

GALE TITUS

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Interviewer: Damian Macey

Transcribed by Donna Duzan, April 2017

D: I am Damian Macey, with the Friends of the Library, I am in the home of Gale Titus to do an oral history of his childhood and life. His mother was a teacher and I think he will have interesting things to share with you. Gale I will turn it over to you. Tell us about your childhood and life.

G: I was born in Terre Haute, IN to Hubert and Alice Titus. I have two brothers, Jerry who is nineteen months older and Melvin is six years younger. I have lived in Marshall all my life. Special memories: My mother was a teacher and taught at Clarksville. I guess, back that up, she started at Avon, which is south of Marshall, a little one room school. From there she went to Snider and then she went to Clarksville and taught grades 1 - 4. I remember the road to Clarksville back then was not blacktopped and when the road got too muddy, she would have to stay in Clarksville overnight. She would stay with Wes Hogue's brother.

D: She didn't stay at the Clarksville Hotel?

G: No, sometimes dad would go get her because he always thought he could drive in the country, but sometimes he would get stuck and the farmers would have to pull him out. That's the Titus in us, kinda hard-headed. When I was growing up our neighbors were Gene Thompson who lived beside us, and behind us was Ray Whitman. And they ran the Mecca Cafe in Marshall. And from there, they sold out and moved to St College, Pennsylvania. And they built a restaurant there and his brother built a motel. And we have kept contact with them. Since then Ray and Mildred have passed on but they had two kids, Ron was a year older and Sharon was a year younger than me. She was my den mother and it was such a treat back in the day to go have a hamburger and a milkshake at their restaurant. That was a real treat for the scouts and we thought we were the King of Kings.

D: I remember the Mecca Cafe was a bus stop for both Greyhound and Trailways.

G: I think you are right. I think the building is still there but I can't think what is in there now. It was next to Western Auto and Taylor Electric.

D: And the latest business in there was Baldomero Photography.

G: And my childhood growing up... It seems like today my grandkids have all these computers and like that. But back then, I remember Velsicol ran a water line along our street and there were dirt piles out there. And dad, being a carpenter, took two by fours and built us little trucks. Jim Reynolds lived a block north of me and we would play in that dirt, and have clod right with each other. And throw clods at the neighbors going by. Herman Cork was my mother's first cousin who lived across the street and he didn't have any boys, he had one daughter. I was his boy, he would take me fishing all the time. He

had more patience than most people. If I was in the boat, I wanted out and if I was out of the boat I wanted in. Then I would get hooked in the tree and he would come get my line loose.

D: Gale you mentioned 14th street, was that north 14th?

G: Yes, my dad and grandpa, after world war II, when dad came home from the service, grandpa and dad bought a block machine and they made the blocks for the house where I grew up. They made the blocks for my granddad's house too. They laid up the blocks, we lived in the basement for a while, until the walls were plastered.

My chores as a kid: well a lot of people don't believe this but I thought my dad was about it back then, and across the street from us was an acre of land and we had a milk cow and a runt hog. And one day, I followed dad over there to milk and then I decided to surprise dad and milk that cow in the evening. So I milked the cow and that evening dad went over there to make sure everything was ok and that was a mistake because dad would milk in the morning and I would milk every evening. So all the kids would go to the Candy Kitchen after school and I couldn't do that because I had to milk. And sometimes I would take some friends to go milk and I would spray milk on them, they thought that was pretty funny. I milked until I was a junior in high school and then dad sold the cow. So your brother-in-law, John Meehling, had a cow and when he needed to be away, he would ask me to come down and milk, so I would go down and milk for them.

D: Do you know if your dad ever sold any milk?

G: No, there was three of us boys, and we would drink most of our milk. In the spring of the year, sometimes, if there was too much onion taste to the milk, we would add chocolate to try to make it taste better. And mother would use some to churn butter, but we never sold any. And we made homemade ice cream in the summertime with it. That milk with little chunks of cream in in, really made good ice cream.

D: That wasn't the 2% stuff, was it?

G: No, it wasn't.

D: Did your dad have his own carpentry business?

G: No, dad worked out of the union at Terre Haute. He worked too with Johnny Snedeker and made cabinets. And we used to go down to Kirchner's and he had a key and we would go down at night and use their saw and stuff to make cabinets. He did a lot of sideline work.

The church...mom would take us to the Methodist Church when I was growing up. I go to the Methodist Church now but back then the youth group was really active. There was probably about 26-27 of us kids. Huffington's had 4 kids, there was 3 of us, Frank Mitchell's two kids, and the Woodard's. Jack Huffington was our leader and he put up with more than more people would. We would have roller skating parties. I remember being in the far back of his station wagon and I don't remember what I was doing, but he reached clear to the back of the car and told me to "cut it out". And he always had a

farm somewhere and we would have hay rides and wiener roasts and we would just always have the best time.

Then after high school I kinda went into the trades and then I got drafted. So I kinda fell out of going to church until my grandson, Kobe, had his situation.

D: What branch of the service were you in?

G: I was in the Army from 1966 to 1968. I was in Vietnam in 1967. I was in the Tet offensive stationed in an out-post. It wasn't the best experience but thank God I made it home. I have good memories and bad memories about Vietnam.

D: Is there something you remember about school, teachers, classes?

