

**OH 18 OMA Oral History Collection**  
**Carl Deiz**

**Date:** May 30, 2012

**Location:** St. Philip the Deacon Episcopal Church, Portland, Oregon

**Length:** 01:27:06

**Interviewee:** Carl Deiz

**Interviewer:** Chris Petersen

CP: Chris Petersen

CD: Carl Deiz

[00:00:00]

CP: Ok Carl, if you would just go ahead and introduce yourself again today. Give us your name and today's date and our location.

CD: I don't hear too well, if you talk softly like you were I don't hear you.

CP: So your, name, today's date, and our location.

CD: Carl Deiz, May 30, 2012, and St. Philip the Deacon Church in Portland, Oregon.

CP: Carl, I'm interested in learning more about your life as a child here in Portland, if you could talk a little bit about your childhood, maybe the neighborhood you grew up in? What that was like?

CD: Well, I was born in Portland in 1920 and lived there until after the World War II. What it was like? Its hard to say, just an ordinary neighborhood, went to grade school there, then to high school from the same house. I really don't know which way you want me to go.

CP: Well, what was your neighborhood? Was it mostly African American folks, or was it racially mixed?

CD: It was racially mixed. There were about three African American families within a mile and were about four or five Chinese families and all the rest of them were white families.

CP: Did people relate to one another pretty well, did they get along ok, or did it feel more segregated?

CD: There was no feeling of segregation, it was just the fact that you were the only family and you related to the neighbors in what seems to be a normal fashion.

CP: What kinds of things did you like to do when you were a child? Did you play sports?

CD: By child do you mean up to six?

CP: When you were, let's say, up to your teenage years.

CD: Up to when?

CP: Up to your teenage years, when you were young.

CD: We, there was not activities such as you find nowadays. We joined the boy scouts, my brother and I were both in boy scouts, troop 39, we were the only two blacks in the troop and it didn't seem to make any difference. We met at Richmond School, for the most part, and that seemed to be the only group. We went to the Presbyterian Church which was about seven blocks away for sort of a summer school. There was nothing like that at St. Philip's at that time, and so we went there for their summer classes. I felt that we learned quite a bit through those summer classes, more about the history of the, not of the church, but the beginning of Christianity and the early days. Learned more there then we did any place else.

[00:06:44]

CP: I know your brother was a track and field athlete; did you participate in athletics when you were that age as well?

CD: Well, when I was in high school I went out for track, but that was about it. I didn't try baseball or basketball or any of the other things.

CP: So scouting was one of your main extracurricular activities when you were growing up?

CD: Yes, it was a weekly thing and we had scout camp that we would go to during the summer, usually a week or two of camp.

CP: How long did you stay in boy scouts? Did you get to be an eagle scout?

CD: No, we never built into the scouts, didn't even reach life and that's a pretty low level. In fact I can't remember what the grades were as you came along. It was only one

or two grades of scouting, we never, always looked forward looked at the eagle scouts as something that was attainable, but never thought of reaching for it.

CP: Did you have a job when you were growing up?

CD: Paper boy. At that time there was a weekly paper called the, I don't know what it was called. I thought of it this morning, but it's escaped me right now. But it was a weekly paper, it isn't delivered anymore. I don't know how long ago it gave out, but that was 50 years ago.

CP: Did you enjoy school?

[00:09:56]

CD: Yeah, school was a pleasant time and classes were interesting. I guess I enjoyed going, I went without problems.

CP: Was it mainly white kids at this school or was it racially diverse?

CD: Well, in grade school there were no other blacks at the school we were in and that didn't seem to make much difference. In high school there were...by the time I graduated I think there may have been four blacks in the school. There were no segregated clubs of blacks that I know of, there were none in that school, there may have been some in other schools, in schools such as Jefferson, but not that I know of.

CP: So, it sounds like you were treated pretty well growing up, for the most part.

CD: Yeah.

CP: What were your parents like, how would you describe your parents' personalities?

CD: Well, my dad was a waiter on the railroad and my mother never worked, she was always a homebody. She was, I would think, more athletic than most. She could about outrun us until we got up to the top grades of grade school. She was always active.

CP: So, your dad was gone a lot for his job?

CD: Yes, you're out three days, home two days and that's about the way it would work.

