

[0:00:00]

*Jared Gab:* Today's date is July 31st, 2012. My name is Jared Gab here interviewing with Earlice Taylor, and our interviewee will be –

*Nelson Smith:* Nelson Smith, artist, Memphis, Tennessee. Have been a commercial artist for some 40-something years. I studied at Memphis College of Art, which was Memphis Art Academy at the time, and also went to Manassas High School, and I did studies there, and it really was prime development for me being what I am today as kind of a jump start to me in this art business. So I've been in the art business for the last about 30, 35 years. I've done places like Shoney's Big Boy.

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Developed molds and things for them, Shoney's people, and then to Big Boy. I did the Liberty Land – did signs and graphics at Liberty Land when they first opened back in '76, so it's been an ongoing process. I do from clay sculpture to paintings. So I can go variably just by any art form. Luckily, they call me the general practitioner of the art world, so I've had a chance to do a lot of different things and diversify.

*Earlice Taylor:* Tell us about your background and where you were raised up, and you know, what your family did and what you did growing up and stuff.

*Nelson Smith:* Okay. I'm originally out of Klondike.

[0:02:02]

That's the Vollintine and Speed area. I went to Klondike School. I found that as the Smiths, my grandmother. I was raised primarily by my – of course, my mother and father, but my grandmother was instrumental in raising me, too. From there –

*Earlice Taylor:* What did your parents do?

*Nelson Smith:* My father, he was a shipping clerk at a workshop in **Downs**. My mom, she was a housewife, so she primarily did – and she did a lot of artwork, which I watched her. She didn't do any paintings, but she did a lot of sewing and made her own patterns and things of that nature. And my dad, he was on the edge, too. He liked to make and fiddle with different materials and stuff that I thought were really nice and then inspired me.

[0:02:59]

“Well, I think I’m gonna try that and be an artist.” And it went on. I was able to do a contest in different places when I was coming up in elementary at 12 years old. Second prize at Breese. I said, “Oh, this is wonderful. This’ll give me a chance to go on.” So therefore, I was really inspired to be an artist at a really young age through elementary school and other teachers there. Mr. Cook, who was my teacher at Klondike.

Earlice Taylor: Eloginal Cook?

Nelson Smith: Yes, Eloginal Cook. He had me going on, doing work for other teachers and things of that nature to develop my career. So I was really made before I was really ongoing as an artist. I was already made an artist.

Earlice Taylor: Did Mr. Cook have a job in Manassas at one time?

Nelson Smith: Now that part I don’t – I’m not sure. I heard about it, but -

Earlice Taylor: He was my art teacher, too, in the seventh and eighth grade at Klondike.

[0:04:03]

Nelson Smith: So eighth grade to – okay, same here.

Jared Gab: Right before we get much further, I just wanted to kind of say for the camera we’re Crossroads to Freedom. This will be put on our website, <http://www.CrossroadstoFreedom.org>. Just kind of thought I’d get that out of the way. But I guess my question for you is sort of about Manassas High School. Our team has been looking pretty deeply into just sort of the history behind the school, and when you mention that you attended, I guess I would like to know more about those experiences if you could.

Nelson Smith: Okay, the majority of it is when I started at Manassas High. I was a little apprehensive. I guess all students are when they make that transition from one school to the next.

[0:05:03]

But I learned to really love that school as I went along. I had an art teacher, of course. Mr. Guy, who was very, very instrumental in

making and developing me as a student, and also other teachers that were – but he was my most influential teacher. I had a chance to go outside of the realm as far as – he was a commercial artist also, so he kind of put us into that phase of being a commercial artist, made us a more commercial oriented, which I thought was really good. So that way, we can go out and get paid for it instead of just sitting, doing painting, and wait to get paid for it. We were able to get paid for it.

**CUT at 00:05:51 – Begin Segment 2**

*Jared Gab:* So more emphasis on kind of the business side.

*Nelson Smith:* Yeah, so we had the business side designed into us by him. He taught me how to letter sign, how to make letters properly.

[0:06:03]

You know, most people don't understand there's a fundamental in making signs. You can't just say, "I'm going to draw it." It doesn't work like that. You've got negative space and then positive space. And so he was able to get us to where we'd know the difference between negative space of a letter and positive space of a letter. So then he also had us in painting. Of course, water color is the hardest media to paint with.

