel Church, the important of its history, and then your experience hearing Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. speak in April of 1862 at the church?

Foster: 1962.

Updike: I'm sorry, 1962. [*laughter*]

Foster: Yeah. Church was a big part of our life. It was mandatory. Like I said, we had to go in the early years when we were children. We had to attend Sunday school. And see, the beautiful part of where we lived - we lived on Wall Street, and Wall Street ended at Calhoun. So, you could walk up Calhoun, make a left turn, and you could walk to the church. The church was on Calhoun Street. 110 Calhoun, I still remember the number. Also, the elementary school, Buist

School was across the street from the church. So, I walked to school and I walked to church. That was a big part of our life. Everything centered around that. So, anytime anything important happened ...

You know, I had been hearing about Martin Luther King, so I wanted to be there and to hear what he had to say. And he captured the mind with a lot of young people. There were a lot of young people in attendance. And it was - I don't want to say it was a defining moment, but it brought me to a certain realization about world affairs. About things that were actually ... Because before then, I think were in our own little world. We were happy. We were, you know, having fun and that type of thing. But then we started to realize there's a big world out there and things are happening. And things are happening that will affect us.

So, that's really when he - and I don't even remember what he talked about. But I do remember that he was a good speaker. And that he had an excellent command of the English language. And that there were a lot of people there that knew him. So, that was my experience. And that was my only experience. I didn't get a chance to shake his hand. I didn't get close to him or anything like that. I was just one of the people that were there. That was there. And that was really it. As far as the church is concerned, we had to learn the history of the church at Sunday school. We had to learn that Richard Allen started the AME, African Methodist Episcopal Church. And this was a man that was ahead of his time. He was - he educated himself. And if you look him up, if you go through the internet, you'll find that he did a lot of great things for a man of his time. He became a bishop. He was a preacher and then he became a bishop when he started the church. And the church was restarted. It started in early - the late 1700s, I think. I can't remember the date. But then it burned - they burned it eighteen-something. And then they rebuilt it. And they rebuilt it in the white - that white coating that you see, that's really what was

the original way it looked. And they've done some things through the years to make it better. But that's the way after the burning, that's what happened.

They burned the church because, you have Denmark Vesey. And you had a lot of people, a lot of people that did some things that a lot of people didn't like. And the church was a refuge. Anytime there was a meeting or something that needed to be done, the meeting was held at the church. And black people felt as if the church was a no-go place. That was a safe haven. You're not supposed to go, you know. So, when those things started happening, when they started doing the burnings and things, it was - everyone thought that - everybody thought that was so vile. That was just not ... beyond description. That should not be happening. But through the spirit of the people of the times, they rebuilt the church. They never got any money or funds from the city or anybody else. This was a labor of love. And when the first church was built, it was built from peoples' meager monies that they had. Another thing that people don't know, and I learned this early in life, there were black people that lived in Charleston back in the 1800s that were not slaves. There were free black people. And one of the reasons you could be free during that time, you needed to have property. And that's the only way you could vote back then. If you didn't have property, you couldn't vote. It's like you didn't exist. Well, there were a lot of people that were artisans that had a skill or a trade. And had acquired property and existed during those times.

And some of those people - there are people now today that can trace their history back to those times. So, those were valuable lessons that I learned when I was coming up because I thought that during that period of time prior to the 1860s, all black people were enslaved in Charleston. That was not true. Yeah. So. That's about all I can say about that.

Updike: So, when you started as a student at USC, you were one of eight black students

on campus. Could you talk about your experience there?

Foster: It was an up-and-down type of experience. Because you imagine you're going to school of about 5,000 people that were white. And a lot of people didn't want you there. But I must say there were - I met some people that embraced us. I mean … everybody, you can't paint everybody with a broad brush. I had some good experiences. I remember when I was in high school, I took Latin. So, I said "You know what? I need a course where I can get an A." So, I took Latin. [*laughter*] I took Latin when I was at - my first year. First year of Latin. And it was a little harder than what I thought it would be. Because they wanted us to - we had to read it out loud during class. And we had to write it. And when I took Latin at C.A. Brown, I think we had took tests on it, we had to know - I think what they made us learn the ... mythical gods and the stories written about them. And that made it fun because you, you know, you had to translate and see what these gods were doing to humans and all that type of stuff. But anyhow, I remember someone helping me and they found out I was struggling. And, you know, prior to the semester ending I said, man got to - you know, I was doing Ds and Cs. And I was like - this is not good. And someone reached out to me and helped me. And I finished the course with a B. So, you know, like I was saying, not all bad - people were bad.

