

Moorestown Historical Society
Oral History – West End Community Center
Charles “Pete” Gray, in conversation with Richard Grey
Recorded Thursday, June 6, 2024
Transcribed and edited by Shannon Reilly, November 2024

Transcription Methodology

Because one can't completely avoid the “observer effect” in translation nor transcription, my intention is to be true to the speaker's words while acknowledging that I will, in small ways, interpret the text. These transcripts assume that the reader will use them in combination with the recorded interview.

Here are a few guiding principles that I have applied to this transcription:

- Punctuation in the text reflects the inflection in a speaker's voice as I interpreted it.
- When the inflection is ambiguous, the text defaults to grammatical correctness.

02:14 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Is that one you photo chop and...?

[Laughter]

02:24 **Simone:** Ah, there he is.

02:28 **Richard Gray:** There we go. What's happening?

02:30 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Not a thing. How you doing?

02:31 **Richard Gray:** Doing alright, Uncle Pete.

02:35 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Good, good, very good.

02:36 **Richard Gray:** That's good. That's good. Well, thank you. Do I hear Doc?

02:40 **Simone:** Yes sir.

02:42 **Richard Gray:** There you go. I thought so. And D?

02:46 **Simone:** You want to see your face.

02:48 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** No.

02:50 **Simone:** No, okay, all right. He didn't want his camera on, but I'm saying “Hello”.

[Laughter]

02:54 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Oh, you can turn it on.

02:57 **Richard Gray:** Whatever you're comfortable with, Uncle Pete. It's all good. I know what you look like.

[Laughter]

03:05 **Simone:** You would have to access your settings and change it in your settings.

03:09 **Charles "Pete" Gray:** Nah, that's okay. This is cool.

03:12 **Richard Gray:** Cool. Okay, as long as you're good with it. So, Uncle Pete, I appreciate you being our inaugural interview for this. And it's not really, it's really less an interview and we want it to be more of a conversation. Miss K. was supposed to, we're supposed to do one with her last Monday, but Pam had to go to the hospital. She's, she's home, alright. I think she was sick, so...

03:33 **Charles "Pete" Gray:** Is she doing alright, man?

03:36 **Richard Gray:** Yeah, she's doing okay. She's home. You know.

03:37 **Charles "Pete" Gray:** Who went to hospital?

03:40 **Richard Gray:** Pam, Pam did.

03:40 **Charles "Pete" Gray:** Oh, wow!

03:41 **Richard Gray:** Yeah, yeah. So she was at a luncheon, and I think she was feeling lightheaded, dizzy, so they took her to the hospital.

03:48 **Charles "Pete" Gray:** Oh, wow!

03:49 **Richard Gray:** She said she was feeling better. I [Garbled] the day before yesterday, and she said she was feeling better, but they were just keeping her there for observation.

03:58 **Charles "Pete" Gray:** Oh, she's still there?

04:00 **Richard Gray:** No, no, she's out. She's out. She came home yesterday.

04:04 **Charles "Pete" Gray:** Okay.

04:05 **Richard Gray:** So, she's good, she's good. But I just, so the the conversation really, is we're trying to just get started with getting, particularly starting with elders' reflections on the West End. This may not be the only time, and I'm sure something will come from this that we'll want to follow up on. I already know, given the letter that you sent, and I know the, um, the stories you've already told about, you know, Mr. Muse and the, and the folks who played baseball that I know I want to explore that in more detail.

04:37 **Charles "Pete" Gray:** Okay.

04:38 **Richard Gray:** But I definitely want to just, just have you just reflect on a few things. So there's some, there's some really general questions, guiding questions, but you, you take the conversation wherever you want to go. And I dropped the, the questions in the chat, I think I did it before folks were on, and I think I'll resend them, and I sent them to you... the... via email, and so, yeah, I'll go through the questions. They're really, pretty straightforward.

05:07 **Charles "Pete" Gray:** Okay. I'll do the best I can.

05:08 **Richard Gray:** Yeah, that's all I ask from you Uncle Pete. That's all you can do. So here's, here's just to give you an overview of the questions. First question is: What's your most memorable experiences with the West End Center?

05:22 **Charles "Pete" Gray:** Oh, wow!

05:23 **Richard Gray:** And then, in what, in, even thinking, something for you to think about. You know, if you if you don't think of something now, you think of it later. We can always talk later.

05:32 **Charles "Pete" Gray:** Okay.

05:33 **Richard Gray:** What memories/experiences do you think best describe the kind of role that the Center played in the community. I know when I spoke with somebody, I think I talked to

Bruce Jones, he was talking about how it provided classes, and it was a way to be able to connect. And so I'm just, your thoughts, particularly being there from the beginning, you know, what role did that play in the Center? And then, you know, there are a lot of people, and I realized this when I was at Second Baptist. There are a lot of people who came to Moorestown after the Center was there. I mean Black people. And so if you were to think of what you would share with somebody who like, I don't, I, they didn't grow up in Moorestown. How would you describe your experience with the Center, the role that the Center played that they just may not understand, that they didn't grow up in Moorestown?

