

Steve Frasier

[second recording of multiple]

STEVE FRASIER: They'd better wake up because we're all in the same boat. We're figuring out a way to get this boat, or parts of our boat, to someplace else so that we can keep on worshipping. I do not believe for a moment (inaudible) that God gave us this consciousness of its awareness, and subsequently, would not obliterate it, especially if we're trying to understand. How can you not try when everything that's presented to us is so wondrous? Just the thought of this room and the evolution of this printed material, all the aspects of make this up, an environment. All of that came from a bunch of climbing in trees and stuff, and at the same time, the mind developing. And I think one of the most basic things that isn't often conveyed is that if you want to see someone else happy, be happy. Demonstrate it. And your demonstrative side make you do it out loud and make you do it with a real sincere -- as my old seventh grade teacher taught me his word stick-to-it-iveness [sic]. (laughs) That's the great preacher -- Peter. I told you about him. You have stick-to-it-iveness. My mother used to say it's sort of a cross between stubborn and patient. And I know you know what I mean by how the words of wisdom

not only come from babe, but they come from parents because they were babes once and they learned, and they give it back. But we've got two -- at least two and a half generations of parents that have abdicated their responsibility to their children. How do you fix that? It's become more evident every time you hear a newscast that somewhere along the line, your worth became nothing, and subsequently, you want -- you don't even know about passing on worthiness to your children. And I've been cracking at this thing for so long that if -- I guess that's what my mother meant and what Gertrude meant because I ain't quitting. (laughter) I ain't quitting and I -- somebody said to me one night at -- I think it was at a gig, and this person said, "I know you as a designer, product designer. What are you doing this way?" Well, hey. It's all part of the same thing. It's as they used to say, the whole ball of wax. Your intellect gives you an ingenuity to change media, to do whatever it takes to solve what you see as a problem. And I am so grateful to God that I've been given this consciousness, this purposefulness. And even with the audacity to feel as though if I've been given a job, and I know I have, that I know the reason why the job was given to me is because I'm worthy of it. And so I push at that, I push at that, and I

-- sometimes I have to really push harder than others because being challenged [00:05:00] in so many ways is thwarting to I would say the average individual, and I'd -- I don't think of myself as being extraordinary, but I ain't ordinary. See? Oh, no. No, I'm going to do something. So I get thwarted with stuff and I -- right now, I'm -- I am so -- I mean and this is heart to heart and I feel very comfortable with you about all of this. The woman that I am married to is such a brilliant person and has given her life to me, despite what I don't feel has been sufficient enough on my part because we are so financially strained. I mean strained. That's a -- one nostril above water. (laughter) And it's because our real estate stuff got messed up, and you know how that can come about. And at the same time, I am so equipped with a plan that I don't know the -- all of it because I haven't seen the last pages of it. But I know that I'm following the plan just right because I'm happy. I'm happy doing it. And yet, the challenges also along the way is that if you go to the west side of Chicago, or the south side, or Pilsen Little Village, or Evanston, Illinois, City of Chicago, and you present something that you know is of value, and every day, we know that moral value is our -- just something that has been stagnated a long time ago, and we need to revive that,

that first of all comes with personal conviction. And so people are -- have been dumbed down so much with William Lynch's manifesto, and they send folks out there following by the letter, and some of them wear blue. And that is not to pain all of them, obviously, and I believe that there are more of them that are good than there are bad ones, just like this planet. And yet, I wish there's some -- I hope there is some way that in the very near future we can bring back their original purpose as it was before they started enslaving people, that every society has had to have some kind of policing of governmental substance, and they vary. Sometimes with the wrong people running it and the like. But basically, believing that there are more of us than there are of them. We try to find them as much as possible and they -- if we get enough of them on the police force, they can return to being peace officers. That's what it was all about, governmental thing. People, society communing, being part of each other. And the mistakes that get made in human history is that they thought that this was the only way to do it. Hey, how about this? How about that is something that is not confrontational and causing some harm to somebody else at your expense? Because you've given up some of yourself because you aren't going to get no love back from that person. [00:10:00] And you get --

the greedier that you get, the more revengeful you make them. So stop messing it up, you guys. So I say I'm giving this much to what coming back home was really all about. There's so few of us here that I went to school with. Connie Bell, she was in my graduating class from Nichols, and I think that there are probably only a handful that were actually in my graduating class and all. But I'm glad that some of them are here. There have been so many of them that were -- that I encountered just because I was involved with the school system and with the -- got me into city government. But I cared so much about the high school. My -- I was so proud of being a graduate of ETHS and then being an Illini too -- didn't have to change colors. All of that. And a jock to boot. So all of that is just -- is part of the reason why I wanted to come back and give something back to this home that helped me nature the consciousness of my value. And I know that my mother and my dad -- they know that we are taking care of business, that -- they had three sons.