But he taught us water color because he said, "If you master water color, then you'll be able to do the oils and other pastels and other mediums." So I was really joyful that I had this because I could have went to any other school. I'd probably say, "I don't know what I would have been. I may have been a football player at other schools." I kind of had that idea. And I thought about band. I was a drummer in the band with Emerson Able. He was there.

[0:07:03]

Emerson Able was an inspiration, and he stayed next door to me. Actually, his mom and him stayed next door to me on the street that I lived on. So we played with his brother and talked to him, and then certainly, here I am in his class in band being a drummer. He stayed on me because he knew me. You messed the beat up. Get it straight. He was really on me.

*Jared Gab:* Did you know many of the musicians beside Emerson Able, or just sort of –

*Nelson Smith:* Yeah, I had the chance to touch with Isaac Hayes. I had a chance to touch base with him and talk with him. We would say hi, but he was quite a busy young fellow at the time when I was in school, and we had some of the great opera singers that became opera singers out in Manassas. I had a chance to touch base with them, too.

*[0:08:00]*

*Earlice Taylor:* What are their names?

*Nelson Smith:* I was trying to think.

*Earlice Taylor:* Little?

*Nelson Smith:* I think her name was Little. You'd probably know since you're a vocalist. You probably know her.

*Earlice Taylor:* Well what is your overall experience while going to Manassas? What was the principal like and all the teachers and the atmosphere of the school? Did you have a healthy atmosphere where you feel you could learn and you knew your teachers were really teaching you? Stuff like that, what was your experience like?

*Nelson Smith:* Yes. The teachers were really inspiring, just like my art teacher were. They not only taught you, but it kind of like put it there, socially put the image there of your learning process. They were kind of like, "Here it is. You don't have to make the best of it, but make the best of it. Make it into something." So most of the art teachers, a Spanish teacher, I had one. My Spanish teacher.

*[0:09:00]*

*Earlice Taylor:* Who was it?

*Nelson Smith:* She was –

*Earlice Taylor:* Katherine Perry?

*Nelson Smith:* No.

*Earlice Taylor:* No?

*Nelson Smith:* You know, I can't recall her name, but she was instrumental in Spanish, although I wasn't good in Spanish. But she was able to get me over and through the class so I could make that. But most

of the teachers that were there that – I’m trying to pull some names. I should have put names together, but you know how it is. It’s green to me, but I’m trying to – most of the students there, were there, were really nice. You know, you would think that there would be bully, you know, push you around.

But that was not the case. Everybody was like a happy family. Like everybody who came from different points in Memphis came together there at Manassas, and that’s what really made the school, I think, interesting. You had the different people from different walks of life coming together as students to – you know, like the times I was at art school.

[0:10:17]

You had different artists that were great artists, and they were there. So you kind of learned to piggy back off of them as far as your learning process. So I was able to pick up on a lot of things that the students were really joyful – I mean they had the school pride. They had all of that in place. They just really wanted to be – everybody was Manassas spirit all the way, as you grew from one grade to the next or one level to the next. Each time, you blossom even more as far as being a school that you could.

*Earlice Taylor:* What about Manassas annual shows? Were you involved in them at all?

*Nelson Smith:* Oh, yes.

[0:11:00]

I painted many a banners. Go tigers, go. Beat Booker Washington. I painted many a banners, many a murals in the art class. I was \_\_\_\_\_ to paint. Anything that needed to move in the art, I was there to do it in the annual show.

*Earlice Taylor:* So for the shows, we had backdrops. We had everything just like in a real movie and stuff, and we were doing Around the World in 80 Days and stuff like that. You had to do the backdrops. You had to do everything for the stage.

*Nelson Smith:* Right. I had to paint those, and sometimes we used books, and then sometimes we just come from our feeling to create the stuff that was needed for different locations, whether it would be in Europe or whether it would be in London or whatever. We would put those together for the shows. Every show had to have Mr. Guy

say, “Well, here we go. We’re going into the next one.” So we had to do the next one. We had proms we had to do. I put those together.

[0:12:04]

They had themes for the proms that we had to go by the themes and create different things in the art department.

CUT at 0:12:10 – Begin Segment 3

*Jared Gab:* So would you say, I guess, all artists at the school, whether actors, painters, musicians, everyone was sort of closely knit together.

*Nelson Smith:* Yes, we were really close. We were supportive of each other as far as our artwork. You know, we learned, and we were supportive of each other at the same time.