But I did get some threats. I got mail from the White Citizens' Council. The KKK, about four different organizations. And I would go to my box on campus and I'd get - I said, "Who's all these people writing me?" And I would see, well, they didn't mean me any good. These were people that would tell me I needed to leave. And that I had no right there, and that type of thing. On the flipside, at the Russel House, which was the main place where people congregated, people would be playing cards, and doing different things, and had different activities. Anybody that came from your home, you would tell them to meet you at the Russell House. And they

would come with care packages. They would come with food. And it might have five dollars here or ten dollars there. And how I got back and forth, we used to use the Greyhound bus.

And the Greyhound bus was okay if you could get an express route. But most of the time, you got a route that stopped at every small town in the world. You know, and from Columbia to Charleston was just about 103 miles, or something like that. 105, maybe. And normally if you were driving, it'd take you about an hour and a half. Maybe an hour and twenty minutes. You catch that bus that's going through all those rural areas, it'd take you three hours to get home. But the Greyhound bus was the cheapest way to go. I mean it was a very, very inexpensive. That's how most people - most students traveled. The courses that I took, they were large centers. I hadn't been used to that atmosphere because classes in high school, thirty, thirty-five people. Maybe forty. Here you were sitting and there were 200 people and you're just a number.

And, you know, you'd get an outline at the beginning of semester. A lot of that was a culture shock to me. I had to learn how to deal with it. I caught on. You get the syllabus at the beginning. I mean you - outline of what the course - what was going to be talked about during the course. And you had assigned pages. And if you failed behind on those assigned pages, you - it was tough. It would be tough. But I started getting - I had to go to the library a lot. You might like that. I had to go to the library a lot because you couldn't study - in my, on the Horseshoe. They would play so much, they'd be throwing toilet paper. Doing things to the hall. Music loud. You couldn't study. From study - supposedly study hall would be from 7:00 to 9:00. So, I said to myself, I would go to the library. That's the only way I can get anything done.

And on the other way, if was if I had a test, I'd sleep early and get up about 1:00 in the morning went everybody went to sleep, and then do my studying. So, I had to find a way around all the chaos. I remember when Texas Western won their championship, how that was treated. A

lot of people who were upset because it was an all black squad that had won. And the first time it had happened in the NCAA. And we were celebrating, and somebody said, "You know what? You might not want to do that here." So, we went over to Allen University and we participated with them. And back then, I knew the bus schedule. I could catch the bus and go to the other side of town. And then I knew when to come back to my side of town and catch that last bus coming back. But I also had an aunt that lived on Pine Street in Columbia, and she was a registered nurse. She worked at Crafts-Farrow, a big hospital in Columbia at that time. And sometimes I would stay at her house. And every once in a while, she had a Buick, she let me borrow her car. And I was famous for borrowing cars back then because I didn't have my own automobile. I would borrow her car. And we would go - during downtime, we would go to a place called the Fountain Blue in Columbia. That was a popular spot. A lot of entertainers, nationally known entertainers would come there. A lot of my friends I would meet there from ... I developed a lot of friends from Benedict and Allen. And we would meet there. Because there wasn't that much to do on campus being ... Because some of the students that were there, let's see, well there were eight on campus.

But we were in different parts of the campus. So, and, you know, you had the TVs would be in the common area. But the only thing I had in my room was my radio. Back in the sixties, nobody had TVs in their room. And so, it was different. Well again, I adjusted. Had some good times. And like I said, there was some bad times. They were - I met a host of good people at Benedict and Allen. And I remember that they tried to talk me into pledging Kappa. And eventually, they got a chapter at USC. But they wanted me to go through the Beta role chapter, which was at Allen. And I went to a couple of the meetings. And got paddled a couple of times, but I decided against it. So, I just concentrated on my studies.