DINO ROBINSON: Remind me of where your parents came from, both of them.

SF: My father was born in Glencoe. It's because his mother and her first son, Adam Tillman, they came here from New Richmond, Ohio, and did domestic, and my father and his

father. I'm not exactly sure the years that they were married but I think my grandmother and -- sometime in the late '90s I think. I'm not positive. I haven't even looked at it. I mean that's -- that tells you a little bit about how I want to know all of this stuff about my ancestry but I haven't had time to delve into the way that I want to. So I do count on some of my cousins because there's some of them that (inaudible) but they're -- and they're even -- so I'm -- so my dad was born in Glencoe, but my grandmother came from New Richmond, Ohio, and this is all on my dad's side. And I'm not sure where Steven Richard Fraser was born yet, but it was -- I don't want to mix it up with my maternal grandfather because he was from Lexington. And I believe that my mother's mother, Nancy, was from Detroit. I didn't even -- one of these days, I'll find out all of this stuff. But I...

DR: No problem. I just put it -- you were meaning your parents but your father was born in Glencoe and your mother was...

SF: And my mother was born in Indianapolis. And they were -- they came to Evanston in separate families but met here. Nancy Brown was a member of Ebenezer. And her husband, Shirley Richard Brown, my mother's dad -- I believe that he was from Lexington. I'm pretty sure it's Lexington. Lexington, Kentucky. Whatever. They had a barber shop.

It is actually where Hecky's is right now. [00:15:00] And anyway, they -- there was a -- as I think about these things, I can almost smell what was th-- what it was like in those olden days kind of because we -- everything was close. Families knew each other. We knew the grocery store, [Dinkin's?] was up there up on -- right across from Foster Field, and Fleming's was up another block. My parents knew all of those people. There was another that was on Green Bay Road and another -- there were lots of corner stores where people got stuff to feed themselves. They didn't have cars and not too much of anything else, so walking was something that -- it depended on having grocery stores, and now I know you know all of this -- that kind of history. But as my wife -- ancestry is Sweden. She's the first generation born in American for both -- for her parents, and for whatever reason -- and I have great hesitancy talking about this probably because I've never told her how -- about my wanting to share with other people what you did for me to -- really to give yourself to me and know that the pain in your heart is that your parents gave you up. They disowned you. And this is a woman who was so physically beautiful, and that was from inside. She came upon herself knowing she's -- not even knowing she was growing up in a bigoted household. But things just

enlightened her as she went on because she's smart, and what a burden that is, when you have parents who are so racially intolerant and -- so I'm very hesitant to talk about it.

DR: If you want, I can stop the -- do you want me to stop anything?

SF: Yeah. (inaudible) it to be -- you have a (inaudible) for life.

DR: I'm going to guess it's probably more a little bit about Masonite and Container. While you were employed -- I want you to tell me a little bit about your experience at Masonite and at Container, and things that you did, and if, by chance -- are there any patents in your name that you designed something that was in your name as a representative of both Masonite and or container?

SF: Nothing that is physical other than my -- I was the art director for the company magazine and the -- when they first hired me, I did not work at the headquarter, the fifty-fifth floor at First National Bank building downtown. I worked at a subsidiary office that was called the Center for -- I can't even think of the name of it. It's just blank right now. But it was the sig-- there were two signature design studios in the City of Chicago, and we were their competitor. They were the ones innovating with