*Earlice Taylor:* What were some of the other artists that came out and made it big? Does A.D. Adams come out as an artist? You and who else?

*Nelson Smith:* Yeah. Although I wasn’t in his class, but A.D. Adams, yeah, that was one. Clifford Banks. He was one. Let’s see.

*Earlice Taylor:* Clifford was from Klondike, too.

*Nelson Smith:* Yeah, he was from Klondike, too.

*Earlice Taylor:* We were raised up together. Same church.

[0:13:00]

*Nelson Smith:* Yeah. Uh-huh. See, we had a few others that I can’t recall right now. Okay.

*Earlice Taylor:* So how was your principal? How did he react with the students and their **co-ops** and stuff?

[Crosstalk]

Louis B. Hobson.

*Nelson Smith:* Louis B. Hobson.

*Earlice Taylor:* Yeah.

*Nelson Smith:* See, he always treated us well, and he was very stern. When he walked into the auditorium, everyone – he didn't have to say, "Be quiet, young people." When he walked in, everybody told everybody, "Here he comes." And they quieted down, and when he spoke and when he left, it was quiet. Even when he left out of turn. And he was very magical. I guess at that age, we were – thought that everything was magical at that time. So most of the students and the teachers, it was just like magic, like being in a Disney production or something like that.

[0:14:05]

*Earlice Taylor:* What about your family? You know, your sisters and brothers, siblings, children. What do they do?

*Nelson Smith:* Okay, I have a brother, and I have two sisters. My brother, he attended Manassas, too. He was right behind me. He also took a class with Mr. Guy. He came in after I did, and then he stayed until I of course graduated. My older sister, she of course decided to go to Booker Washington, so she went to Booker Washington. My younger sister started Manassas, and then she ended up having to go to North Side because they had built North Side, and she was the first graduating class from North Side. I also had my wife, of course. She graduated in '68 at Manassas, and she also was – Mr. Guy was kind of a guidance with my art teacher, was a kind of a guidance for her, too, as far as helping her with certain things in class.

[0:15:08]

Was, you know, kind of like a guidance counselor. We of course married. We were married 20 years, and my son, of course, he's an artist, although he shows his work over –

*Earlice Taylor:* What's his name?

*Nelson Smith:* His name is Nelson Smith, same as mine, and my daughter, her name is Elisa Smith, and she's an artist also, and she took computer graphics, and she's in California now doing computer graphics, designing stuff on computers, which she do every day. And she's out of Austin Peay College, and she also went to Northwest College here in Memphis, too.

*Jared Gab:* So it kind of runs in the family, too, you had said.

*Nelson Smith:* Yeah, the blood is steady running, so I was real happy with that.

[0:16:03]

although I wish that she was here. I mean being in the business world and doing artwork all over the city every day. I wish that she was here, that she could help me in some other areas that I have to farm out to other people to do. But you know, they have to be happy. And so...

*Jared Gab:*

Yeah, could you speak a little bit about, I guess, after Manassas, what work you were getting involved in right off the bat, maybe, or just sort of what direction you took after?

*Nelson Smith:*

Oh, right after I graduated high school, of course, I had military. Of course, I went to **Miflock**, and then I went to the military. They drafted me out of the military. But after that, I went into sign painting business with a friend of mine, Clifford Banks, and we painted signs all over Memphis, and then I also went with another named Benny Lang.

[0:17:13]

He went to Manassas, too, and we were in a sculpture company together on Second Street. We sculpted different things and made caricatures, lamps, or whatever we – was needed. We manufactured it. After that, I later went with Holiday Inn, which was Specialties Incorporated, which was a division of Holiday Inn, and I worked with them for three and a half years. I made the molds. I was their principle mold maker. I could make just about any – whatever the description or whatever the dimension in certain pieces of sculpture piece, I made the mold, and I also cast in different materials from foams to plastics to plasters to gold, silver, bronze.

So I was able to learn a lot when I was working with the material there at Holiday Inn.

[0:18:27]

So we decorated Holiday Inns all over the world. They had paintings, sculptures, waterfalls. We took the bars, and the bars was designed to look like a ship. We had the painting on the wall of the ship is inbound, and ship sails hanging from the ceiling, and the ropes, and we made the canons, and the canons – the bars had canons coming out the sides of the bars. That was really – a really nice something for you to go in and see.

*Jared Gab:* So kind of taking different materials and using them in ways you wouldn't normally think.