06:19 **Charles "Pete" Gray:** Right.

06: 20 **Richard Gray:** And the last one is related to you thinking about if you were talking to, to, you know, one of your grandkids about it, and a younger generation that didn't even really know that kind of time, if you were trying to explain this to a young... these are all you're not gonna have to answer all these questions. I'm just giving you all of them. So you have sort of a sense of where we're going. How would you, how would, what would you want to say? I want the younger generation to know this about the West End Center, the role it played, the kind of community that was there. Okay, so those are just some over, overview of the questions.

06:52 **Charles "Pete" Gray:** You know, one of the things that impressed me, and it still does impress me, is that, when that Center first opened, I don't remember when they started having... what do you call it? Like religious classes. They were taught by Mrs. Liberty Hall. She was in charge, and they... Bible study, Bible class. They held them in the Community Center. And she used to run the whole thing.

07:34 **Richard Gray:** Liberty Hall?

07:35 **Charles "Pete" Gray:** That was her husband's name. I forget her name.

07:42 **Richard Gray:** Okay.

07:43 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** But, but, she was married to Liberty Hall, old, man Liberty Hall, not the Liberty Hall, you know that grew up with me. This was a grandfather, and they used to live in that house at the corner of Church Street and Maple Avenue.

08:08 **Richard Gray:** Okay, okay.

08:09 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Right in that first old house was where Liberty Hall and his wife lived. And she taught Bible study, a Bible class, and they used to run for service a summer program, and it ran for like two, three weeks or a month or something like that. And they were divided into classes based on your age. And it was very, very helpful, very interesting, and it kept the kids occupied for a good period in the summer.

08:44 **Richard Gray:** Were there folks from the church that were, either Second Baptist or Bethel that were involved with that, or it was just...?

08:49 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Second Baptist.

08:51 **Richard Gray:** Second Baptist, got it. Got it.

08:53 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Yeah, Bethel. Bethel was not too influential in that. Second Baptist ran the whole thing, I think.

09:01 **Richard Gray:** Interesting. Interesting. So two things on that. One, what year was this?

Something you remember from your childhood? Was it...?

09:10 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** I was, I was a kid,

09:12 **Richard Gray:** Okay.

09:14 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** I was a kid. I would say I was... I wasn't a teenager yet.

09:19 **Richard Gray:** Okay.

09:20 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** I was, I was not a teenager. I had to be eight, nine, something like that.

09:25 **Richard Gray:** Okay, and would you, would you say that Second Baptist had a, that there was more of a connection with Second Baptist in the West End Center, at least the programs that you were...?

09:37 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** It’s difficult to say, because I was associated with Second Baptist.

09:41 **Richard Gray:** Right, right.

09:41 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Now, whatever input Bethel had, it was very little, because I don’t remember people from Bethel being all that involved.

09:51 **Richard Gray:** Got it, got it.

09:52 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Everything was Second Baptist.

09:55 **Richard Gray:** Got it. Now, Uncle Pete, I remember we were on a, we were, I think it might have been at the library, who talked about the building that became the West End Center before it was the West End Center, and then transformed it.

[Laughter]

Richard Gray: I’m kind of curious about that transformation and what was the first time? You know? What was your first experience walking into the Center for the first time, as the Center?

10:22 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Oh, wow!

10:26 **Richard Gray:** You remember the first time?

10:27 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** No, not the first time I walked in. I was a little skeptical about going in.

[Laughter]

10:34 **Richard Gray:** Why’s that?

10:35 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Because. You're going to think this is a laugh. So, from the time I was a kid, or that, you know, I was, once we moved to Church Street, and we walked past that building every day. And it was closed, it was locked tight, and all the way up in the attic was a big, not a big window, but there was a shaped window right up in the attic, and they had what looked like a corpse.

[Laughter]

11:11 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Nobody ever broke in that building. The hell with that! But they had it displayed in a window, and it looked like a mummy or something in that window up there. And I wouldn't go near that building, man, Nahhh. And nobody ever broke in that building. So it's just say, just to say, we'll keep your Black folks from breaking in, we'll put up somebody who looks like a dead person.

[Laughter]

11:43 **Richard Gray:** So, you say you were a little skeptical when you first went in.

11:45 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Yeah, I was like peeking around corners there for a while. But that's how they could, that's how they controlled break ins. You know, it worked.

[Laughter]

12:01 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** I would've never thought about going in there. Of course, it was locked up.

12:07 **Richard Gray:** It was locked up, you said?

12:08 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Oh yeah, yeah, when it first opened, I feel skeptical about going in there.

12:15 **Richard Gray:** Okay.

12:16 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** But then, after awhile, I thought it was funny. I said, “That's another one of your tricks to keep Black folks in their place.”