CP: What were some of the things you all did as a family together? What was important for the family to do things together? Was church part of that?

CD: No it wasn't. The grandmother lived and mother lived together with my dad. Grandfather passed away when we were quite young. They were all very active with the church. My dad sang in the choir and mother was part of the guild and did work like that.

[00:15:04]

CP: You grew up during the great depression? Do you have any recollections of what that was like, the difficulty of living during the great depression?

CD: None at all. At that time my dad worked and we never seemed to notice it with any difficulty.

CP: How about any of your friends, did you notice anything of their lives?

CD: Not really.

CP: Well, I want to talk to you a little bit about Tuskegee, and I'm wondering what your first impressions were of the whole Tuskegee program when you arrived there initially.

CD: Well, this is a strange situation because my brother had gone to Tuskegee. He had volunteered and went in as an aviation cadet. He had graduated and was a pilot before I was drafted. I had applied also but the situation was such that you...there was quite a backlog of people trying to get in, and I was drafted. And when I was drafted, my letter arrived saying that I could be accepted as a Tuskegee cadet, but it was too late then. And so I was drafted and went to Alabama as my first place. And my first place to realize that segregation was the army. You may not have realized that much in your home town of Portland, Oregon but when you got into Alabama and the army you realized that segregation was a fact. And it was a fact until about, maybe, about just a few years ago. I'm sort of...my mind is sort of wandering because just thinking that segregation ended in the army and I just wonder is it also going to end in the church. But that's another problem. Now I'm in Alabama and from there I went to another airfield in...

CP: Was it Arkansas?

[00:19:42]

CD: Yeah, I think so. And then from there I went to training as a officer candidate school in Miami. That was a 90 day school and I graduated from there and then I was sent to Tuskegee. And that was my first time, my second time for seeing Tuskegee. When I was in Alabama my brother flew over one time to Maxwell Field, Alabama and picked me up and took me back to Tuskegee where I spent an afternoon and an evening

with him and had dinner at the officers club and then took the bus back to my airfield which was about 40 miles away. And now I have arrived at Tuskegee and I was assigned to a training cadets, I was assigned to the same captain who had requested me from Alabama but had...didn't accept his change. So he said "So you finally have arrived". So that was odd, it was Captain Jones, was the head of the squadron. I have trouble remembering whether they called them the squadrons or exactly how they designated the units. But he was captain of a unit and I was assigned to him and from there I went and got assigned to Pilot Training, which meant that about 6 months after I had tried to get in earlier, I finally made it. Unfortunately I passed everything and got ready to graduate and flunked the final eye exam. And then I decided to, basically, to get out. And I got out basically because they had so many black officers that they didn't know what to do with them. They stacked them up at Tuskegee and then you could apply to get out as excess or whatever. So I got out, came home and signed up for University of Portland.

CP: What was the Pilot Training like that you had at Tuskegee, can you tell me a little bit more about the training that you did?

[00:24:30]

CD: It was three classes; your primary class was at Tuskegee Institute, which was about 40 miles away from the Tuskegee Airfield. You had your primary training there and that's where you first got your solo training. And you had several hours of solo flight before you left your primary group. Then you went to Tuskegee Institute for basic and advanced. The basic training was about two months in a aircraft that had a fixed wheels on the thing, the wheels were always down. Then you completed that training and you went to advanced training and at advanced you had an aircraft that had wheels when you took off, the wheels would fold up. And you had two months training there. I got enough training there that when I got out I was able to get my civilians pilots license. And so I became a civilian pilot and flew out of Troutdale for just whenever you wanted to take someone up for a ride, you could give them a ride around, out from the field at Troutdale.

CP: Was that something you ever thought about pursuing as a career?

CD: No, I never thought of that.

CP: Were, so were the people who were doing the training at Tuskegee, were they white or were they black folks?

CD: They were both. The pilot training, at the initial part of it, was all white officers. When my brother came back from overseas, he became a trainer. And some of the blacks got into the training end of it because they had a lot of time with no true

assignment. They weren't being sent overseas initially. And so they were training mainly in Michigan and they got involved in coming back to Tuskegee Airfield and doing some training for the pilots, for the training people there. But it was sort of strange the way it warped you. By not going overseas, they were trying to find reasonable jobs for them to do.