**CUT at 19:10 – Begin Segment 4**

*Nelson Smith:* Exactly. And I also dealt a lot with fiberglass work.

[0:19:15]

I built from things that they would use in manufacturing and fiberglass. I've even built tanks for airplane molds to make the tanks for the airplanes. I had a chance to make stuff, rockets components. I've had a chance to build different projects that people would come and need to build prototypes. They would tell me what they had in mind as to what the prototype would look like, and I would sculpt it out and make the molds and make the product that they can submit to other manufacturers.

*Earlice Taylor:* What about your Batman car or something?

*Nelson Smith:* Yeah, my car, it ended up in the newspaper.

[0:20:11]

I'm in the Commercial Appeal. They ended up shooting my car. I designed the car, and I did it from front to rear, totally sculpted it out and everything. You'd have to see it to believe it.

*Earlice Taylor:* And he drove it.

*Nelson Smith:* Yeah.

*Earlice Taylor:* Tell me what it looked like.

*Nelson Smith:* It once was a P-Arrow, and I changed it from a P-Arrow to a design that I wanted it to be. So I had, you know, but my artwork being graphic, it's kind of hard to describe.

*Earlice Taylor:* You have pictures of it?

*Nelson Smith:* Yes, I have pictures of some of my work and all those things. Maybe we can go over it. I don't know, how would you all process something like that?

*Jared Gab:* Right now, those are definitely things that would be very interesting to have, maybe if you'd be willing for us to store somewhere, too, maybe.

*[0:21:11]*

*Nelson Smith:* Okay. Yeah, I was unable to bring a lot of my things. Most of my stuff is at the shop, and it's pretty big. I go from real small items to large items as high as 24 feet. I did the Arc d'Triomphe when the mayor first entered, Mayor Herrington first entered office. They had the Napoleon exhibit there, and I was able to do the arch ditrol inside the Cook Convention Center, and they had like a banquet set up there.

So I did that, and that was 24 feet high by 8 by 24. So it was a pretty big piece from the inside.

*Earlice Taylor:* So you do characters like for Disney.

*Nelson Smith:* Yeah.

*Earlice Taylor:* You know the real big characters they have? He does stuff like that.

*Nelson Smith:* Yeah, costumes.

*Earlice Taylor:* You can put a head on them with fans in it, and they can wear them, and it's like a character.

*Jared Gab:* So a lot of costume work. I've been hearing sort of I guess a lot of stage designing and costumes. You've been pretty involved with the theater?

*[0:22:24]*

*Nelson Smith:* Yes, I have. I have been doing theater probably for the last 15 years, just really hot on. Backdrops and – you know, if they maybe need a scene of a village or housing complex or something, I would go and construct it on stage so they can use the stage.

*Earlice Taylor:* Tell him about the daycare that you have where it looks like a museum, where all of those castles and animals and things in it. It's right over on Lamar. You should see it.

*Nelson Smith:* Yeah. If you get a chance to see it, I built a road inside that oscillates through the whole building, and it goes into the wall as if

it went into a cave, and all of them had antique cars dating from when I was a little bitty boy.

[0:23:15]

Not you, but when I was a little bitty boy, and strollers, and those kinds of things. It's really a museum, the whole thing. It took me four years to complete that. We got murals on the walls, super murals on the walls. I got carousel horses that I developed from scratch pools, full scale fiberglass pairs of horses. So the whole thing needs to be really seen to really grasp the – what it's about.

*Earlice Taylor:* And you did something for Manassas not long ago. What did you do?

*Nelson Smith:* Yes, I put together a pedestal out in front of Manassas. It's kind of hourglass shaped. It has a school on the face of it. It's done in bronze, and the school dates from 1899 all the way up until today, and each one of the schools that were built at that particular time is on that base of that piece of sculpture.

[0:24:13]

So I did a rendering of each.

*Earlice Taylor:* So where is it now?

*Nelson Smith:* It's right out front, almost on the sidewalk area of the school. You can pass by it. You know, just drive by. You can take a look at it. It's about five foot tall.

*Jared Gab:* That's real interesting.

*Nelson Smith:* Yeah, I've done quite a bit of things around this place. Like I said, living in Zippin Pippin, which was Elvis Presley's favorite thing. I did the signs and graphics for that. I was real happy to get that chance because the people in Disney World flew out just to meet me. Can you imagine how exciting that is for an artist? So they come out, met with me, brought their plans, and laid them out to me. So I said I could do some for them.