Again, now that I look back on it, I had some good times. I remember part of our tuition … I still remember what the tuition was. It wasn't a lot, it was 450 per semester. It was 450 per semester. And that was a lot of money back then in sixty-five. And they - I saw the Supremes as a part - they had a great series of people coming in. Saw the Supremes - didn't have to pay anything, it was part of my tuition. I saw a guy … the comedian, he's deceased now. He had his own TV show. Flip Wilson came in and saw him. The Shirelles. So, the only thing I didn't participate in like when we had, you got two free tickets to the football game. All the football games. And I would either give away my tickets or sell them. I never went to the games. I would go to some of the basketball games. But I never went to the football games, yeah.

And I saw people play like John Roach - guy that's retired coach now. He was at Georgia Tech, coach at Georgia Tech. I can't think of his name right now. But I didn't know at that time I was, I was ... I was witnessing history. Didn't realize it. But that's basically my, was my experience there.

[BREAK]

Updike: All right. So, is there anything else that you'd like to say about your experience at USC?

Foster: That's really - it was a good experience. Although I still consider myself a Game Cock although I didn't finish there. I did ... The completion of my stuff while I was in the Army. You know, you had the GI Bill. So, I utilized that. But my - I had some good experiences. Then, you know, I was taught - both Charles and I were taught, you can make good of a bad situation. And so, we were always taught to be positive. If that's my one strength that I have, any time there's a down situation in my life, I always try to look for the good in it. That's what I was taught. Because there's good in everything. So, I never ever really got despondent. I never really

got down on myself. I think that's my strength.

You know, I've gone through a lot. You know, I've ... Charles died at an early age, he was thirty-eight. I was in Germany, I was not - my grandmother died, wasn't able to come home because of the distance. I had some traumatic things in my life. But I looked on the bright side of things - that, you know, the good Lord's given me good health. I don't take any medication of any sort. I'm healthy. I still got all my faculties. You know, I enjoy a good life. So, you know, when you look at things, the experience that I went through made me who I am today. And so, that's not a bad thing. That's what I look at. And so, anytime I can pass on that information to the younger people that will listen. Because, you know, when you get to a certain age, you have that wisdom that you can pass on.

Because what I have found out and what my grandmother used to tell me, and my mother as well, is that there's really nothing that's not any really new. It's just in a different form. And as you live life, you'll discover that. That the same challenges that men and women have, they've had since the beginning of time. And it's just that it might be wrapped in a little different package. But it's the same thing. And so, if you study your history and you learn from the mistakes of others, you can go forward. You can think - and you can work things out. Things work out. So, that's really about it.

Updike: While you were at USC, your brother was having probably a much different experience at The Citadel. I know that we've already talked a little bit about his experience as a cadet at the Citadel, but is there something that you'd like to say about his transition from going from an all-black high school into a mostly all-white military college?

Foster: Well, you know, he - it was a challenge, but he embraced it. I think the hardest thing was getting to into the regimentation of things. Athletically, he could handle, he could stick

with the best of them. That was never a concern. But the concern that he had was how he was going to be treated. He just wanted to be treated fairly. And I think that was the thing that bothered him the most. That they were doing things to him that they weren't doing to other people. And that bothered him. He was very strong. He took care of his body. You know, he ... He was constantly training and making sure that he would be up to the task. But as I said before, his biggest problem with The Citadel was that he didn't think he was being treated fairly.

He looked at what other people in the Corps, you know, were asked to do. And then look at what he was asked to do. And he was comparing, and he was like - this is not adding up. This is not right. But he decided in his mind that - you're not going to run me off. You're not going to break me. That's the term he used to use. They're trying to break me. He said, "I'm not going to let them do it." That's what he would tell me all the time. He said, "They're trying to make me seem as if I'm weak. That I can't continue on." He said, "Anything they can do, I can do," he said. He said, "I can excel in it." So, although he had some tough times those first two years, it made him stronger. You know, there's a saying, what doesn't kill you makes you better. Well that's the attitude he took. And when he got to his junior year, things were - it was a big difference. I think, number one, people in those first two classes were the source of a lot of his problems. They were gone. So, now he's on top of the heap, he's a junior. And so, he didn't have - he's only got one level above him that he had to deal with. And so, I think that made a difference. He was a little bit more at ease. When I would talk with him, you could tell that there was a difference. But all in all, like I said, after the four-year experience, he had changed considerably. He had changed a lot. From a person that like to laugh and talk … he didn't laugh at a lot anymore. He didn't. He didn't - he was very serious about things.