CP: So were there, was, did, was there a sense of... You talked about the segregation within the army but you had the white trainers and the black soldiers who were learning from them. Did you have a sense of tension between those two groups or was there not so much?

[00:30:06]

CD: No, it didn't seem to make any difference.

CP: What was it like for you to be exposed to black folks from other parts of the country, from the South, where they'd had a very different experience than you growing up?

CD: I didn't have that much interaction. I just stayed usually with a group of one or two people that I was acquainted with and we sort of hung out together. But any relation between the...the relationship between the whites and the blacks was not a group where they operated together except in their work. There was no living in the same are or anything like that.

CP: Do you feel that the Tuskegee Airman have been represented accurately in movies or books or in the things that you've read or seen on tv?

CD: I think so, I think they've given them a pretty good showing of...the problem is, I think the most interesting show was *Red Tails*, which is currently being shown at some theaters around but the only problem with *Red Tails* is that it eliminates Tuskegee all together. Tuskegee is where they trained initially and this gets them already through training, through...and already overseas, which is quite a story in itself, of how they trained and went to Michigan and trained more and then some were shipped overseas and some flew airplanes overseas. My brother was with a group that flew from the states and flew their airplanes to North Africa. But there was...at that point they were still a completely segregated unit. No whites involved at all.

CP: Did he talk much about the missions that he flew as part of the Tuskegee Airmen with you? Your brother?

CD: Not at all.

CP: Not at all? He didn't talk about the War?

CD: Not at all.

CP: Really? What was your brother like? Tell me a little bit more about him.

[00:34:31]

CD: Well, he was more athletic, he was a track man mainly. He did go out for football one year but he stayed away from it from then on. And he was given a scholarship to University of Oregon, a track scholarship, and that's where he stayed for three years. He didn't finish there because he volunteered for the cadet training and missed his, the end of his fourth year. So he had about three and a half years of college before he went to Tuskegee. And at Tuskegee he graduated there, he got his commission and he was stationed...he was there two different times, he was there before he went to Michigan and then they went overseas and then over to Africa and then to Italy and then he came back. And...I have trouble putting his life together, it's because he was at Tuskegee when they had B-25 bombers there at one time. I think they did. And he would, he would fly one of those, fly it to Portland with group of three or four people, you know, would come up and visit.

CP: Did he stay in the military after the War?

CD: He did, he stayed in the military for a number of years and he got involved in the development of landing planes and such as that where you didn't, where you would land on instruments only. And he was in the development of that for quite awhile. Instrument landings and things such as that. And then he got out of the service and...and worked for the state of Ohio. I'm trying to think of, well, he was a parole officer for the state of Ohio for awhile. Because he said once when he wanted to come home he decided the best thing to do was put his guys back in jail, so he'd know where they were when he got back. Don't know how much was fun of that or not.

[00:40:10]

CP: Were you in Portland when the Vanport Flood happened in 1948? Do you have any memories of that?

CD: Yes, I was. I had a residence in Vanport which was a secondary residence, I still had my home but I had a residence at Vanport and when the flood came I lost a very nice radio and record player that was about the only thing of my own that was there because Vanport supplied you with your beds and your base equipment was part of Vanport. But that was about the only thing, I think, of mine that I lost at Vanport.

CP: But you knew a lot of people who were affected by it, by the flood?

CD: Yes, uh-huh. No one seemed to be, no one that I knew, seemed particularly disturbed by it. Most of them moved to Portland and got reasonably good housing in Portland, the ones that I knew. I didn't know that many people in Vanport because I was sort of a temporary resident.

CP: How did you meet the woman who became your wife?

CD: We both worked for the Federal government. And...I'm trying to think, at that time she had come from New York City with her son Bill. She had separated from her husband and they came out to Portland. And I'm having trouble trying to figure out...she was working for Bonneville, in the library and...Now I'm...When I met her I think she was working for the Federal Government and I was also working for the Federal Government when we met. And we just started going together. I was still living in Southeast Portland, the same place I'd been since birth and we went together for awhile and we got married. That's the simplest way to put it.

[00:46:29]

CP: So she went to Law School and became a lawyer and then a judge. And she was the first African-American Female judge in Oregon, correct?