*Earlice Taylor:* You started producing what?

*Nelson Smith:* The graphics for Liberty Land

[0:25:13]

*Earlice Taylor:* Oh, yeah. Tell him about the thing you started with me out of the Styrofoam.

*Nelson Smith:* Yeah.

*Jared Gab:* What is this?

*Nelson Smith:* Of you out of the foam –

*Earlice Taylor:* He puts together Styrofoam strips, and then carves out a whole bust out of it, and it looks just like me. And you just scrape it in little beads, and it looks just like your face. And when you do that, then what do you do?

*Nelson Smith:* From that, then I commit to the mold, which I use a plaster, or I could use a rubber mold, and I apply that to the surface, and then wait until it sets and pull it away, and then pour my cast into that, whether it be resin, or whether plaster against plaster, or whether it be fiber glass. Or whether it be bronze. Last year, I did a bowl. It was the size of a small car.

[0:26:11]

I did that for a minority business firm here in Memphis, and it happened at the Cook Convention Center. They went wild over it. It was really nice. It was painted and bronzed, but it was fiberglass. And I used the same steps that we talked about as far as using foam to sculpt it out of, and then I used the fiberglass and completed and take all the foam out of it. The foam is like you destroy it after. It's kind of like a breakaway mold. Once you do it, you just have to tear it. It don't come out exactly.

CUT at 0:26:47 – Begin Segment 5

*Earlice Taylor:* So what's your latest project you're working on?

*Nelson Smith:* Well, right now, I'm doing a globe. It's about five foot tall for the same minority people that I did the full last year.

*Jared Gab:* What's the name of this business?

*Nelson Smith:* It is the Mid South Minority Business Counsel.

[0:27:10]

MBC.

*Earlice Taylor:* So have you done any relief art where they take up a whole wall or something? Like people gathering or something. Have you done anything like that?

*Nelson Smith:* Yeah, years ago. I did like one, I did a Tom Sawyer relief. I had that in my portfolio, but I had – I did a relief of Tom Sawyer, went into Tom Sawyer's Restaurant that was on Summer. They're not there anymore. That's been some years ago, but I've done lots of reliefs. Matter of fact, the one in front of Manassas, that's a relief, too. That's one of my most latest reliefs that I did for the school there. We're coming up with some more projects that we're going to work on at Manassas that they want me to do.

So my work is just ongoing, and I'm kind of happy with that. These days sometimes, it's good to have something to keep going.

*Jared Gab:* That's very true. What do you say – I'm sorry. Would you say you've stuck pretty close to Memphis for the most part at least?

[0:28:15]

*Nelson Smith:* Yes, I've had work go all over the United States and the world, but most of my base has been right here in Memphis. I used to do Red Lobster. I would do interior package for them. I did the Hungry Fishman. I did stuff for them. I did Danvers paintings and stuff for Danvers. They don't use them anymore, but I did paintings for Danvers. I did lots of other interior stuff that most people use around here. Memphis is still ongoing.

*Jared Gab:* Oh, I think something –

*Earlice Taylor:* So what would you tell any other young people that's coming up now to do to make them want to have some incentives to do some of the things like you did on how you got started with something like that?

[0:29:17]

*Nelson Smith:* Well, what I would say to them would be art takes a lot of work. Takes a lot of time. If you're to be an artist, it's best that you have patience because that's what it requires. If you don't have patience, that's the only requirement that will not make you an artist that you must have patience to do this because it takes time, and it requires a lot of thought. I mean I've had times where I was

in bed and had a dream and put together a project from start to finish in order to – before I even made it, before I even started. So I would suggest to them to really – so pay attention or watch things in the art world because it's all there.

[0:30:11]

Things on the street other artists may have done, the sculptures that people have done to inspire you to do other artwork, and there is payment there. You know, a lot of people think artist, well I might as well get a sideline. But you can. If you're going to be a true artist, a sideline work will not work because art is definitely full time. If you notice, everything that's on earth today that has been created other than what God has already put her was created by artists. There's nothing else. We are the mainframe. It has to come through us first before it goes to anybody else.

So that's what you have to look at. We are first.

*Earlice Taylor:* But you can make good money as an artist.

*Nelson Smith:* Yes, you can.

*Earlice Taylor:* You've just got to work at it and be good at it.

