

[00:00:00.620] - Nicky Hamilton

This is Nicky Hamilton and I am here today with Mr. Earl Shores and we are at the Saint Mark's Community Center and today's date is May 27th. So, Mr. Shores, thank you so much for being here. And we'll just start from the beginning, if you would like to tell me about your family and where you grew up and how you came to Sewanee.

[00:00:25.200] - Earl Shores

Well, thank you, Nicky, for this opportunity. I grew up in Belvedere, Tennessee, part of the county here the only child for my father and mother, Floyd Shores and Elise Dorely Shores. I went to high school. First, I went to grammar school, of course, in Belvedere, Tennessee. It was a place that my grandfather help set up. And I went to Townsend in high school in Winchester, which was all black school and closed down school year 66. And I went to integrated school Franklin County High School. That was an interesting school because I graduated as the first class of the integration. Left there and went to Chattanooga community College for a year.

[00:01:12.280] - Earl Shores

I was majoring in computer science. I got drafted in the military. I didn't go to the army. I ran away and went to the Air Force and I was there for three years, eight months and 17 days. I got out. And while I was in the military, my mother remarried. My father got killed right after I got a high school in a car accident. I my stepfather was Isaac Turner and he worked for the vice Chancellor, I think was Vice Chacellor Ben I believe that was his name.

[00:01:44.920] - Earl Shores

He was a Butler chauffeur and he told him that his son wanted to go to College up here. So he got connections with Elizabeth Nic Chitty, better known as Ms. Chitty and Arthur Ben Chitty . So they work to get me here in Sewanee and got my transcripts and the Department Financial Aid placement help me with all what was necessary for assistance. I got tutors and whatever I needed because I wanted to be a success there. Anyway, I majored in religion after first looking at mathematics and philosophy graduated in my school classes.

[00:02:32.190] - Earl Shores

Think December of 76, I marched with class of 77. So I consider myself the class of 76/77. And I grew up on a farm in Tennessee 50 acre farm and only child. It was nice. I had everything I needed few things I wanted, but I didn't want much cause I was a farm boy in Tennessee.

[00:02:57.430] - Nicky Hamilton

So what year did you actually come to Sewanee?

[00:03:00.770] - Earl Shores

I came in 73 after I got a military, I think was the second semester 73.

[00:03:05.310]

And you attended the University?

[00:03:08.430]

University of the South majored in religion.

[00:03:10.140] - Nicky Hamilton

Can you say a little bit about your first years here at Sewanee?

[00:03:13.110] - Earl Shores

Yeah, that's any first year is it way. I guess the most traumatic part for me was I couldn't believe how friendly the people were. I just left the military during the Vietnam era and then stationed in Mississippi coming up here, and I couldn't believe the people are friendly and minus the work. It was the police when I was in the military and I worked for a Dechard police Department. It's a dispatches. I always care to fire an legally and even into class. I kept a 22 Magnum Dang in my pockets for a while.

[00:03:46.720] - Earl Shores

But anyway, I did learn to trust the people. I find that they were very truthful. It was different than I had been used to over the previous years.

[00:03:54.300] - Nicky Hamilton

So you carried the firearm because you didn't feel like you could trust the people here?

[00:04:00.000] - Earl Shores

Yeah. Yes. Because I couldn't believe they were as friendly and nice as they appeared to be because I had never experienced that. Because remember, I'm from the county and I grew up in the area and I didn't. I just didn't believe that local people were that friendly.

[00:04:14.690] - Nicky Hamilton

Can you say a little more about your interactions with the African American community here in Sewanee?

[00:04:22.290] - Earl Shores

Interactions in Sewanee? Well, when I came to Sewanee, I was married and had a child. So I live with a seminary students. And so even though my parents, my mother and my stepfather lived here, I was basically involved with um, when it comes to interaction with the community. I was on the volunteer fire Department. And the school life part, I didn't participate that much because I was a family person, plus working. But I had relatives here in the on campus, so I visit with them. So that was just a continuation of relationships that I had when I grew up

[00:04:59.600]

Where there other African Americans when you came as students?