a lot of design things, and so were we. And so that's where I started to work in the beginning because I convinced them after Martin Luther King's assassination I had to do [00:20:00] something. So when I'm at Masonite, I suggested that I go to schools and talk to kids about this profession that I have that almost no one knows what it is. Because even my counselor at Evanston Township High School obviously didn't know what it was because she would've suggested it to me. So I want to go to school and I want to tell kids that I learned how to be a good student because I was interested in what I was doing, and art helped me do that. And I -- all of you -- any of you who like to draw, do that. Do that and express yourself that way. Draw whatever it is that you think is interesting and get to be good at it. Think about what it is you're doing. And when they -- they said, "OK, we'll do that. But we would like you also to do something else." And that was to be the art director for the company mag. And it had a publication that was I suspect probably -- I would say at least two or three -- maybe it was quar-- it was quarterly. It was a quarterly thing. So I guess that's the -- that's there in some archives or something like that. I don't know whether -- the company that I worked for very briefly, when I -- they were an offshoot of the Oster Company, and

it was called Campbell. And it -- I designed a hair clipper, and I never saw the product because I left and got more involved -- was there, I went to Masonite, and then to Masonite -- from Masonite to the Container Corporation of America. It really -- I can't believe I can't remember that place that I worked, the name of it.

DR: Here's why I ask that: because I want to look it up and see if I can find any -- your name mentioned in there. Your -- if this product that you sketched out before you left went into final production mode and if your credit was still there.

SF: That would be good to know. (laughter) Because sometimes -
- I mean you probably know Charles --

DR: Charles Harrison?

SF: Yeah, Harrison.

DR: And that's why I'm asking all these probing questions, because it's become so much. I'm like how many other people -- how many other designers were out there doing these things --

SF: And coming up with ideas.

DR: -- who produced stuff and came up with ideas but never credited for. And that's what I fear, is here you are in the cusp of all this and were you written out of the books or were you part of the books. And that's a serious

question. I mean you've obviously -- I mean you showed me the sketches of the clippers that you designed in your portfolio there. And it'd be interesting to see if -- did that come to fruition?

SF: I don't -- having never seen the -- there's so many things that I did as a design thing that I just lost total track of because there's so much of it. I mean even one summer, I worked at a screen printing office, and I -- we made the vinyl things that were labeling gasoline tank -- gasoline -

DR: Pumps?

SF: -- station pumps. And I just -- I created just this little, simple design that was an "S" and an "O" with a dot in the middle of it. Standard Oil. And I know nothing about how long that lasted, probably not at all. But every time I would go and fill up at a Standard Oil. I would kind of chuckle to myself [00:25:00] seeing that. And that was just a summer job. And I ran across something in -- digging through some things in my attic, and I found the -- a poster that I had designed for Advertising Age for the -- there's an annual thing that they did. Creative Work Style Workshop is what they called it, the annual Creative Workshop, and it was Crain business with advertising. And they first of all had me participate with them in the --

developing a program to reach the youth market. Now this all came about when I was the art director for Container Corporation of America, but Container is savvy enough to know that anything this guy does, it's a heightening profile for us. I mean they are -- they're not the product itself, but they package the products. And I was talking to them about being socially responsible because they would -- they had this thing where they would talk smack but they weren't -- people weren't doing things, so I just basically -- and it must've been a sub consciousness because I didn't know what I was going to do. I just knew that I had to do something to stop this dumbness that has people burning down where they live, despite the fact that I understood their per-- their frustration. But it's endangering children, all of that stuff is. And not only that, it's fueling the fire of hatred. I wanted to get in the way of that, and so I'm doing this stuff. So Northwestern -- Medill school people -- a professor named Steuart Henderson Britt called me and said, "I've been reading about you in the *Evanston Review* and the *Tribune*, and I want to know if you would be interested in helping to participate on a faculty that is going to design the next Creative Workshop for Advertising Age." And so they apparently got -- went to him, and so these Crain people and I went to several

meetings with them. And at the same time, I'm working for Container Corporation of America because they know that's a good liaison, especially since the more my profile gets heightened, the better it is that I'm able to do something that is going to reflect on them because I g-- I said -- and I did -- I made it clear to people that this was my idea. Nobody from Container came and got me. I sold this to them. And my eventful timeliness is that as I finished doing this workshop, and that's the one with Lucky Cordell, that thing. What I found was the poster that I created for the workshop, and it was so much a memory thing that I'm going to frame this thing. And ironically enough, I had a frame that was just right for it, and bang. (laughs)

DR: So you still have that poster?