[Laughter]

12:28 **Richard Gray:** So you, it looked like that the, the Center officially opened in 1944.

12:39 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Okay.

12:40 **Richard Gray:** And that letter that you, that you shared, shared with me, that was, you know, I guess it was the they, they gave letters to folks who played after the season, was 1945 which means that there was a pretty, a pretty strong sports program at the West End Center from the, from the start, you said that was 120 pounds that you were, were there other weight divisions that were also playing?

13:04 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** It couldn't have been 120 pounds. I don't believe.

13:08 **David:** That's what it said on the paper.

13:10 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Did it say that on the paper?

13:11 **Richard Gray:** Yeah, that's what it said on the paper.

13:13 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Because I was, I was 10. Yeah.

13:17 **David:** You were probably six, what? 30 pounds? Yeah. But he only a buck 20 now, man. I don't know if that was legal for him to play.

[Laughter]

13:27 **Richard Gray:** You can still play right now, Uncle Pete.

13:31 **David:** He could be on the same team right now.

13:36 **Richard Gray:** Yeah, but yeah, it did say 120 on, on...

13:37 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** It did? It was 120? Okay.

13:38 **Richard Gray:** That's what it said on...

13:39 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** I was a little skinny guy anyway, but I was only 10. I was born 34 and that was what, 45?

13: 48 **Richard Gray:** 45, yup.

13:49 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** I was 11. And you know what? Clarence couldn't play because he wasn't 10 or 11. That's why Clarence was to manage it, because you were allowed to play until he turned to certain age that he was 10 years old.

14:03 **Richard Gray:** Got it, got it.

14:04 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Clarence was born in 35.

14:07 **Richard Gray:** And you, you are you... What teams did you play? Do you remember the teams you played?

14:15 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** I have, I do not remember. I do not remember. I don't know who we played. I can't remember that. I can't remember. I do remember, did you know Bing Brown? Him and Bill Harvey were good buddies? He was from Palmyra. He wasn't from Palmyra. He came from Beech Street, Moorestown, and he was one of the Browns. Husky Brown, remember the, the window washer?

14:45 **Richard Gray:** Yes,

14:46 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** He still got some daughters and more on Beech St. in one of those new apartments. But anyway, Bing Brown was, was Husky Brown's younger brother and and he was a good football player, and he was just turning... He was playing football, and he was just turning high school age. And some guy from from Palmyra knew the family. They took Bing out of Moorestown, put him in Palmyra so he could play football for Palmyra. Because he was a pretty good player.

15:28 **Richard Gray:** Got it. Now did you? Did you play at the West End Center for, you played a number of years? It wasn't just that one year?

15:36 **Charles "Pete" Gray:** Just that one year.

15:41 **Richard Gray:** I got you.

15:42 **Charles "Pete" Gray:** Yeah, it's just that one year. I don't remember why we only played that one year. But, yeah.

15:51 **Richard Gray:** I got you. And did, did, did Dad play as well?

15:59 **Charles "Pete" Gray:** I don't think so. I don't remember Rich playing. I don't know if Rich played.

16:06 **Richard Gray:** Got it. And so you talked about the religious classes, which it sounded like you went to, and then the sports. Were there other things that you remember, you know, maybe in your teen years, as you got older, that you, that you remember going to the West End Center to do other than, I know, playing baseball?

16:26 **Charles "Pete" Gray:** Yup, yeah, but yeah, baseball, we played a lot of baseball. We used to play against Pennsauken, Mount Holly. We would actually go to those. I remember those games because we had some good competition. Merchantville we played again. Matter of fact, Tex King was a heck of a catcher. Remember Tex?

16:48 **Richard Gray:** No I don't. Tex? His name is Tex King? K-I-N-G?

16:52 **Charles "Pete" Gray:** Yeah. He was married to Ruth Esther Graves.

16:54 **Richard Gray:** Um, yes, okay.

16:58 **Charles "Pete" Gray:** Lived right over there near you.

17:01 **Richard Gray:** Uh, that's right. So he's, he was Robin and Donna's father?

17:05 **Charles "Pete" Gray:** That's correct.

17:07 **Richard Gray:** Got it, got it.

17:08 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** He was a pretty good catcher. He was from Merchantville.

17:12 **Richard Gray:** So, you remember when you first started playing baseball there? Like, do you remember that was it? Was it was a West End Center team that you were playing with?
Or...?

17:22 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Yes, it was a team, but it was a very loose affiliation. We usually set up our own games because we knew baseball players from Mount Holly, baseball players from Pennsauken, Merchantville, and they said, “Hey, you, let's, let's do this on a holiday.” Okay, if we weren't playing the Old Souls, and that's what I remember. It would be the young guys against the Old Souls, they called them. And the Old Souls were Pen Muse, Joe Rhodes, a guy named Dixon. Little short guy named Dixon was married to Joe Rhodes's sister. There was another Muse used to come. He was Pen Muse's brother. I can't remember his name, but he played for them. Billy Brooks used to play with the Old Souls, Catherine's older brother?