*Nelson Smith:* And be good at it.

*Earlice Taylor:* And being in the right place where somebody is going to recognize it and help you.

[0:31:11]

*Nelson Smith:* Exactly.

*Jared Gab:* Patience, full dedication, and I guess a little bit of luck, too.

*Nelson Smith:* Uh-huh.

*Jared Gab:* That's good to hear. I guess in terms of influences, I know you've mentioned a teacher of yours at Manassas High School. Are there any other people possibly who have really had a big impact on your work?

*Nelson Smith:* Well, yes, there's several. You know, being **offspring**, other than my parents, which was the first thought and then I had my art teacher, Mr. Guy, the second. Then I had John **Sacred**, which was

sculptor teacher at Memphis College in Laurence. Memphis Art Academy as it was referred when I was going to school. He inspired me, and we still get a chance to talk, although we lost – he’s been slightly ill, but we’ve had a chance to touch base with him.

[0:32:18]

I was really glad to have had the chance. You know, being an artist, being in the right place, like every job that you do, is an important step in your life. It’s being in the right place. That’s right.

*Earlice Taylor:* Have you had any other younger people that you’ve kind of pulled under your wing that you tried to get interested in it the way you are and it worked or didn’t work, or what?

*Nelson Smith:* Yeah, I’ve taught a few classes. I’ve also had some people that I’ve taught how to make molds, and they’ve been excited. They said, “If it wasn’t for you, I wouldn’t be doing these kinds of projects.” I’ve even had some today. The last couple weeks, I give them pointers to help them to do their artwork in a way and in the fashion that it should be done.

[0:33:10]

*Earlice Taylor:* And you’ve helped in youth projects, too.

*Nelson Smith:* Right. I’ve done youth projects, too. I’ve done one with you, Ms. Taylor. We’ve done projects together to help the kids. You know, you touch people, but you don’t know who you touch in a lot of instances. You might have 8 or 10 or 20 students in your class, but you’re always going to touch one or two as just a rule of thumb. And some of them have what they said, “Well, look, you talked to me, and I’m an artist.” And I didn’t – don’t remember that. But you know, there they are.

*Jared Gab:* It must be very gratifying, I would imagine, to see your work live on through other people.

*Nelson Smith:* It really is. It really is. I’ve had other artists that have gone to be good artists.

[0:34:10]

*Jared Gab:* I guess also could you describe living during the Civil Rights era? That's sort of another topic, obviously, we've been looking a lot into, so just sort of how was it being an artist during that time? Or maybe I guess how would you define the era? Or maybe like right after that time?

**CUT at 0:34:38 – Begin Segment 6**

*Nelson Smith:* Yeah, I had during that time, you know, we fought hard. We were on Beale Street, a matter of fact. Clifford, Bankston, and I, we were in the sign business together on Beal Street. Well, we found that there were certain businesses that we couldn't breach because the Civil Rights era kept us from being able to even having a chance to do that.

[0:35:10]

So that was kind of a down – heartening to us to in that aspect, but overall, we were still able to gain, and say we didn't make a lot of money, but we were able to gain –

*Earlice Taylor:* Do you know who painted those signs, I am a Man?

*Nelson Smith:* You got me on that one.

*Earlice Taylor:* You know what I'm talking about?

*Nelson Smith:* I do. Yes, I do.

*Earlice Taylor:* I wonder who did those signs.

*Nelson Smith:* I don't know. But they might – I had seen something on television concerning who – the man, I think, just died. He was the initiator, and I don't know what his name was. They announced it the other night. He was the one that created the words I am a Man, and he just passed.

*Earlice Taylor:* Was he the sanitary worker?

*Nelson Smith:* Yes, he was.

*Earlice Taylor:* Oh, did he die?

[0:36:10]

*Nelson Smith:* Yes.

*Earlice Taylor:* Oh. And they were fighting because of what – the rights on the truck having a decent place to work on their truck to fix the situations as it was.

*Nelson Smith:* Right, right.

*Earlice Taylor:* Because somebody got killed. They were on the back of the truck, and it was raining, and they went and sat in the truck, and somebody turned the thing on and pulled him in the back of the truck, and that's what they were fighting, I think, about conditions.

*Nelson Smith:* Right.

*Jared Gab:* A technicality, things went on.