SF: Yeah, I'll show it to you. And -- but the -- that whole thing of having given away so much of our time -- and my time is hers and vice versa -- and despite it all, I do know this much. That is I did not let them suffer in any way with any kind of humiliation, my son, [00:30:00] my wife. I said I'm going to be his dad. I'm going to be with him. So during the time that -- after I left city government, I started volunteering again. I mean everything from ECDC to all of those things that I was a part of when I was in city government. I was the guy --

you probably know who Alan Anderson is, right? I had Allan Anderson's job before they even invented it because there was -- I was on every committee that you could possibly imagine. Everything from CEDA -- no, CEDA, and I even designed that grassroots thing that (inaudible). The City-School Liaison Committee. And mind you, all of these are things that I stuck my nose into because I knew that this is part of what does the 360. I wanted all those people who were on those boards to know that I don't BS. I am here, and so I'm out and I'm meeting all the time. All the time. And -- but it is how I manage to make things happen, like the conception of and the initiating of the Evanston Arts Council. Nobody had thought about -- now when we -- I don't know. Maybe somebody did, but nobody did anything about it, and that was -- we have an art commission, yes. We have a human relations commission, we have a youth commission, and I'm on both of those, but not on the art commission because I thought the art commission was dealing with nothing but negative stuff, what you cannot do artistically. Now wait a minute. Something's wrong with that. (laughs) So I thought to myself -- and mind you, I'm already the -- I think at that time I was with one of the chairpersons of the community coordinated childcare, having done something with -- well with Neighbors at Work

by virtue of being on CEDA. I was on the board of directors of CEDA when it was Cook County Office of Economic Opportunity, and I was there by virtue of the fact that I was a representative of the City of Evanston there. Well, I'm not just going to be there and just do nothing. I thought -- looked around and I thought to myself Tom Fuller. You know who Tom Fuller was, right? Tom Fuller was -- that time, I think he was a vice president of CEDA board, but I -- that was the first year that I was there. And then the next year, he became the president, and in the process of that, I knew about people -- there were probably 24, maybe 25 members from surrounding collar communities of the City of Chicago, and Evanston was the one that was most well represented because first of all, you had least two there, Tom Fuller and myself. But I made sure that Tom Fuller got reelected because I was the chairman of the nominating committee. So year after year, Tom Fuller was there as -- and I also made that there were -- there were some other people who -- their residence was Evanston. So we had not just the two of us, but three other people from Evanston there. I mean so we stacked the deck, and I did as much as I could to make things like that happen. And when you're on the CEDA board, you also have to go to Neighbors at Work. I had the run-in when I told you about

the brothers who came in to -- and I was taking it for as long as I -- I mean I stretched it a whole lot, and that's the kind of thing that makes -- that is unsettling to my wife because some of them folks are crazy, and she also knows [00:35:00] that I have a streak in me that makes me feel protected. So I'm going to go and check out what's wrong, and sometimes I think about it and I think maybe I shouldn't have done that. But OK, I did it. I'm still here. But I know that all of these projects that I'm involved with do nothing but multiply because that profile thing means after I did this thing with Medill, that workshop was so successful. And while we were faculty training, putting together the agenda for this thing, and it turned -- it was at the Palmer House, and there were -- had to have been I would say easily 300 people from the businesses, Wall Street, all of that of that stuff is there. And they wanted to know how to -- how they can impact the youth movement, the young people. And so in one of those faculty, I'm thinking to myself so these are the guy -- I mean it was the first time being with that many of them. There were probably -- there were at least a dozen of us that had to plan this thing. And when they would get around to asking me -- because I'm with graphics with Container, etc., they get around to asking me about it and

I said, "Well one of the things that you could do is just really do what your slogan is," and I said, "In general, but more specifically, if your slogan is the real thing, why don't you use Ray Charles instead of somebody who's trying to sound like Ray Charles? Aretha Franklin." Why - - and that's what they were doing. And it's the real thing, and they got somebody trying to sound like -- and not -- it couldn't have been more than a month later, Ray Charles was doing it. Aretha was doing it. And never got any credit for that with -- but I wasn't exactly necessarily looking for credit, but then I -- as I kept making other things happen like the Developing of the Arts Council, I knew that that was -- and I say this because I was shrewd with this one. I really was because I -- OK, I know we don't have anything that promotes the arts, so -- and let me find out more about the arts commission, and I go to one of the meetings. I had no intention of taking on another thing, but I go to this thing and I realized that's exactly right. They just talk about you cannot put up a statue with -- here like that or whatever it is. So the chairman of that board was the art history professor at Northwestern board, the chairman. And I thought about it and I said, "OK." Just by sitting and watching him operate, he was very sens-- very self-centered person. You