18:28 **Richard Gray:** Yes.

18:29 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** And ... remember all those old guys that would play, And that's who we'd play every holiday, it was those young guys against the Old Souls. And Pen Muse, man, that dude, he would pitch three innings. That's all he would pitch because he was in his 50's and he'd only pitched three innings. You gotta pick him up and it took you three swings and set that all down. Yeah. This guy was like 60 years old, Damn boy. **Look like** a half sprint coming up there.

[Laughter]

19:13 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** He was rickety, that guy.

19:15 **Richard Gray:** I think there was a picture of Mr.... of, of... There was a baseball team called the Crescents, Moorestown Crescents. This is from, this was the, and the Old Souls would have probably been on that, because it was from, the picture was from 1918, or 1919. And I saw Mr. Muse was on that. I saw there was a few Muses there.

19:43 **Charles "Pete" Gray:** Yeah, yeah, he had a couple brothers that were pretty good.

19:47 **Richard Gray:** And find the picture. Can you see my... Can you see the screen?

19:51 **Charles "Pete" Gray:** Yes,

19:52 **Richard Gray:** Now, and I'm trying to find the picture while we're talking. So, so tell me, like the, as much as you can remember. Do you remember, like, how you got connected to the baseball when you first heard about it? Or was it just, folks just came together and decided they wanted to play? How did, how did these games sort of come about?

20:10 **Charles "Pete" Gray:** Those things came about because every time there was a holiday they would have, everybody would be out behind the Community Center.

20:19 **Richard Gray:** Ah, okay.

20:20 **Charles "Pete" Gray:** And it got to the point where they said, "Okay, let's do something. We're going to have a baseball game on Fourth of July, and the Old Souls are going to play the young guys." And that's how it all started. And then there was, looking for something to do there was horseshoes out back. And, and right behind the Center. And I don't know how much of it... there was an association. It was a croquet course right behind Pen Muse's house, and that, well, you came right out of Pen Muse's yard in his back, there was this croquet course, and it was cut, it was trimmed, so that the ball rolled a certain way. And every day after work it'd be John Hall, Pen Muse, Dixon, they had old man Coleman, and it had, they had actually had a league, and they played croquet every day.

21:27 **Richard Gray:** And where was, where was Mr. Muse's?

21:30 **Charles "Pete" Gray:** Right behind Muse's house. Remember where Mike Muse lived?

21:33 **Richard Gray:** Where were they..?

21:36 **Charles "Pete" Gray:** Right next to, right next door to my, my homestead.

21:40 **Richard Gray:** Got it. Yes, that's right, okay, okay.

21:43 **Charles "Pete" Gray:** And right, you come right out of my backyard, to Pen Muse's backyard and you were right in the middle of the croquet course.

21:50 **Richard Gray:** Ah, okay, okay.

21:52 **Charles "Pete" Gray:** And it was neat. Those guys, they had their own lawn mower. They kept it cut and trimmed and everything and they played every night after work.

22:03 **Richard Gray:** That's it. Now you talked, Uncle Pete, about, you said it was loosely affiliated with the West End Center, and a few people have talked about that, that it wasn't necessarily something that was run by the West End Center, but they provided either support or they let you use facilities. Was that was, did you all have to go to Mr., Mr. Adams and say, we're going to be, you know, we need the field at this time or did you just go? What was, what was sort of the connection between the West End Center and those games?

22:32 **Charles "Pete" Gray:** We had to go to Mr. Adams.

22:34 **Richard Gray:** Right.

22:35 **Charles "Pete" Gray:** He, he had to, pretty much okay everything.

22:38 **Richard Gray:** Got it.

22:39 **Charles "Pete" Gray:** And he had a guy who was the head of the Moorestown Recreation Association. His name was John Carter. White guy.

22:51 **Richard Gray:** John Carter?

22:53 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Yes, John Carter his name was, and he was head of the West, he was head of the Moorestown Recreation which put the... [Background noise]

23:01 **Richard Gray:** Can you do me a favor? Just let Dave and and Doc know that I'm recording this. So, just be mindful the background conversation.

23:10 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Dave? Dave? You heard him? Okay, okay.

23:18 **Richard Gray:** You guys are good. Just, just letting you know.

23:20 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Okay, I just let them know.

23:25 **Richard Gray:** Cool.

23:26 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** But you had to go through Mr. Adams. And everybody, you know, they respected Mr. Adams. And you know that guy was amazing, because he, do you remember him at all?

23:38 **Richard Gray:** Mr. Adams?

Charles “Pete” Gray: It's a bad neck he, he... He couldn't turn around. I mean, if he wanted to look behind him, he had to turn around.

23:46 **Richard Gray:** Ah! That's Mr. Adams?