And, you know, you get ready, you're about twenty-one, twenty-two years of age, you're

getting ready to decide what you're going to do for the rest of your life. And then you're thinking about what you've just been through. You know, now he's got to make a decision whether or not he's going to take a commission. And he decided to do so. He didn't serve any time overseas or anything, but they gave him something … they thought they were giving him something he wouldn't like. But he went into ordnance, he enjoyed it. He liked it. And so, when he became an officer, he seemed to be okay. He started to get a little bit of his swagger back. But I don't know what happened during those years because I was gone. And when I ... I do remember ... When he became an officer ... Was I at Ft. Jackson? No, I might've already been gone. I don't know. But I think I told you about the story, but he said, "You're going to salute me?" I said "Oh, hell no. I'm not saluting you." [*laughter*]

Pickering: And he was commissioned at graduation or did he ...?

Foster: I'm not sure. Because I didn't make - I was in Germany. So, that's a little cloudy in my mind. I don't - I can't pull that up completely. A lot of things were happening then because I'd lost my grandmother. And I was very close to her. Shortly after that my grand aunt died, which was her sister. So, you know, I lost both of them. And I remember I came home one time when Naomi was sick, and I remember I traveled on - it was Transworld Air - TWA then. It's a long flight coming over the Atlantic. It's three hours over water. It's a long flight. And I stayed here for like twenty, twenty-five days. And he and I talked for a while during that period of time. And he was already commissioned then. Yeah, he was commissioned then, yeah. Because I was in Germany for two years, so yeah. So, you know, the more I think about it, he probably just accepted his commission right after graduation.

Pickering: That's what I was thinking.

Foster: Yeah, because I don't think there was much lag time between him. Yeah, he

probably did. He probably did, yeah. Yeah.

Pickering: Do you think he ever realized the impact of what he did? How significant that was?

Foster: Not completely. Because Charles was ... he was proud. The justification he did that he made it was to prove that he could do it. I think more people around him were more - they saw more of the significance of what had happened more than he did. I think he felt like he was just a vessel. And that - his concern at that point was to - now I got this education, what am I going to do with it? And that was his frustration. He felt like people that were in his class did not, you know, didn't reach out to him at all. He didn't get - he'd heard all the stories about, you know, once you graduate, this ring can take you around the world and you can do all kinds of things. He said he never, he never got that. And that was the sad part of his life.

He just believed that he was owed something. He'd done all of these things. He didn't do all of this and ... Now that I've done this, you know, I've taken the best and the worst that you've offered me. And I've made it. You know, what's next? And that was it. That was the problem. That was what made him wonder, you know, like he said, these people are not fair. It's not fair. He didn't think it was fair. Yeah, he really didn't. You know, so. You know, and he was a very smart, you know, articulate person. And so, he was just looking around and he saw the advancements of people in the class ahead of him. And people that came out with him. And different things that they were doing. And he said, "I went through the same things they went through and I'm not reaping the benefits." So, yeah.

Updike: Could you talk about the community support while he was a cadet?

Foster: The community was awesome. They truly supported him in any way they could. When he had functions to go to, mothers would want their daughters to - they would say, they'd

call the house. You know, "My daughter would be willing to go with Charles to the ball," or whatever. And the people at the church, they were solidly behind him. People from C.A. Brown. All of the faculty. I met people, we heard from people that we'd never met before, you know, that were solidly in his corner. So, the community … the community held him up. And they made him feel good. When he was out, you know, they made him feel good. They took care of him. Like I said many times before, they'd see him walking back and they'd make sure, they said "Get in the car, we can get you back on time."

I forget what time it was curfew or whatever, but I know on the weekends that they had to be back at a certain time. And sometimes he'd cut it a little close. And he had already had enough demerits, so he was - he didn't want to get any more. The community was like I said, awesome. They - and as you, when you put that website, you'll find that out. There were people that are still living that remember him. They will - you will hear from them. I'm sure you will hear from them. Yeah. It's just that the communication has to be there. That's the only thing I was wondering about. How will you communicate it to the community at large? Because a lot of people are not up on what's going on at The Citadel. So, the challenge would be for the ordinary person is to how that you, how you get to them that they know what's going on. Yeah, that's going to be the challenge.