know what I mean? Kind of a snooty sort of thing. Doctor James Breckenridge. OK. I did know of another person who was of his same stature, but in a different capacity. I knew a woman who was the president of the Evanston Symphony Orchestra because I knew their kids. Because they dug me because I'm a rhythm and blues, rock and roll, soul man. And I knew -- and I love classical music, so I've been to concerts whenever Evanston would have one at the high school or wherever. And then I thought yeah, that's it. So I invited Breckenridge [00:40:00] and Ellis -- Phyllis Ellis to my office at city hall, and they -- I just wanted to -- because I was the assistant city manager, I did -- that -- know they didn't know exactly what I wanted to say, but they knew that it probably had something to with his past experience. And after we had a -- we were having a cup of coffee, and I said, "I'd like to ask you if there would be a maze by which we could do a very strong push to promote the arts more and create a body that is -- that really just seeks artwork for the city. This is a very cultural city." We didn't have anything. This was before Richard Hunt. In fact, that's how I got to know Richard, where -- that first one that he put up in northwest Evanston. And so presenting that to them, because I knew that their personalities would be very much juxtaposed if

they couldn't come to some kind of agreement between them. Because you present something -- say if it's only a triangle, you and two and other people. Well if you present something to them that makes sense, out of sheer logic, they're going to have to agree, and they would hold each other accountable. That's what happened. This -- I mean Phyllis Ellis, this was one of the richest people in Evanston, and she's the president of the Evanston Symphony Orchestra for decades. And it happened, simply enough by her influence with all of the other rich people in Evanston that she knows, including the [Salks?], the Saxes, all of those folks, Adele Neems, and these are all people who knew me, who knew about me because one of the things that I did in the very beginning, even before I got into city government was to work toward fair housing. That's one of the first reasons that got me onto the human relations commissions. All of that stuff's entwined. I said, "Man." I -- obviously, I had to be around for some of these things, but I could feel it just heightening all along because the -- there was greater interest in theater. Well it wasn't just -- not just the graphic arts, but it was an expansion of that with regard to music, with -- regardless of its kind because I'm at -- at this time, I'm still a soul man. (laughter) So I continued to push that button.

But the -- I'm grateful that Container Corporation made it easier for me to leave there, despite what -- the potential for it. I believe we were less than two weeks away from going on the *Johnny Carson Show* because of what we were doing and going to schools in the City of Chicago and all over, any place. We would like for the Soul Experience to come to our school. And so all of that. And so Container -- I have a letter in -- saying that they were really close to coming into doing something with NBC and the *Carson Show*. And needless to say, in every group of people, there are going to be some naysayers, and one of those naysayers at Container Corporation was one of the vice presidents. And he was one that was -- there were three of them, and he was the one that was most -- the most reluctant. Subsequently, I would think he's just probably one of the -- the big bigot. Why should he be? He's so rich; he's got everything. But at any rate, so they're pondering my going to the Carson thing, and they need me to be able to -- to talk with him about it. And then [00:45:00] -- and this guy had a meeting since -- John, he's talking to one of the other -- John Massey. Want to see what we've agreed to, and Massey's response was, "He's already doing, it Rich." And Dick Bittenbender says, "Well I don't want him to say that he came to us with this project." (laughs) No. Hey,

OK. What? I'm going to be the Tom you send out? No. From the very beginning, I was clear with them, and so Massey knew that and this other guy, he knew it too, but he wasn't -- I just didn't see any response from him when it was decided that hey, this is my idea, concept, and to active it. And I'm doing it. I'm at Northern Illinois University, I'm at University of Illinois, I'm at Crane, I'm at Marshall, I'm at Englewood, I'm at schools all over because I'm delivering something that's, first of all, knocking kids out of their seats in the morning. Another anecdote (laughs) to this one. We're doing Crane -- no, I'm sorry, Marshall, and the show is supposed to start at eight o'clock. I get there with my guys. We had a minivan that had Soul Experience on the side of it. We get there, and we unload, and go into the auditorium. And the guy who is the principal, his name was Henry Springs. And I don't see him right away, but the janitor let me in -- let us in the entrance to get closest to the stage center. And we're doing prepping, and then the principal comes in the auditorium from the back of the auditorium, comes down, and he asked for me. And I must've been in the bathroom or something. I go through a whole bunch of prep stuff. (laughs) That is a ritual. That's just what I do. So I didn't see him, and he says to -- he tells one of my guys