23:48 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Mr. Adams. And there was something wrong with his neck, and he had some kind of surgery. But what I did not know was the man was very athletic. And every year he had connections with people who owned lakefront property in Medford Lakes. And everybody who had a car, limping or whole, they would load people in a car. And if we had permission to go to these various places who owned lakefront property, white people, and they give us one day, and everybody would drive up to the lake. And one day, Eddie Chin, and they had, they had canoes, and they'd let you use the canoes and row boats. And Oliver Truitt, and somebody else was in a canoe. Eddie Chin... Was it Eddie Chin? Eddie Chin swam out there and

tipped the canoe over. Well, nobody knew Oliver Truitt couldn't swim, and he was out there floundering, and Mr. Adams had his swim trunks. I never saw Mr. Adams... Man, Mr. Adams broke out into a sprint, dives in the water, went out there and grabbed, took Oliver, brought him to the surface and swam back into shore with Oliver Truitt.

25:23 **Richard Gray:** Is that, right?

25:24 **Charles "Pete" Gray:** Yeah, and I'm going "Look at this guy with a bad neck, and everything!" And here he was a lifeguard. I didn't know it, he was just there, you know, as Mr. Adams. The guy was a lifeguard, and I didn't know that.

25:39 **Richard Gray:** How old was he? How, how old was he around about that time?

25:44 **Charles "Pete" Gray:** In his 50s.

25:45 **Richard Gray:** Wow, okay, okay!

25:48 **Charles "Pete" Gray:** Yeah, he's in the 50s. He saved Oliver Truitt's life, because Oliver was, he had disappeared for the third time. And Mr. Adam dived out. He ran, he sprinted out there, dived in the water, swam out there, and would dive down, brought Oliver back up.

26:09 **Richard Gray:** Wow!

26:09 **Charles "Pete" Gray:** And I didn't even know he was a lifeguard or could swim, because, again, with the bad neck and everything.

26:16 **Richard Gray:** Right, right.

26:17 **Charles "Pete" Gray:** But I do remember that episode, man.

26:21 **Richard Gray:** That's something. So, that was Mr. Adams was, was, clearly, he was a central figure in a lot of, all, you know, a lot of, what kind of relationship, interactions did you have with him, directly? Or do you, do you remember anything?

26:39 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Not, not, not a lot. You know, he was okay. He was a good guy. We’d get a little smart mouthed with him every once in a while.

[Laughter]

26:52 **Richard Gray:** You would?

26: 52 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Oh, yeah, but he, he never held it against you. You know, when I got ready to stay, go to the State Police, now, he was all over me, man. He was right with me. He, he gave advice like, they said, “Okay, you need three, you need three advocates. In other words, three people that's going to vouch for you to go on the State Police. Who you want to vouch for you?” I said, “Mr. Adams, John Carter” and I needed one more. And you know what Mr. Adams said to me, you know? He said, “You know you’re going to be like the third Black trooper in the history of State Police and sometimes that doesn't work for you.” He said, “Let's go with three white people.”

[Laughter]

He axed himself right out of the picture and stuck Judge Alexander Wood up there, who was, he was a superior court judge. Then there was a guy named Henry Bender. He was a judge, but he was a municipal court judge at Moorestown. And the other one was John Carter. Those three white guys were my vouchers and by Mr. Adams’ assistance, because he said “No, that, that might not work so good.” He had a little more foresight than I did.

28:19 **Richard Gray:** I got you, I got you. Okay. And what was the judge's name again?

28:25 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Judge Alexander Wood.

28:27 **Richard Gray:** Judge Alexander Wood.

28:29 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** He was a superior court judge in the county. He was a county court judge. Then there was Henry Bender. He was the Moorestown municipal judge. And John Carter was president, he was, he was a lawyer. He was president of First National Bank in Camden.

28:54 **Richard Gray:** Okay.

28:56 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Because it was like a big three. It was Campbell’s Soup, RCA Victor, and the banking industry. It was like five banks in Camden. I can't call them off now, but First National was one associated with it. It was a big bank on Cooper Street in Camden, and he was the president of the bank. And I, I could, I could walk in his office and sit down his secretary, “Come on in. Come on in.” I can run my mouth. That's how, that's the kind of guy John Carter was.

29:31 **Richard Gray:** Right, right.

29:32 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** And I was in school with his daughter. His daughter, Nancy was... Anyway...

29:41 **Richard Gray:** Just let Dave, Dave.... I don't know if he's emphatic about something, but he's gotten louder. I can hear him in the back, just so he knows.

29:49 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Oh, really? Dave, Dave.

29:54 **Richard Gray:** Just, just, we're transcribing and recording. So I just want to make sure.

[Background conversation]

30:13 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** okay,

30:16 **Richard Gray:** Appreciate you. So, so Uncle Pete. I'm gonna show you something here, if you can see, I'm going to share my screen because it's a picture. I think I've showed this to you before, but I wanted to see if there were any of the people on the screen that you can... Can you see this? Can you see the screen here?