Updike: And I think through our diversity programs on campus we'll - and our marketing department - I think that working together we'll find a way to reach different - I'm thinking congregations ...

Foster: That would be a start, yes, the church.

Pickering: C.A. Brown alumni association.

Foster: Alumni association. Yeah, that would be the - that's good. That's good.

Updike: Before we move on, is there anything else that you'd like to say about your brother's experience at The Citadel?

Foster: No, I think we pretty much covered it.

Updike: Is there anything else that you'd like to say about your brother's time in the Army? We talked about it a little bit.

Foster: Well, I can't give you a lot of information because I was in the Army at the same time. And, you know, we were both busy about your lives at that point. I think that - I was married twice. I was going through my first marriage. And I was - when I got out of the Army, I was trying to make all the money I could. I was just - I was motivated to make money. I was just, you know, I think I came back here for a period of time. And I was at a clothing store where I was like a sales manager. And I did quite well with them. I did okay. I rode by there today and I see well they're closed. And I was surprised, because that store had been there since the late 1800s. But, no we were both trying to make our way.

He'd moved to - for some reason, he liked the Dallas area. I never knew why. I don't know whether he met some - while he was in the service, where he met some people. A lot of times you move different places because you meet people and, you know, you think that, you know, it would be a good fit for you where they're living. You know, because I've met several people that in Charlotte going to school at John C. Smith and never went back to where they lived. They found a job. They liked the city and they stayed. So, it could've been one of those things. I never was a big Texas type guy. I never wanted to live there. For some reason, I gravitated towards Atlanta. Atlanta was a new frontier. There was a lot of opportunity. A place where you can make some money if you had some skills. You had a good skillset you could make money. And so, that's where he and I went two different directions. I went to Atlanta. He

went to Texas. And we communicated from time to time. But not as much because like I - we were both trying to make our way. We both from time to time would try to converge to Charleston to be with our mother. I think by that time she had retired. She'd put thirty-two years into the school system. And so, we would do that. But there ... we didn't see each other a lot during that period of time. You know, you're in your thirties. You're trying to make it work, trying to make some money, trying to find your way.

And it was an exciting time for me because I saw all kinds of ways to do things. And Atlanta was a new frontier. I mean like if you - like I said, if you had anything about yourself, you could make some money in Atlanta. You had to be just not, you didn't know anything. I mean you just had to be a goose egg. And so, he may have felt the same way about the Dallas area, you know. Could be.

Pickering: Do you know if ever - and I think I know the answer to this question, but do you know if he ever came back to The Citadel for anything after graduation?

Foster: He came back and - he came back several times. But I don't think that … because he was still looking for answers. I don't think that he ever got the answers he wanted. He did come back. He did come back.

Updike: In 1992, The Citadel invited you to come to an unveiling of a picture or a portrait of your brother in the museum. Could you talk about that?

Foster: It was a picture. It was not a portrait. But now that it was explained to me, I understand. It was really going to be a big day we thought. And I ... nobody could really control what had happened after the president decided he was coming to town. It pulled the coverage because they were going to have, like it'd be a big affair. They pulled the coverage from The Citadel because they were going to have the newspaper and the TV people there to the president,

which is natural. And so, but I did enjoy the moving words of the general [General Watts] as he - he put the audience, and there was a full house, a lot of people here - he put the audience in Charles' mind. And he did a very eloquent job.

And I was blown away that this man this high up on the totem pole could envision a cadet on his first day of a minority race and what he might be feeling at that time. And it brought tears to my eyes because I said, well, wow, that's really tender and that's really understanding. And I was surprised, and I didn't - because I didn't expect it. I didn't expect it. And when he said, "Well, you know, can you imagine at seventeen-year-old young man that's an African American coming to The Citadel." And I forgot the numbers of people that are here. And then he would be the only person of his race. And he was wondering in his mind what he would be enduring. What would be next? All the things that would happen to him on his journey. He says, "Put yourself in his place and how would you be thinking." And so, you got this picture in your mind. So, you know, what and you see all of these people you don't know. And all of the things that are ahead of you, this adventure ahead of you. And all that you had, you know, that you'd be dealing with. The things that you would be dealing with. The unknown of it. And it was quite moving. It was quite moving. So, I will forever remember that. And if I ever see him again, I will tell him that because that really meant a lot to me.