*Nelson Smith:* So as far – it touched me some as far as the Civil Rights Movement where, you know, as far as getting the amount of work we needed, but we were still able to gain – you know, we had some black entrepreneurs that were in business and doing quite well.

[0:37:12]

Universal Life Insurance Company, I was able to get some things from them, and Tri-State Bank, was able to get some nice contracts from them.

*Earlice Taylor:* So you were out of school during that time.

*Nelson Smith:* Yes.

*Earlice Taylor:* Or you were actually finishing school during?

*Nelson Smith:* Yes. That was in '68, and of course, I graduated in '64. So you can see where the time span was at.

*Earlice Taylor:* Were you in any of those marches?

*Nelson Smith:* No. I painted a few signs for them, but that's about it. Because I stayed so busy, and I have been busy every day of my life I have to say, doing my artwork. I'm never without anything that I need to do. It's really surprising. Yeah. So my artwork is in high demand. It may not be in high money, but it's in high demand, but I make it okay.

[0:38:10]

*Earlice Taylor:* So you didn't do any recreation other than your artwork as far as socializing and stuff like that. You've always just been into the artwork.

*Nelson Smith:* Yeah, that's correct.

*Jared Gab:* Sometimes that speaks even louder.

*Nelson Smith:* That's right. And it didn't make me a dull boy, either.

*Jared Gab:* All right. Yeah, I guess I think we've hit on most points I've been interested in. I mean do you have any other stories, maybe, that we haven't really gotten to that you would like to share?

*Earlice Taylor:* What's some of the most exciting things that you've done with your work that brings a big memory into your mind that you would want to share with somebody else? Good or bad.

[0:39:11]

*Nelson Smith:* Well, let's see, I haven't had too many bad, but I've had some. Most of them – I've had so many of them, \_\_\_\_\_, but it's kind of hard just to pull one out. It's like a rabbit in a hat. It's kind of like magic. But being able to create something and it works is a good thing for me as far as – and most people say, "How did you come up with that? You know, like I was making this world, and I was cutting out of a flat board, and I created the world with all of the longitude and latitude lines on the globe, and the globe is five foot high. They just say, "From a flat piece of wood, you came up with this."

And it's perfectly round and everything. That inspires me when people look at it who – they say, "I've been in this world a long time. I've been around a lot of people, but I've never been in a \_\_\_\_\_ as a guy that is as talented as you are."

[0:40:22]

You know, they kind of like reigns over you. You know, they kind of just make you go into a ghostly feeling when somebody says that to you. It's really inspiring.

*Earlice Taylor:* Well, we need to get you to do something for Manassas for that museum.

*Nelson Smith:* I'll be glad to.

*Earlice Taylor:* So you need to start on that right soon.

*Jared Gab:* Always having work.

*Nelson Smith:* Yeah, there goes some more work. But I enjoy my work, every inch of it. I really do. Everything that I have to do I really enjoy. It's really – now it's a part of my life for sure. You know, at first, it was a part, "Well, I could do this. I could do that." Now, I think it, walk it, talk it. Now it's an every day process.

[0:41:13]

*Earlice Taylor:* So he's going to bring one of these giant statues on Tuesday. Will you all be gone? On the seventh. You'll be gone.

*Jared Gab:* We'll have just gotten out on Friday. Yeah, that's still –

*Earlice Taylor:* But maybe you can take him to look at some of your stuff if they have time.

*Nelson Smith:* Before you go.

*Earlice Taylor:* You all got time today?

*Jared Gab:* Afternoon maybe.

*Nelson Smith:* Sure.

*Earlice Taylor:* You need to go and show him some of your stuff.

*Nelson Smith:* Yeah, we can do that.

*Earlice Taylor:* And they can capture that.

*Jared Gab:* That'd be really nice.

*Earlice Taylor:* And he's got pictures over there, too. You can make copies of the pictures if you want to.

*Jared Gab:* Yeah, no, that'd be great. It was – I said earlier I think those would be great if we could store those digitally. I just don't want to damage any of the materials, but definitely. That'd be great. I just want to really thank you for your time and your stories today.

[0:42:10]

*Nelson Smith:* Thank you.

*Jared Gab:* It's been a great pleasure listening, and I'm touched from the success you've had, and just to know that you can really make your career work when you're set to achieve the goals you really want to carry out.

*Nelson Smith:* Well, I thank you for having me here, and hope that I drew a picture and painted it for you so you could –

[End of Audio]