CD: Right. And see she...After she left Bonneville and she went to work for attorneys at...And was working for them about a year and one of them was Graham Walker. And he said, suggested that she oughta go ahead and go to Law School. And they also assisted her in the beginning of going to Law School. But she, at that time Law School was a night law school. And that was before she moved out to Lewis and Clark and all that. They would meet at night downtown somewhere; there was the law school that took about three or four rooms in a building down there, downtown somewhere because that's where she started law school.

CP: Can you talk about the process about how she became a judge?

CD: Well, that process she became first an attorney and had her own office and she...I have trouble going back into history, I've...because at that time we were married, when she was going to school, because...I don't know. I'm at a loss for trying to build her time at...

[00:50:45]

CP: Do you remember if there was resistance to her becoming a judge?



CD: Huh?

CP: Was there resistance to her becoming a judge, do you know?

CD: No, none that I know of. She...The only problem was setting up, you had to set up your own organization, and that was, she had a couple of attorneys that were, that she had met and worked with as an attorney when she decided to try for the judge, they helped her set up the organization to run. Because you...The thing that helped her a lot was once she graduated she went to work for the state in...you're going to have a lot of blank space on this tape. She went to work for the state and I'm trying to think of the organization she worked for. I can't think of it off hand, but it was an organization that helped the word SAIF is the initials, but I can't think what they stand for. But that organization is one that she worked for. And in that they did work similar to a judge. And that was what sort of got her into going from that to the judge. Because I think that's where the step that was made.

CP: You must have been very proud to have her be the first black judge in this state.

[00:54:45]

CD: Well, I felt that...that she really wasn't the first black, I mean there were...Aaron Brown was a judge. And he was in a different capacity but as a judge and ... I don't know. She became a judge first in the Juvenile Court and, yeah, that's where she first became a judge, in the Juvenile Court and then she graduated. She applied for the Circuit Court and then when she...and each time she won, she was elected. I don't think she was ever defeated. So, then she was Circuit Court judge and stayed there for...several terms.

CP: Did you help out with those campaigns for her election?

CD: I assisted where I could, mainly in helping keep on track of the money and the various situations. There was always the necessity for having two or three strong people in the organization in order to run and both times she's had good people with her and behind her on that. It would be worthwhile to note who they were but I would have to go back to get that, I can't remember all those things from 30 years ago.

CP: Did you participate at all in the Civil Rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s?

CD: Not...Not as such. I was part of an organization that was very much involved. My trouble is not knowing of this question, I would have to go back to look to the name of the organization and things like that and which parts I was involved with.

[01:00:51]

CP: Was it the Urban League?

CD: I was a member of the Urban League, but not basically in a Civil Rights area.

CP: Do you recall what the impact of the Civil Right movement was in this area? The things that were happening with Dr. King down south for example?

CD: The only thing is the Civil Rights movement arrived...Was already organized and pretty well underway when it arrived here. Yeah, I would have trouble without checking back on what organizations were involved and how they were involved. My involvement was not great. I was a member of the Urban League and other organizations but taking a forward part in those organizations...I don't think I was ever that much involved.

CP: Well, the last time I was here, you talked about your relationship with this church a little bit, you were at St. Philip from 1921 - 1950 and then you were at St. Andrews from 1950 - 1963 and then you came back to this church at that point. Why did you decide to go to St. Andrew's for that period of time?

CD: It was mainly because St. Andrew's was within walking distance. Although I don't think I ever walked there. But we drove up there but it was in the neighborhood. I felt that, at that time we had children going to St. Andrew's and it was convenient to have that happen.

[01:05:25]

CP: You also mention that during that time that St. Philip changed from a mission to a parish and that was important?

CD: Yes, uh-huh. It...That was, I wish I could, if I had the names of the ones were involved in that change, I thought that was quite important but my part, I hadn't even got back into St. Philip's by the time that they had made their move from a mission to a parish. I was really happy to see them do that and that got me to thinking whether St. Andrew's is a mission or a parish because it was sort of on the edge but I don't know which way it is right now?

CP: What are your memories of Father Stone?