G: Well, my football coach, Phil Acton, he was probably only here 3 or 4 years. I played football for himplayed center linebacker at 140 pounds.... a lot of people would laugh at that. About ten years ago he retired and there was a retirement party for him in Bowling Brook, and he invited Larry Bender and I to go up to the party. So, he seated all his past football players in a front row seat and then he introduced us. And since we were the first team he had coached, he sat us down and then the next guy was a guy who was six foot six and 250-260 pounds and he asked what position we played and we told him center linebacker and he laughed and said that we wouldn't have been big enough to carry the water buckets !! Gene Wilson and Acton were the football coaches and he also coached wrestling. Larry and I wrestled on a pretty successful team. There was a wrestling team for only about 2/3 years.

Hobbies: I've always hunted, always had beagles, bird dogs, then the rabbit population got pretty scarce. So, I got out of the beagle business then my stepson wanted in the beagle business so we bought a beagle and tried to raise pups but that never worked out. And I've always quail hunted but I'm down to one bird dog now. But now the quail population has dwindled since the farmers have pushed out the fence rows. So I would say that this dog, he's nine now, when he is gone, that will be the end on quail hunting. But I have also picked up the hobby of duck hunting. I do like it because I'm getting older and with duck hunting, I can just sit in the boat.

D: Who takes care of the dogs when you are in Florida?

G: My kids do. Sarah lives across the road, she feeds them in the morning then BJ comes in the evening.

D: How did you meet your wife, Jackie?

G: I don't know, I've known her all my life. Her sister, Kay, and her grew up just two blocks from us. When I came home from the service, I dated around for a while and Jackie and her husband had gotten a divorce. So I asked her out.

D: Aren't you glad she said yes?

G: Well there are days.....yeah for the most part. It's been a good life, we've been married 42 years

now, and perhaps if I hadn't got married, I might not be here today. She pretty much kept me in line. And I've got a wonderful step-son, at times I was pretty rough on him, but I think now he appreciated that, or at least I hope he does.

D: Well I was leader of the Boy Scout group for many years, and I know you always had an association with the boy scouts.

G: I think I was assistant scout master for about 10-15 years. When Jimmy got out of it, and BJ didn't want to go into it, it was time for somebody else to do the honors. But it was a lot of fun.

D: Is there a particular thing in history that you could say really influenced you, or made an indelible memory?

G: Not that I can think of.

D: What about a person, you mentioned this coach... could he be one that influenced you?

G: Right now, there have been several people that have kinds encouraged me in life itself. Seems like the pastor at church has done as much as anyone. Reverend David Deal and Rev John Davis... have meant a lot to me. When Kobe needed a heart, I prayed that if he could get a heart, I would try to live a better life and I do go to church now and have become active in the church...for the past 17 years. We have had some good pastors and I have been a trustee at the church and have really enjoyed working at the church. My wife would say that I spend more time working at the church and when she needs something done at home she calls the church secretary and gives her a list of things she wants done at home. So I would say that my faith has done more for me than any one person.

D: Sounds like it has been strengthened over the years. As far as modern conveniences... is there a particular modern convenience that you can think of that you would say you just couldn't live without?

G: I would say a cell phone...I bought one to take hunting so if I had a problem I could call for help but it seems that where I hunt there is no reception. So it doesn't really do me any good and I'm not good at technology....and I'm not good at computers. Also the tools of trades. Like I said I worked for the carpenters union, so, the tools that we have today have really changed. Your power miter boxes as far as for trimming, I have an old Stanley that I trimmed my house with and when I worked at my daughter's house and built BJ's house, the miter box was so improved. So whenever we go to a Menard's or Lowe's, I head for the tool section. If Jackie goes and wants to shop, she knows where I will be. I always see new tools and think I need that but it will never pay for itself, so I just look and don't buy. I don't think that the building material today is as good as it used to be.

D: You didn't mention your experience with the garage doors.

G: I worked out of the hall for about twelve years. I started working on Indiana State on the dormitories. I worked on the two nine story dorms and from there I went to Homestead Hall at Indiana State, then I got drafted. When I came home I opportunity....the guy I worked with went to

work at Overhead Door in Terre Haute. So, the two guys worked for Mr. Gimple, John Higgins and Duane Ramsey both just worked there, and Mr. Gimple was getting ready to retire, so Duane and John bought the company. So Duane moved in the shop and John ran the business and they hired me and I worked 32 years for Overhead Door. So basically, the last 32 years I worked for them hanging commercial doors. I hung a lot of doors in Marshall and I still do a little work for them. I've been retired twelve years now ...

D: I'll be "flip" and say that you've seen a lot of ups and downs...

G: I have. I always tell everybody that it's an up and down business !! I worked for three different owners, Marvin Gimple, John Higgins, Duane Ramsey and Jim Stoltz owns it now. I still have a key to the shop, so I reckon they trust me. If I need something on a weekend I can go over...I try not to... there is an alarm on the door and every time I go in I set off the alarm and the cops are calling me to see what's going on.

D: Well, Gale, it's been really nice speaking to you. I'll ask the same question that we have asked all our interviewees... What would you tell people about Marshall and why they might want to live here?

G: Well, like my wife said...it's a great community. When a family has a problem and needs help...the whole community get behind them. There are several people that Marshall has had fund raisers for. It's just great knowing that the people and the churches that are out there ready to help when help is needed. And it's a clean place to live with a really good source of good clean water. There isn't many places that have trash laying around, it's a well-kept town.

D: Well, it sounds like you are going to stay...

G: Yeah, I imagine.

D: Well, thanks again for participating in the oral history program for the library.