Updike: And then in 2016, just a couple of years ago, The Citadel honored your brother and announced minority scholarships in his name. And you came to campus for that and met with General Rosa. Could you talk a little bit about that?

Foster: That was a really great, and I want to thank Pickering for that. He did an awesome job. Thank you to your face. And tell you that meant a lot to me. Somebody striving to keep his memory alive, you know, what he went through. The struggle. But it was done in a very tasteful

manner. I was - all the [illegible] all of the things that were done for me made me feel good. They treated me special. I got a chance to review the troops. I'm like, wow. I told people about it. I went back to Charlotte and said, "Man, guess what I did?" But then they had a special place for me to sit and to witness it all. And they allowed me to go into the meeting. And that's where I met Bruce [Alexander] and then talked about it. And I was shocked about the scholarship. And like, did they put that scholarship together so fast.

And they got the outpouring of people that donated. And that was mind blowing to me. And so, that was a special time. And then to cap it off that evening we had a picnic outside. And got a chance to mingle some more and meet some people that I hadn't met before. And that was a very special time. I enjoyed the football game. And then I got a chance to renew myself with Larry [Ferguson]. I hadn't seen him in a while. And I'm glad that he's - because he told me that he said, "I don't know if I'll ever come back by the Citadel." He was kind of bitter himself. But he's starting to mellow. And I'm glad that you guys are doing this because you need somebody like him to be a part of it because he's as much a part of history as anybody else is. And he's got great contributions. So, that was a good that - and he spoke, and he told about some of the advice that Charles gave him.

And that was special. Because I didn't know that they - he had communicated that to him. So, I'm hearing that for the first time. So, that was good. The - and then I found out that there were several people that had become generals after my brother had started. I said, "Wow, you got generals." And I don't know what the higher rank, what's the highest-ranking general that's come from The Citadel?

Pickering: African American?

Foster: African American.

Pickering: Two star.

Foster: Two star. Okay. And so, I learned about that. And a lot of - do you have an admiral in the group, too?

Pickering: We do.

Foster: Yeah, that's what I thought. An admiral and a whole host of colonels and I said, "So things have gone quite well." And I'm sure he's smiling down right now that, you know, "I spearheaded this." And so, so he got his reward after all. That's the way I look at it now. He got his reward after all. So, yes, that was a special time. And what's going on now with what you're doing. And the help of the staff, what you guys are doing. I think is really, really showing that we've come a long way. And, you know, I've lived long enough where I know that things come in time. Things come when they're supposed to happen. I realized that. You know, and I think this is the time for it. And if you tried to do it four or five years ago, it would not have happened. You would've probably had a lot of resistance. But now it's the time for it. And it's going to go, and a lot of good things are going to come out of it. You got some very sharp people that are doing things. And they know how to get things done. And then I'm impressed with the general I just met [General Walters]. He seemed to be a very genuine person. He says, "This is, you know, we need to get this done." He looked like he's a let's-get-it-done guy. I can just look at him and tell by how he handles himself. He's very sure of himself. So, I think that - I don't think you have a problem putting forth his will in making sure that things are done the way they should be done. So, yeah. I enjoyed 2016. I did.

Updike: And then I think as we hear from more people who knew your brother, and as they share their stories, and their experiences, and memories with him, we'll have a lot of wonderful material that will become part of our archive collection that can be used by the public

and by researchers. As we're wrapping up this interview today, when you're thinking about your brother's legacy and memory on campus, and when you're thinking about new African American students coming to campus and learning about him for the first time … what is the picture of your brother that you would like them to see and to know?

Foster: Well, I'm hoping that one day that you could have either a room or have some place where you can display things at the time that he started.

Updike: Absolutely.

Foster: That would really make me feel good and I think that that would make the community feel good. Because the community would feel like, you know what? The Citadel's starting to be a part of the greater community. And they're inviting us in. Because a lot of people feel as if The Citadel is just, like on an island. Okay, it's a great institution here. But, you know, the average person is not, doesn't really know what goes on. Well, if you did something like that. Then the community at large is going to feel more inclusive. They're going to feel like, "Yeah, well okay, we a part of this, too." And so, that diversity program is right on time, I think. And, you know, if the general can pull off the museum, that would be great.

