

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

**Date:** May 19, 2012

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

**Length:** 00:33:32

**Interviewee:** Carl Deiz

**Interviewer:** Chris Petersen

CP: Chris Petersen

CD: Carl Deiz

[00:00:00]

CP: Okay Carl, so we are going now. If you would, just go ahead and state your name for me.

CD: Carl Deiz.

CP: Spell your last name for me.

CD: D-E-I-Z.

CP: Carl, when were you born?

CD: November 16, 1920.

CP: And where were you born?

CD: Portland

CP: Have you lived in Portland most of your life?

CD: All of it. Except in the service.

CP: Were your parents - where were you parents, where were they born, were they born in Portland too?

CD: No they weren't. My mother was born in Nebraska and my dad was born in the West Indies.

CP: Oh really? And how did they make their way to Portland?

CD: He made his way on the railroad and my mother came out with her mother and father in about 1918 to live in Portland.

CP: And why did that family move to Portland, from Nebraska?

CD: Not sure.

CP: And they met in Portland?

CD: And they met in Portland.

CP: And so did you father continue to work for the railroad? That was his occupation?

CD: He did. Yeah, until he retired.

CP: And was your mother employed?

CD: No.

CP: Did you have any siblings?

CD: I had one older brother.

CP: And what was his name?

CD: Robert.

CP: Is he still alive?

CD: No, he passed two years ago.

CP: So you went to school in Portland? And what schools did you go to?

CD: In Portland. Richmond Grade School and Franklin High School.

CP: So are they in Northeast Portland?

CD: No they are in Southeast Portland.

CP: And so that's the area that you grew up in then.

CD: Yeah.

CP: So after you graduated from high school you went into the military.

CD: No I worked on the railroad for a couple years.

CP: And what did you do in that job?

CD: A waiter.

CP: You were a waiter? Did you enjoy that work?

CD: It was work.

CP: Talking earlier amongst the group it sounds like that was an occupation, an industry that a lot of African-American folks were employed in at that time.

CD: That's right. It was a major source of work. The railroad, the Union Pacific and the Southern Pacific, and both of them had crews that worked out of Portland.

CP: Uh-huh. And so were you drafted into the military?

CD: Drafted.

CP: What year?

CD: I wish I could remember... 1942 I guess, maybe.

CP: And they, so where did they station you?

CD: I was sent to Montgomery, Alabama.

CP: And what was your impression of Montgomery, Alabama?

CD: Well, I never saw it. All I saw was the airfield and I don't...I was there a few months or so and I never saw Montgomery.

[00:05:01]

CP: So was that basic training? Or the training that you went through in Montgomery?

CD: Yes.

CP: And then where did you go after that?

CD: After that I went to... I don't know I'd have to get a map to see where I went. I went to Arkansas I think for a short time.

CP: Where did you spend the majority of your military career? In what area or areas?

CD: Mainly in Alabama.

CP: So you were part of the Tuskegee Airmen-

CD: Yes, but that was a long way from the part of, where you left me.

CP: Oh, okay. Can you take me through that?

CD: Oh, okay. When I was in Alabama, my brother was in Tuskegee, Alabama and he talked to one of the captains there to see if I could get transferred over to Tuskegee and he sent the word over to make the transfer to Tuskegee and I realized that if I went to Tuskegee that would mean I would be where there were hundreds of people trying to advance themselves that are already in the service and so I turned the offer down and went to Arkansas. And I was able to get out of Arkansas to officers school in Miami in about a month. Which I felt if I'd had gone to Tuskegee I'd have been lined up behind the thousands. Anyway, that got me to Miami. I got out of there in I guess about 90 days. And then I was sent to Tuskegee. And when I went there the first captain I meet is one that says "Oh so you finally arrived!"

CP: And you spent the rest of the time in Tuskegee for the most part? Your military days?

CD: Sorta. I applied for the cadet training which at that time I was commissioned so the application didn't go through the normal situation. But anyhow, I got assigned to a cadet group. There were about 30 cadets and 4 officers in the group. And since we didn't live with the cadets or eat with the cadets, we stayed at the Bachelor Officers Quarters, BOQ, and at the Officers Club.

[00:10:05]

CP: What duties did you have during your military service?

CD: I spent one full set of time as training...pilot training. I went through the full thing from Basic to Advanced training. Then at the end of that time, upon my last eye exam, I didn't pass it. So I stayed at Tuskegee and became a supply officer at Tuskegee. My class graduated and went on to fly and up to Michigan, I think is where they went initially. But then they were overseas later.

CP: And your brother was a pilot.

CD: And my brother was a pilot.

CP: When were you discharged from the military?

CD: In '45 I think.

CP: And you returned back to Portland at that point?

CD: Yeah. I returned to Portland and I continued in the military as assigned to the airbase. Not as active duty but as assigned there just so that you could continue to stay associated with the military. And I stayed there until, oh, two or three years and then I was at the University of Portland and I got out of the...and I dropped the military ties all together.

CP: So did you go to UP on the GI Bill?

CD: Yes.

CP: And what did you study?