[00:05:04.400] - Earl Shores

Yes, they were here. I didn't know that much about them. I did associate with Eric Benjamin. He was very outgoing at the time, and I invited him. He actually spent some time with my parents. I invited him over to dinner one time. Do remember that. I didn't have that much time been with any of the students, but when they had party weekends, I would not be with my family and be with the students. And they had Tennessee State would bring some students up and was socializing.

[00:05:41.060] - Earl Shores

That was the most socializing time I had with the students except in class.

[00:05:44.880] - Nicky Hamilton

So where did you graduate high school?

[00:05:48.430] - Earl Shores

High school were from Winchester after grade school and went to Townsend high School, which was all black. Then my senior year, we went to Franklin County High School. I graduated in 67, and that was a test of patience because some people wanted us to fail and I was determined not to fail. But anyway, I met some good people there. The guidance counsel was a very nice lady. Her name was Ella Mary. She a Mary. She was a very, very good lady to work with. And she steered me toward junior College, which was in Chattanooga.

[00:06:26.240] - Earl Shores

So Franklin County High School was where I graduated.

[00:06:29.240] - Nicky Hamilton

So you obviously grew up in during changing times can you say a little bit more about whether you are aware of those changes and then who helped you to make sense of those changes?

[00:06:41.900] - Earl Shores

A flashback. I grew up in the changes, yes, because that was the beginning of um integration. And it

was just a different time. But I guess it was all based on my ability to deal with changing times, through family values, through Christian values. I was able to cope with those I experienced some trying times with. My father was killed in a car accident. That when I came my military. I tried to research it and I couldn't find any records on that, never happened. That was very bad.

[00:07:27.120] - Earl Shores

I think went I first integrated school. I felt I was placed on the path to fail and I was determined not to fail. It was times when George Wallace was in Chatanooga. It was time when riots were going on and I was working the cross blue Shields and the riot was going on right down the block. It was it was testing times. But, you know, I believe in people are people, and I believe that we should try to take a person as a person, not a person as a color, because they were individuals.

[00:08:07.980] - Earl Shores

Everybody is different and yourself to place your values on that person. So the value of the race it was it was challenging time for my faith took me through it.

[00:08:16.460] - Nicky Hamilton

So you mentioned that your father accident was as if it didn't happen. Can you say a little more about what you mean by that?

[00:08:26.560] - Earl Shores

In 67- this is right after graduation. And before I went to College, I think it was June 3rd, 67. My birthday was June 7, turn 18, but he was at work and it was this girl. Whitegirl. They was sitting and she was driving fast and she was passing his car and they hit head on. It was Econoline van, which is no protection. He was killed in a car accident, which was very difficult. And I had gone over it for years in my mind, I wanted to make peace with myself and her.

[00:09:07.660] - Earl Shores

So I tried to look her up. And when I came back to Winchester to try to find a record, they couldn't find a record that it ever happen. So cover ups like that was was difficult for me. But I can't live the rest of my life hating anybody because I hurt myself more than I do that person.

[00:09:28.320] - Nicky Hamilton

How did some of your experiences growing up shape your perspective? And maybe if you can also say something about your time at Sewanee, how that shaped your perspective?

[00:09:42.640] - Earl Shores

Growing up on a farm, being an only child I didn't have anybody to rely on, I learned to allow my own thinking, my own philosophy around Value system that was taught to me as a child. When I talk to I was taught in Church Christian faith and I found a lot of that in Sewanee, it was a lot taught in Sewanee about people. People are important and people are individuals. And we are all different, different cultures. Each individual is different. So in Sewanee is somewhat of a melting pot where you can communicate and talk about your differences.

[00:10:23.630] - Earl Shores

There was a lot of rich people when I went and there's a lot of smart people. And there was people that weren't as smart and people not as rich in somewhere. And they brought their own home values with them. And it's like a melting pot. And I think learning from those in what I was taught as a child and what I was raised, made a life richer. It was a great chance to come opportunity. Many people in this area, even in Sewanee today, have not ventured into different world culture and many different places.

[00:10:59.090] - Earl Shores

And this just sort of enrich that.

[00:11:00.500] - Nicky Hamilton

When you think of, like some of the fondest memories, at Sewanee, what comes to mind?