Maybe you'll have a room that's named for him. Or you have something that depicts his journey and what he went through. And, you know, a kind of like step-by-step thing from what you learned from the people that call in, or send you videos, or whatever. I think that would be great. And that will help - people tell the other stories that followed from him. Because there are a lot of great people that came on after him. But he spearheaded it. But now once you hear his story, then of course you want to hear the other stories. You want to hear what else happened. You know, of course, you know, and you tell me know there's a two-star general. I would like to know more about him. Who he is, what he went through. So, you know, you start with that one

point and then you can go on down the line. You know, you're speaking with all these people that have tremendous stories.

Just like - again I was surprised that when Bruce [Alexander] said that he hadn't heard about my brother. I'm like, I would think ... I would like to see in the orientation that they mention something about him when people come into the school. That's a part of the history. They should know that. They should know who the first African American person - I'm talking about all cadets. Not just African American cadets. All cadets should know that. They should know about the history of the school.

Pickering: And now that is a part, that is in the Guidon, which is the book that freshman get and are required to know. So, you'll be happy to know that.

Foster: That's great. That's great.

Updike: So, from there, they learn his name and then from things like this they learn his story. And they know who he was.

Foster: Exactly. Okay. Very good. Yeah, and people are going to - when you do this, people are going to learn that a lot of good people came out of C.A. Brown High School.

Updike: Absolutely.

Foster: It was a lot of good people. Yeah. Yeah. I get an email from them - every time somebody passes away, they send me an email. And they got - I haven't been able, I need to send in my dues. I'm glad I said that. They do things together and I'm still so busy, I haven't gone. They did a cruise, oh, it was last year or the year before? But they do things together for the people that's still alive. You know, so ... My hope is when these guys ever finish this book that they're doing on Charles is that I could come here and do a book signing so people could know more. That would give you a copy to put into the museum or whatever. But I'm going to start

pushing them a little bit more. They say that they're going to University of South Carolina printing. Most of it's already done. I don't know what the holdup is. I need to ask Ken just what's going on with that. But he claims that by the beginning of next year, they should have it done. So, we'll see. We'll see. And I gave them a lot of information. I did a session like we're doing here. In the library in Charlotte. And we sat down, and I just gave them some history on the family. So ...

Updike: That's wonderful. Well, before we wrap up this morning, is there anything else that you'd like to say about your brother or any other thoughts on the Citadel or ...?

Foster: Well, I want to say that within the last five years, well, 2016, last three to four years, The Citadel has been more outgoing, and I've been hearing through Pick. And I like that. You know, before I get too far in years where I can still remember things, because I'm starting to - I got a birthday coming up and I'll be seventy-two. So, you know, my wish is to be around for 120. [*laughter*] But we don't know how that's going to work out. So, while I think it's special that you're getting information from me while my memory is still intact - while I still can remember. I can still remember things like it was yesterday. And I think that's a tribute to the fact that I still carry a full plate. I firmly believe in how I got this is because I remember my mother. My mother died at seventy-two. But she never got over my brother's death. She went on, she retired, she went on a cruise. She did some volunteer work with the police department and church and that's it. She just kind of vegged out.

And so, I said that's not going to happen to me. You know, you're supposed to learn from every generation. I think that if you stay active and you keep yourself going, you'll be here or be around a while. And so, that's my thing. That's - I will always be doing things. They're going to carry me out with my boots on. That's the way I'm going to do it. So, but what I feel good about

that you're getting to me while everything's still fresh. You know, you know, wouldn't be no fun talking to me ten years from now. I'm like, oh, I can't remember, what? You know, that would not be any fun. And I couldn't give you accurate information. So, this is an opportune time. I think that you guys - timing is everything. I think that everything's starting to fall into place. I like what I see. And any time you want to invite me for anything, just give me enough notice. That's the only thing I ask. You give me enough notice, I'll be here. I will be here. I will participate wholeheartedly in any endeavor that you choose to do to honor him. And so, to carry his legacy on so people that come after him that are wondering what it's like, you know, what you have to deal with. They will know. So, that's basically it.

Updike: Thank you so much.

Foster: You're welcome.

End of recording.