CD: Well, he gave me a car one time. He didn't drive, I mean he didn't have a car and someone gave him a car and he passed it on to me. And...He was a real force in the community. He...I'm trying to see where he...My part being that I've been out of the community for so long, living out near University of Portland, that I just don't see the

things that go on in the area of St. Philip's. Just, right now, we're thinking the area of Mother Boozer because she was more of a force in the community because she was in the school and things like that. Reverend Stone was helpful but I can't relate it.

[01:10:20]

CP: Well, how do you feel like the church has evolved over the time that you've been here? I mean it's certainly changed a lot, maybe talk a little bit more about the time that Alcena Boozer was the reverend here and since then.

CD: Yes, well, it had developed into the parish by the time she had arrived. I'm trying to figure whether the church was here at the time she arrived or was it still in the other building. I don't know exactly. She...I'm trying to think how the church has developed as...see, part of the problem with the church is where it is. The church, theoretically, was basically what was - have to go back to the word - in a Negro neighborhood. And now at the present time, the neighborhood is very mixed. And I've never been in the neighborhood itself but only as an observer of it. I feel that the church in itself has got much more...integrated. Any number of the officers and organization people that are currently working in the church are, it's a very integrated group. Much more than it was when Father Stone was here. There was maybe one or two whites that...Now, I would look out in the audience and it's more getting closer to half and half. And it's integrated like the army.

[01:15:02]

CP: Yeah, referring back to that earlier statement that you made about the church being segregated, how has that changed the dynamic of the church, do you think?

CD: I don't...I don't know that it has changed it that much because it, the growth was so gentle, it was never any problem in one group meeting with the other. They always have moved together very naturally and normally.

CP: I want to ask you about race relations in Portland. Do you feel like - that there has been a change over time, in the many years that you've lived here? In terms of the way the different races have gotten along in this city?

CD: I don't know, I...I've been here haven't seen a problem of how they've gotten along. I'm trying to think back through the years and um-

CP: It doesn't sound like you've had very many negative incidences in your life, as for as that's concerned.

CD: Only one, in about 6<sup>th</sup> grade, a fellow called me a name, and I chased him down the hall. But that was about the only thing I can remember. And...difficulties, I don't know whether it's been a problem with getting jobs or not. Myself I've normally been with the Federal Government. In first one job or another, its difficulties are just getting along and making your way.

CP: What did you think when Barack Obama was elected president? Did you ever think you would see that?

CD: I didn't think I would ever see that and I was quite happily surprised when it happened. But now he's been with us a few years and we're gonna try it again.

CP: The last thing I wanted to ask to you about was, the last time we talked you mentioned you've traveled an awful lot in your life, all over the world. Are there any particular experiences from your travels that made an impact that you'd want to share?

[01:20:22]

CD: I can't think of any that had any affect. Every place we've gone, we've been well received and sometimes we've traveled with groups and sometimes just Mercedes and I travelled. Never ran into a problem.

CP: Okay Carl, well, unless you have something else that you want to talk about, that's all I have on my list.

CD: The only thing was what I sort of refer to of the army becoming non-segregated and I'm just wondering if the church is going to be making that same move.

CP: What do you mean by that? Tell me a little bit more about that.

CD: Well, St. Philip's is considered a black church. Hardly you could consider it that if you come and look at it. But it's still listed as a black church and there are about...anywhere you go you'll find somewhere there's a black church. There are enough of them that they have an organization of...that meets somehow and somewhere as a black organization, which I've never quite figured out why. That's basically what I have been wondering. I don't know. What do you think?

CP: Well, it sounds to me like this church is an example of how things are changing. And over time that change will probably continue to happen around the country I would guess. I mean it happened in the military, it happened in this place so maybe it will continue to happen.

CD: Yeah, well, I just wonder how much background can hold it off and...

CP: But you would like to see more change in that direction?

CD: Yes, I feel that I was at St. Andrew's for a number of years and part of the organizations and went to the convention as a member of St. Andrew's with Father Four [?] who was the minister there at the time. And I just, I just don't see why it needs to be separated but whether or not it's a worthwhile thing to be separated in order to get the group together whereas there may not be enough feeling for one or two to go in to a church and be the new negro in the area or how do you do it? For example the church over here, the handy one, has one or two blacks but I can't think of any other church where any go at all and yet there are numerous black churches which have no whites which is the same thing only the other way around.

CP: Okay, well, thank you Carl.

**[end 01:27:05]**