to come to see him. So I do, I come to see him in his -- going to his office. He says, "Just so that you know this, the Panthers are going to be here." And it's very obviously a controversial thing. And of course, they apparently heard that I'm there from Container Corporation of America. So -- and he said -- and I -- he said, "I just think it's only fair that -- to tell you, and you know how volatile this situation is." And I said, "Hey," I'm like, "OK, we'll do it. Ain't nothing we're afraid of. Hey." So maybe they'll like the show. So I'm kneeling by the -- it's a proscenium stage and I'm kneeling in the front of it and going through the -- some of the music or what we were going to do and just making some mental notes about what I want to make sure that I emphasize. And I'm doing that, and then I go away for a minute, and then come back. And I'm doing it again, kneeling down on the stage, and then all of the sudden, I feel somebody walk up and they walk up to about as close as you are to me right now. And I'm -- right now I'm concentrating because I want to make sure that I change the key of this song we're going to do. And so I sense this person and I look up, "Hey, bro. How you --" and no smile. "Who sent you?" And I said, "Huh? What do you mean?" And he said, "Who sent you?" I said, "I did. I set this up." "Who is Container Corporation

[00:50:00] of America?" I said, "That's who I work with. But it was not their idea that I do this. This is mine." And he was sufficiently convinced that he said, "OK." Then he walks away. Next thing is that four Black Panthers are standing by the doors and then the kids are coming. And you know how kids are when they go into an assembly. This one, they might be a little more subdued because there's going to be some damn youth motivation person. And they come, and they sit down, and there must have been -- but there's still hubbub because they're talking. And then the principal goes on and he introduces me. "This is the Soul Experience with their message." And that was enough to have (laughs) my guitar player -- he had a wah-wah pedal that you would not believe. (laughs) And we had some six-foot-tall speakers from Shure Brothers that could blow you out, and I had them tone it down because it was making -- it was deafening me. In fact, my hearing is not so good as of right -- but at any rate, busted out James Brown (laughs). Danced all across the stage doing my stuff, which is -- I'm glad to say it is uniquely mine. It's just -- it's what my body does. And we did -- I think the second was "Respect". And we did "Respect", finished that one, and the kids are rocking because it's not what they expected. And I said, "OK, hold up. Hold up." And I

said, "Hey, I'm going to let these guys cut out for a minute, and I want to talk with you about something." And I have their attention, just like that thing that was the athletes against drugs thing. It's the same kind of thing, only it was a different approach because it was the first time. That time, I had my practice, even without a band. But I -- and I said -- and I just got very homey with them. And in fact, I have some pictures where I'm -- I come down to the front of the stage and hang over the proscenium, and get as close to some of them in the front row right there. And I'm an eye contact person because that's the way I talk. I talk to you with not just my mouth. (laughs) And so -- and I'm dealing with it, and they -- and after I finished, I said, "OK." And by this time, the curtain is opening again and the band is starting to play because they know I'm done. And the kids are applauding, and they're applauding with the music, and all the Panthers that were by the doors did this and walked out. Guess who the dude who came was there? Red Hampton. Red Hampton. Man. So I (inaudible). That was by the door.

DR: Did you say you have photographs of that event, that particular event?

SF: Yeah. In fact, I don't -- no, I don't think there are any in this one, but I do have some. They might be here.

DR: The reason I'm asking is because I think that's a powerful message that you're doing there and I think those -- I want to write an article about that. And I think that's powerful to show that -- how you blended all these different things so you could connect with youth.

SF: It's not in this one. This is probably some of it here. Oh boy.

DR: Look at this one here.

SF: It was a plan for engaging the principals of a bunch of high schools that are in Lawndale, and to get them to collaborate with each other. And [00:55:00] we called it COP, and I got them to change the name. Call them (inaudible). Hey, put that -- and again, it was one of those things -- I suggested something and then somebody and everybody say hey, that can't make nothing but sense because that's what they were having to do. So -- now these -- I'm not sure what these are, Dino, but these I think are -- I'm not sure what school that is, to tell you the truth. The CEDA -- oh, I think --

DR: This is nice though.