CD: I studied Business Administration I guess.

CP: Did you finish your school work there?

CD: Yes.

CP: And then you entered the work force at that point?

CD: Yes. I entered the work force as a federal employee. I think I was at Bonneville Power initially.

CP: And in what capacity were you at Bonneville Power? What were you doing there?

[00:15:07]

CD: Initially I worked the front door. I mean, as people came in I would tell them where to go and what they want...who they wanted to see and things like that. But then I got assigned to the accounting department. That's where I stayed for awhile.

CP: So you worked at BPA for several years?

CD: Yes, mm-hmm.

CP: Did you eventually go to a different company or a different organization?

CD: My, you're getting me to go back in years. I worked for Bonneville and then I worked for the outfit down at Tillamook...It was...I should have, if I'd had an idea you were going to ask about this, I could've looked back into history because I worked the Forest Service and I...a certain time with them. And when I was in Tillamook it wasn't in the Forest Service, it was...Lord knows who it was.

CP: Were you still doing accounting this whole time or was it different work?

CD: It was always basically either accounting or supply. One way or another. And I wound up back in Bonneville again and I retired from Bonneville. I spend about 30 years there.

CP: So that was a building here in Portland?

CD: Eventually. I spent some time in Bonneville in Vancouver at the sub-office there in Vancouver, I was the supply officer there.

CP: So were you living in Southeast Portland during this time or did you...where did you establish your residence?

CD: In North Portland. Out near Portland University.

CP: And so you lived there for many years?

CD: Yeah, I moved out there in '49 and lived on Portsmouth Street. And then I think about '63 I moved to build a house on Chautauqua and moved there and that's where I am now.

CP: Is that also North Portland?

CD: Yeah.

CP: So that neighborhood has probably changed quite a lot over the years.

[00:19:37]

CD: Oh, did it! Because Portsmouth is a little further west than Chautauqua and when I was first out there, there was very little building between the two. And now there's a whole city out there! And just a couple of days ago I went out and drove around

through there just to see what it'd look like because one of my granddaughters had picked me up over on Portsmouth one time and she sort of drove through there but not any reason, just taking me back home. And it got me interested in going back and just this past week I went back and drove around through there and was just amazed about how much had built up out of there. It's practically a whole city.

CP: When did you meet your wife?

CD: In about 1948 I think. We were both working for the federal government. I was working for the federal government and she was too but she left the federal government and took a job with some attorneys. And from there she went on to law school and from law school to lawyering and to becoming a judge.

CP: Where did she go to law school?

CD: At Northwestern College of Law. That was before it became part of Lewis and Clark.

CP: What year were you married?

CD: '49.

CP: And how many children did you have?

CD: We had three children.

CP: And what were their names?

CD: Bill, and Karen and Gilbert. Bill had come from New York with his mother when she came out here in about '48 so that's part of what caused me to wonder about the timing there. Because she, when we got married I adopted Bill and then the other two children were born.

CP: Who has been influential in your life, what people have influenced you?

[00:24:33]

CD: That's a pretty difficult question. I feel that there hasn't been nearly the influence that you might expect. I spent time in college - four years at University of Portland - and then directly to work and didn't have any opportunity in-between times for influential people to lend a time. The only hand I can think of was when I was planning to go to Portland; I was influenced to go from engineering, which I thought I was going to take up to business administration. And that was influenced by the assistance of the

people at the University of Portland. And the minute I started working for the government I found out that the engineering was the way I should have gone because all of the initial, the opening jobs in engineering were two grades higher than all the business portions. But I was already there then.

CP: Well, this church is obviously important to you. What other things in your life have made an impact like this, if anything? Any other groups or organizations or...?

CD: Not that I can think of have had any bearing on the church. It didn't have so much influence as the fact that I just continued with accounting work with the church and still doing it.

CP: What are some of your hobbies?

CD: I was interested in photography, I was quite interested in picture taking. I've had a couple of cameras and used them pretty extensively. The thing I guess I, I might say I was interested in traveling. I've traveled around the states, followed Disneyland from the L.A. to the Florida. And in fact just about every year we'd be up to one or the other. We've traveled to Europe and we traveled to North Africa, we traveled to Japan and we made a short trip over to China. And that's about the way we spend our time until we had enough kids that it kept us from...Keeping them in school sort of cut down on the traveling to some extent.

[00:30:49]

CP: How about social life her in Portland? What were some of the places you'd like to go to hang out with your friends.

CD: Well, we weren't much of a builder of the social life. Can't think of anything I...I belonged to a fraternity but it didn't tie up too much of...too much time.

CP: Was that a fraternity from college or later?

CD: Later. No, there was no fraternities during the college years.

CP: What was the name of that fraternity?

CD: Alpha Phi Alpha.

CP: Are there any other important events in your life that you would want us to know about as we prepare to talk to you further in a couple weeks?



CD: I can't think of anything. No. I like to cruise. We did that as part of our traveling, we cruised to South America and cruised to Hawaii. No, I'm pretty thin on ideas.

CP: Okay, well, thank you Carl, I appreciate it.

**[end 00:33:32]**