30:34 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Can see the screen.

30:35 **Richard Gray:** And it's got, it's called “The Good Old Days.” This was the Moorestown Crescents baseball club, and they used to play behind, where the, where the, where this... I think they might have played where the Center was, because it looked familiar. But it had some names there that I was wondering if there was some of the old, like it has Howard “Pen” Muse’s picture.

30:53 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** That, that's him. Yeah.

30:54 **Richard Gray:** Then they have a guy by the name of Charles Williams.

30:59 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Charles Williams, that does not ring.

31:01 **Richard Gray:** How about Wilbert Hayes?

31:04 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** No.

31:05 **Richard Gray:** He was a supporter. Then, you know, you remember Frank Eldridge?

31:09 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Oh, Eldridge, yeah!

31:10 **Richard Gray:** Yeah. They have him listed as a supporter. I guess there were some people that... Lloyd, Lloyd Eldridge, was Lloyd? Was he, was he a brother to Frank?

31:19 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** There were a number of Eldridges, and I think they were brothers.

31:23 **Richard Gray:** Okay, okay. And it has Mr. John Hall as a supporter?

31:26 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Yeah, John Hall, he wasn't very athletic.

31:30 **Richard Gray:** Okay. Then they had John Williams. Williams as an outfielder.

31:35 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** John Williams, no, no,

31:38 **Richard Gray:** How about an Adolphus Butler?

31:42 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** No.

31:45 **Richard Gray:** John Cook?

31:48 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** John Cook...? No.

31:50 **Richard Gray:** He may be... This is, this is, these are people who were probably in the, in the in the 50s, probably would have been in their 50s or 60s, and so, Mr. Nelson Moody?

32:02 **Charles "Pete" Gray:** Ooo, yeah. Nelson Moody, I remember him when he was, he... Oh yeah, he's right with those guys. Nelson Moody, he lived in a house where, where Lucy, Lucy French...

32:20 **Richard Gray:** Okay, okay.

32:21 **Charles "Pete" Gray:** Brick house, matter of fact the, Geneva Keyes' sister lived there. What was her name? A brick house, right across from, almost right... Did you know the, the Keyes?

32:40 **Richard Gray:** I do know, yeah, like Thomas Keyes. I remember Thomas was, where he, where he was older than me, but he would have been in sort of my generation.

32:49 **Charles "Pete" Gray:** Yes. Well, right where you remember, he lived in that house that used to be the Second Baptist rectory.

32:55 **Richard Gray:** Right.

32:56 **Charles "Pete" Gray:** And right next door is a brick house getting, you know, getting closer to where I live, and that was where Nelson Moody lived.

33:06 **Richard Gray:** Got it, got it. Alright.

33:09 **Charles "Pete" Gray:** Nelson Moody lived there. And then next door is a brick house and that was Lucy French's house.

33:14 **Richard Gray:** Got it. Got it. Do you know a, it's here a William "Bill" Bailey?

33:24 **Charles "Pete" Gray:** Bailey? No.

33:27 **Richard Gray:** Okay. How about uh, it looks like it may be John French?

33:33 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** The Frenches yeah, okay, yeah. They lived right next door to Nelson Moody.

33:37 **Richard Gray:** Okay, so Mr., it's kind of cut off. I don't know if it has French, pitcher, like he was a pitcher. I don't know if he ever knew him, little old...

33:50 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** No.

33:51 **Richard Gray:** And then it has Mr. Al Muse.

33:52 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** That's Pen's brother, I think.

33:56 **Richard Gray:** Right. How, how about a Frank Stevens?

34:01 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Stevens? Yeah, from Beech Street.

34:06 **Richard Gray:** Okay. They said he was an outfielder here.

34:09 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Yep, yep, yeah, I remember him.

34:12 **Richard Gray:** And do you ever remember playing with him?

34:16 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** No, we never played with the old guys. They played together. Yeah, we, you know, we were the young guys against the Old Souls.

34:23 **Richard Gray:** Okay, now let me, let me ask you this one before I get back to it. So what, what was the cutoff between you being an old soul and a young...?

[Laughter]

34:36 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Well, me, I was, I was a teenager.

34:39 **Richard Gray:** Okay.

34:40 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** You know? But like, oh, you figure in, I was 10 years old in 1930... 1944. So, by time I got to high school, you know, I was 20, thanks to Miss Jenkins and Miss Brown and all those people, you know, Commissioner Baylor, nameless, man.

35:09 **Richard Gray:** Yeah, yeah. But we're gonna have, we're gonna have a separate conversation about, about your Number Seven experience.

35:15 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Yeah. That’s a whole different ball game.

35:18 **Richard Gray:** That's a whole another, yeah, that's a whole... That's a brown liquor conversation, I think, probably.