[00:11:08.720] - Earl Shores
Fondest memories? PG?

[00:11:15.100] - Nicky Hamilton
Whatever you're willing to say.

[00:11:21.900] - Earl Shores
Foundest memories. I have a lot of memories of Sewanee. I enjoy working at the fire Department. Met a lot of people there. I learned about being firemen, worked for the police Department, learn about being a policeman, civilian style. I really enjoyed that. Those are fond memoires. Party weekend was nice. Academics was hard. But I remember those study days we had because we had six day classes. I don't know where that goes on to, but six days. Yeah, I know. And everybody had to wear ties and those ones. I know a lot has changed.

[00:11:56.700] - Earl Shores
But I remember the structure about the free time that I had take my trip back out in the Woods. And it was such a tranquil out there with the foxes, dear, and bear just out there alone. That was very peaceful

[00:12:18.270] - Nicky Hamilton
Where there other people of color on the fire team or the police?

[00:12:24.370] - Earl Shores
Fire Department and police. There was one guy Melvin Cuningham he was a local person.

[00:12:31.100] - Nicky Hamilton
Say his name again.

[00:12:32.330] - Earl Shores
Melvin Cuningham. He always want to be a policeman. He used to come up and watch the police cars just so he could drive him, point a to point b to watch them coming back. And he became a dispatcher as well. And he was on the fire Department. He was the only person the local person at the time of color that was involved in those two departments while I was here. And I was involved in primarily because I was a policeman in the military. And I just thought, David Green, I met him.

[00:13:08.840] - Earl Shores
He was a little kid at the time, and that was with him and his father at the time. We were good friends and actually, yeah, I was playing Cupid when he when he got married. That was a lot of fun. So, I mean, I had a lot of good times, more good times than bad times in Sewanee.

[00:13:29.920] - Nicky Hamilton
Yeah. Can you say a little bit more about challenges that you experienced at Sewanee?

[00:13:35.260] - Earl Shores
The biggest challenge I had was academics, and I couldn't believe the people were so kind. I guess that was the biggest challenge was what happened. It was rough on me. I had I had tutorials and one class in particular, which I won't mention within. And don't check my GPA that I didn't do well three times. But I was determined I was going to pass it because I was determined that I would not let this beat me.

[00:14:06.760] - Nicky Hamilton
What about socially?

[00:14:08.650] - Earl Shores
Socially? I had my wife, I had my son and then my daughter was born as I was leaving here.

[00:14:17.050] - Earl Shores

And I had family, cousins, a lot of cousins, a lot of cousins. Quite a few cousins here in Sewanee and people that I knew from Church. So socially, I didn't have a problem because it's easy. It was easy to go to school here if you had family, it's a challenge to go to school here, big challenge, if you don't have family, because in a way, Sewanee has its own community.

[00:14:39.740] - Nicky Hamilton

Were your kids born here(AM)?

[00:14:41.250] - Earl Shores

One.

[00:14:43.220] - Nicky Hamilton

Which one?

[00:14:44.330] - Earl Shores

My middle child. My first child was born when I was in the military and my youngest--

[00:14:50.810] - Nicky Hamilton

His name is? Your first child?

[00:14:51.180] - Earl Shores

Ivan. Flight attendant, now international flight attendant. My daughter that was born here. She's in Sandusky. She's a hair stylist. I want her to come a pilot, but she wanted to do hair, so she's she's a good one. My youngest is electronic technician for the Cleveland Clinic. So he gets to tear up things and fix them. That's what he always do--buy him toys he'd take them apart and then he can put them back together.

[00:15:20.460] - Nicky Hamilton

How old were your kids when you moved away from Sewanee? Did they grew up here?

[00:15:24.780] - Earl Shores

No they didn't. Ivan was four cause he was born just before I came here. Evette was born here, then we left. So she was what, probably seven-- she was she was almost a year old. So they have hardly any memoires. Evette has none. My oldest has memories because he went to Sewanee Public School system downtown.

[00:15:52.660] - Nicky Hamilton

Okay, out of some of the things that you learned from your parents and your mentors or your teachers, what would you say or what feels the most valuable to you?