SF: -- this is Nichols. This was the first one that I did with the band at Nichols.

DR: I remember that. I remember you telling me about that. These are cool. Do you still have these negatives?

SF: No. In fact, I didn't think I would ever really need them again so I just -- I dumped them about -- let's see, it can't be anymore than a couple of years ago.

DR: Darn it, darn it, darn it. (laughter)

SF: Wow.

DR: No, I got to -- I mean there's a lot of stuff I would love to scan on here. It's going to take some time to do.

SF: Go at it.

DR: But I can hold --

SF: You can do it.

DR: I can hold onto them?

SF: Yes, you can. Yes, you can.

DR: So is that designing -- is that talking about the courses that you were doing?

SF: Well this is the one that Purdue came to me after I had -- that's another thing I forgot to tell you about. When I was at Container, I was adamant about wanting more people to know what industrial design is, and when I was in my last -- next to last semester at Illinois, I was chosen by the faculty and the student body to be Illinois' representative for the International Design Conference. So I go to this thing. Man, I look around me, and I don't see no brothers there but maybe three. (laughs) So it's us four. And then come to find out, the other one who I

thought was, he was Indian. (laughter) But it was the people from all over the world, and there was about 1500 people in this tent, in an atmosphere that to me is just so wondrous because I had never been to the Rockies. And I'm in Aspen, Colorado where the air smells so good and crisp, and the sun is shining, and I'm just -- and I'm there representing one of the best design schools in the country. And so the more I thought about it when I got back home and started working in Container was that there are more young people who need to have this experience. If -- this blew by mind, and by this time, I had already been in the army and had experienced the world. Not to the extent that I would like to, but I was awed by it. So I said, "We got to do something about this." So I talked Container Corporation of America into helping me raise enough money to take 15 kids from Chicago schools to the International Design Conference. (laughs)

DR: That is sweet.

SF: And that was -- it was so cool because -- and Karen and I, we did it ourselves. And it was -- it wasn't an easy thing because we couldn't get as much money -- we just did not get as much money as we needed. So instead of them -- everybody flying out in a group, they went in separate train and got there. But it was a successful thing, and to

this day, there is one who is more -- I guess stays in touch more every year. He comes to Evanston to see us. And he's quite a fine artist himself. And I think probably one of the things that [01:00:00] he brings up with it just -- it didn't matter to me at all that he was gay. Hey, I would not want anyone to suggest what I should believe I should do with my body. So I ain't going to put nothing of that on you. I mean I was that way when I was in the army. I defended some kids who were -- they were 18, 19 years old, and they were gay in my platoon, and I wouldn't let these guys mess with them. And I'd say, "Hey, wait a minute." And so during this time when I was at the design conference, Purdue guy was there. And he -- wait -- this was the time after we had gone taken the group, and he asked me to write a let-- write an article for the *Design Course*, which is the art department magazine for Purdue, at least it was then. And so this is some of the correspondence with regard to that, but that's where I came up with the article that I wrote for it called "Made Design and Niggatown Slums". Now, did I give you a copy of that?

DR: No, I'd like to make a copy of it though. I don't know if you...

SF: Absolutely. Let's see. Now this is something else. This isn't that one.

DR: Let me see this one though real quick. So these are copies of the same thing, right? Because this is a...

SF: Right, that's...

DR: Can I keep one from the archive?

SF: Sure, absolutely. This -- OK, design. Where are you? I showed this to you, didn't I?

DR: And I'll keep this for the archive. This is an exact duplicate of --

SF: Yeah.

DR: These two pages are exact duplicates. I would like to make a copy of this entire packet here.

SF: OK, please do.

DR: That would be great.

SF: In fact, I think I have -- it has to be in here.

DR: One question I have for you too, especially with your music. Did you -- with the Soul Experience, did you ever record any of the performances?

SF: (laughs) I think there was -- no. We didn't do anything musically, and I guess if they had had phones, they -- there would've been.

DR: There would've been.

SF: But the -- I mean technology at that point was so --

DR: It was coming from them.

SF: -- selective.

DR: You couldn't just --

SF: Here's an example.