35:23 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Yes, it is.

35:25 **Richard Gray:** So. But you were probably, you were like, when you said teenager what like, 16, 15, 16, 17, when you were playing?

35:33 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Yes. Yeah, I could hold my own because I always had a good arm, right? I throw the ball about 95/96 miles an hour. And the guys used to tease me like, “Man, that's that guy throw the ball 100 miles an hour and don't know where it's going.”

[Laughter]

35:54 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** I said, “I know where it was going. You don’t know where it's going.”

35:58 **Richard Gray:** But I want you to think I don't know where it's going. Yeah, actually, there was one of the, one of the Moorestown Historical Society interviews they did, and I can't remember who it was with, who mentioned you. You know, playing ball with you. It might have been. I'm trying to think if it was, I can't, I'm, I'll get the the interview. But it was, if they were mentioned there. What about a...? We said, so we talked about French. We talked about Frank Stevens.

36:30 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Yes.

36:32 **Richard Gray:** Okay. Where did Mr. Stevens live?

36:35 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Beech Street.

36:37 **Richard Gray:** Beech Street, okay. And then Billy “Gus” Johnson?

36:44 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Billy “Gus” Johnson. That doesn't ring a bell.

36:47 **Richard Gray:** Doesn't ring a bell?

36:48 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** No.

36:49 **Richard Gray:** There's a Harry “Woody” Proud, uh, Prout, P-R-O-U-T.

36:59 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Prout? Most of the Prouts were from Palmyra, really.

37:03 **Richard Gray:** Palmyra? Okay, so they might have played on this team, but being from, there probably are folks who...

37:09 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** These teams had, guys from all over. If you could play ball, you know, you wanted to play with these guys, because Pen Muse was... he should have been a pro, right?

37:21 **Richard Gray:** Right.

37:22 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** There's a white guy named Conroy, and he used to come in a drugstore where I used to work when I was a teenager. And every time he'd asked me, [Changes his voice] “You know Pen Muse?” I'd say, “Yeah, I know Pen.” Well, this guy played, like, 12 years for Washington Senators. And he said, “Man, if they were accepting colored people in the league back in the day,” he said, “That man would have been a pro, pro ball.”

37:50 **Richard Gray:** Is that right?

37:52 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** He said, “Every time I came up, that man struck me out.” So I go back and I tell Pen Muse what he said, and Pen Muse would say, “Ah, shit! Every time I pitched that man, he hit the ball clean, out Strawbridge's lake...”

[Laughter]

And he used to break me up because they had so much respect for each other.

38:11 **Richard Gray:** Right, right.

38:13 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** You know, none never had a bad word to say about Pen Muse and Pen Muse never had a bad word say about him.

38:19 **Richard Gray:** What was the man's name that...?

38:22 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Conroy.

38:23 **Richard Gray:** Conroy.

38:24 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Yep, he played like 12 years for the Washington Senators.

38:28 **Richard Gray:** Was he? Did he live in Moorestown?

38:29 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Yes, sir.

38:30 **Richard Gray:** Conroy, okay, okay, yeah, okay. What about Frank Anderson?

38:37 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Oh, yeah. Frank Anderson lived right there on Locust Street. He was, he was **Bus Anderson's** father.

38:49 **Richard Gray:** Who's that? Say that again?

38:51 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Bus Anderson. Bus Anderson was a school teacher in Mount Laurel, Black guy, for a number of years. I think he retired from Mount Laurel school system.

39:04 **Richard Gray:** Okay, okay. And Ed, Ed, how about Ed Green?

39:08 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** That doesn't ring a bell. They had a lot of guys that were from, not from Moorestown. So, I really did, never really got, but the Eldridges, man, there was quite a few of the Eldridges that played ball.

39:23 **Richard Gray:** Yup. Oh, you said, so which of the Eldridges do you remember playing ball?

39:27 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** I didn't know them personally. You know, like to be able to rattle their name off.

39:32 **Richard Gray:** Right.

39:33 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** But there were some Eldridges, and they were all pretty good ball players.

39:38 **Richard Gray:** Did, did Mr. Eldridge, Denise and Dennis, Leon's father, did he play?

39:45 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Yes.

39:47 **Richard Gray:** He did, he did play. Okay. I'd imagine, because I'm telling you that all those Eldridges can play just about anything, including the women. I'm telling you. There was a question one time where Keith and I were saying, who was the fastest? And I think he said Mary. And I said, Denise.

[Laughter]

40:06 **Richard Gray:** They kick off their shoes, Jack! You gave...

40:10 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Is that right?

40:10 **Richard Gray:** Oh, yeah, every one of them, every one. So it was funny that actually they had a, I think was one of the, Greg had organized one of the golf outings, and they were honoring the Eldridge family. That's right before, I think Mrs. Eldridge had passed. And Greg, Greg said, “Yeah, you know, there's always been a question about who was the best athlete in the Eldridge family.” And he picked Denise. And Leon came up and said, he said, “Richard, Greg, you don't realize how much trouble.” He said, “We've been having that argument for the longest time. And you just messed it up.” Yeah. Because Denise was, like, she was All-State and everything, All-State field hockey, All-State lacrosse, All-State basketball.