[00:16:08.610] - Earl Shores

At this moment? People, relationships, take a person as a person instead of person as a class or a ethnic group. To me, that's the most important. I practice that today in my career and my retired career and my I'm in now. I think that's the most important people. At one time I work for IBM, I was a computer programmer systems person that was boring as heck, you get a project, they throw it over in the corner, you come out with an answer. I like dealing with people.

[00:16:46.300] - Nicky Hamilton

If there were one or two things that you would want people to most remember about one your childhood and then two about your experiences here in Sewanee, what would that be?

[00:17:01.560] - Earl Shores

Never give up. If you start a challenge, finish it. Don't be a quitter. To me that's the most important thing. If you set a goal, stick to it. It may get hard. It makes seem impossible. But don't give up. To me that's the most important thing. And I always set a goal that that you want. Not because somebody say you want and somebody say that you should do. Follow your dreams.

[00:17:33.340] - Nicky Hamilton

Now, would you say that you wanted to attend Sewanee as a University or who encouraged you to attend?

[00:17:41.340] - Earl Shores

Well, growing up, I had no dream about going to Sewanee because it was out of my reach financially, academically, any kind of way. I think coming to Sewanee is a great opportunity for anyone. I'm glad to have that opportunity. It was my stepfather that said that I should do it. And then my mother pushed me. I'm my mother's baby. Still, I always try to please her. And

[00:18:14.560] - Earl Shores

I wish that everybody has an opportunity to go here. And I'm very thankful that I had that. And I have encouraged people over the years to go, and some people didn't have the push that I had to go here. And I think it's a good school. It has its challenges like it every place else. But there's no perfect place. But for what I wanted out of life, this gave it to me. Gave me a chance to go into different areas. The Liberal arts education is good because I've done quite a few different things and Liberal arts education allowed me to adapt.

[00:18:51.740] - Nicky Hamilton

What was your wife doing while you at school?

[00:18:54.760] - Earl Shores

She was taking care of me. (laughs) No, she had graduated from nursing school in Delanga school of nursing, went out. And while we first got married and then when she graduated, she moved with me to a base in Mississippi. So when she came up here, she worked for the University Hospital, University of South Hospital. And so I became her dependent at that time. And then full time employee could have benefits for their dependents. So technically, I became her dependent. So she was an REN there and She had a good career as an RN there.

[00:19:30.450] - Earl Shores

She went to Ohio RN there she works as a Dialysis nurse, step down nurse, surgery and emergency Room nurse. So really good. She's retired. I don't know how to retire.

[00:19:42.440] - Nicky Hamilton

And some of those benefits. Did you all get any benefits through the University? Because your wife was an employee that time.

[00:19:50.420] - Earl Shores

I did at that time as she is an employee and I became a dependent. So I got tuition out of it, which was a gigantic benefit. I was drawing my VA education benefits. Plus I worked on work study. Plus, I worked at the police Department in Dechard. So actually, with the benefits they gave me and my other benefits from the military and my work, we lived comfortably as a student. We didn't struggle, as a student. And thank God, when I graduated, I had no bills! The Masters is a little more of a challenge, but I had to work that out later.

[00:20:33.450] - Nicky Hamilton

So are there any final thoughts you want to say about you experience at Sewanee?

[00:20:40.810] - Earl Shores

I thank God for the opportunity of being a student at Sewanee, and I would like to offer that chance for other students of color to come here. I think they've definitely enriched the history and the culture of Sewanee. And there's a lot to learn. Sewanee had a history of being in leadership when it comes to integration in this county, they did a big part of it. Of course, there's always skeletons in the closet, but we'll leave those there. And for me, personally, I think they did a good job and trying to bring more minorities and also bring in many different cultures.

[00:21:29.590] - Earl Shores

At one time, I understand was all male white school, and then things started changing as soon as they allowed women to come. It just keeps changing. And I think at least the part that I've experienced has been the changes for the good.

[00:21:45.500] - Nicky Hamilton

Yeah. Well, Mr. Earl Shores, thank you so much for your time today. It's been an honor and a privilege to hear your story. So thank you for sharing that with us, and we really appreciate it.

[00:21:58.340] - Earl Shores

Thank you. Nicky, for the opportunity to play, to speak on a few things.