DR: You just couldn't up and do it. You had to really plan for that and budget for it.

SF: And by this time, I had started getting -- I'm getting flack from Container from this guy, and luckily, the City of Evanston came to me and said, "Hey, the city manager wants to meet with you, and the mayor, and the alderman." And when I got there, that's what they presented to me. We would like for you to be -- we got that.

DR: We got that.

SF: I was going to point -- you notice how -- what this was about? They had -- I meant technics not techniques. It's easy to get second guessed and it changes the context.
(laughter) Wow. Anyway...

DR: That's what happens.

SF: It does, man. It do. It sure do. But I am -- I know I'm running over my time with you, brother.

DR: I checked. I got to get back to the office, but -- and I still -- because there's still so much more. [01:05:00] Do you want to meet again?

SF: Oh, yes. Absolutely. In fact, you know what? This is such -- I have to say it's very therapeutic for me. I say that in all sincerity because I -- it's purposeful spilling

of stuff that is bottled in me and, and its release helps me to plot with it better. So I mean -- and I see these, like Nancy -- you haven't heard of Nancy Jefferson probably. She was a west sider who was a very prominent black woman who won't (laughs) do this and so. Because she was on the case. She's very much revered on the west side. And I -- actually, the rest of the city too because she was the -- that kind of a person. Here it is.

DR: This is nice. This is very good.

SF: There were people who...

DR: Who recognized what you're doing and get it.

SF: Exactly.

DR: They get it. That is fantastic.

SF: Because people do that, but they don't recognize that the person may need this. Now this one...

DR: Is that the paper you were talking about?

SF: Yeah, this is the -- and you know what? The irony that really ticks me off with myself is that I had -- he -- this guy who got me to write it sent me 30 copies of it and I kept giving one away, and giving one away, and I got to the point where I only had five. (laughter) And then -- I really should've been more careful, but I am such a sucker that I really wanted people to have them because there were people who were being -- who are reading new well and like

them, and I don't know if they ever had them or not. Now that's the only copy of the printed thing that -- and -- but you can imagine it was an art magazine so it was very well handled. And it had the -- had some photographs in there of performances as we were doing them.

DR: This is actually fantastic. The reason I say this is fantastic is what you're doing here and what you're doing in my ways is like a predecessor to an organization I was involved in starting up, a chapter here in Chicago called Organization of Black Designers. It started in New York, but there are chapters opening up all over the place. And so I was involved with the Ev-- with the Chicago chapter.

SF: Oh, man.

DR: It's still going on today. Organization of Black Designers is basically dissolved, but I was in the process -- I helped them with the process of renaming it to Osmosis. And it still exists today.

SF: Well you know some -- hey, we're going to make something happen with that. I know that. And all of these arts that we mesh...

DR: Can I hold onto these and make copies of? And then I can give them back to you next time we meet. Would that be -- is that agreeable to you?

SF: You know what? That's the last desk copy and I'm giving that one to you to have in your vault.

DR: I mean you're having a file here because all the stuff that you have here are so pivotal in telling those stories of what's going on in this community and the greater community --

SF: Check this out.

DR: -- that's not talked about.

SF: This is -- and I have very little to document what I did in getting the west side of Chicago, and Pilsen Little Village, and south side to collaborate. I told you that store of when the brothers called. But anyway, they made this (inaudible). The chairman of the education committee for the west side economic development. That's that hundred-million-dollar grant that we got. And I was like, man, OK. That analogy about your collar's too close to the fence? Somebody's reaching through the fence and got a pail there digging up -- catching all of that sweet milk.

DR: Well this is fantastic.

SF: Well I'm very, very glad to share it with you because all of it is [01:10:00] part of something that is current because we're just bringing it to -- up to date. And this...

DR: Like that black lives matter, so does grey matter.

(laughs)

SF: Yowza [*sic*]. Hey, we're coming on with it. If we can -- it's -- basically, it's turning around Willie Lynch. And obviously, we need a whole bunch of -- a posse. (laughs) And we can do that if we can get everybody...

DR: I'm going to make copies of all this stuff and give these back to you. Let me just end this recording here. This is Wednesday, March 30. No, 29, March 29. Approximate ending time is two five. Speaking with Mr. Steve Frasier. Thank you.

SF: Thank you.

END OF AUDIO FILE