40:55 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Really? Oh, wow!

40:56 **Richard Gray:** Yeah, Denise was, she was, Denise was for real.

41:00 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Well, who's whose child was she?

41:03 **Richard Gray:** She was, Miss Lorraine and Donald.

41:05 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Oh yeah. How about that?

41:10 **Richard Gray:** They were the youngest, Denise and Dennis are our age. They were the twins, the youngest twins of the...

41:19 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Okay, yeah, okay. But what is..? The girls, Marie's girls are always talking about this Eldridge that was, they grew up with, and all of a sudden he showed up with a skirt on or something.

41:35 **Richard Gray:** I don't know anything about that one.

41:37 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** One of them is gay, evidently, but I was, but what's her name talks about it all the time. He said, you know, he changed his name from Ruth to, you know, from Gus to Ruth, or something that...

41:51 **Richard Gray:** I know that Leon Eldridge has a, has a son, that's Leon, but he's, is, um...

41:59 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** He's not gay, right?

42:01 **Richard Gray:** No, I don't think so.

42:05 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** But you, you talk to, to Marie's girls, because whoever it is, they grew up with her.

42:12 **Richard Gray:** I will check, you know, I, you know, it's funny. I'm going to check with some of the... It's been interesting to find out how many generations back people go, and how many generations forward. So there's a... I was unaware till I spoke with you, that Mr. Eldridge grew up in that house where Dennis and Denise were so, you know, and then Dennis has been living there.

42:41 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Oh yeah. Donald's father lived in that house.

42:44 **Richard Gray:** Right, right, okay.

42:46 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** And he never moved.

42:47 **Richard Gray:** That's it.

42:48 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** And Donald raised his family in that house, and then the mother gave that house to Dennis, and that thing's been the Eldridges' ever since I was a kid.

42:59 **Richard Gray:** Yeah, that's that's something. That is something. That is something.

43:04 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** It's still Eldridge.

43:06 **Richard Gray:** Yeah. Well, you know, this is, there's many Eldridges. It's like, there's names like the Eldridges, like you said, there's Muse and Brooks, you know, there's, oh, yeah, folks, you know, Youngs, the Lockes. All those names that you know, they're generations of people that you just....

Charles “Pete” Gray: Oh, yeah.

43:25 **Richard Gray:** Fortunes.

43:30 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Oh yeah, but Jimmy Fortune's father, Mel? Mel Fortune? Yeah, I think his name was Mel Fortune. Lived in that big house up on up on Church Street. He was, he transported migrant workers with busses, but he made a good living doing it.

43:57 **Richard Gray:** Who was this?

43:59 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** This was Mel Fortune's father. Who's the Fortune played, played basketball with Mel Collins and Eddie Douglas?

44:14 **Richard Gray:** Ah, okay.

44:21 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Jimmy Fortune.

44:22 **Richard Gray:** Yes. Jimmy Fortune. I remember the Fortunes that lived on Locust Street because they lived right next to, there was a Fortune, Vincent and Merrill. They were, they were my generation.

44:34 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Merrill Fortune, married Helen Muse? Yeah, oh yeah. I know. We used to play ball. He's a good ball player.

44:44 **Richard Gray:** Okay, okay.

44:45 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Mel Fortune was. Not Mel. Is it Mel? Yeah, Melvin, no, yeah. Cause he has a brother named Billy Fortune.

44:53 **Richard Gray:** Okay, okay.

44:56 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Yeah, okay.

44:57 **Richard Gray:** I knew them. So, Uncle Pete, so you, that's your teen years. Did you, when you got into your twenties, were you ever part of the Blue Chips?

45:04 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Never belonged to the Blue Chips, except for one year, the first year they started out. And that's the year that Bernard was the president, because nobody else wanted to be president. And it just started out. And I went to that first meeting and about a month later I joined the Marine Corps.

45:23 **Richard Gray:** Ah, I got you. I got you.

45:26 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** So I just disappeared right out of the organization.

45:30 **Richard Gray:** I got you. Do you remember anything about that first meeting?

45:35 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Yeah, it was only like five people. It was me, Uncle Roberts, Bernard...

45:46 **Richard Gray:** Was Mr. Hall there? Mr. Charlie Hall?

45:49 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Yeah. Charlie Hall. But that, but it was only like five people, because they got permission from Mr. Adams to take over the basement, because they never did anything with the basement. They got permission for the Blue Chips to take over the basement.

Fix it. They fixed it up and... But that was the first meeting. But like I said, I did. I went to the Marine Corps, and I never came back to it.

Richard Gray: Did you go to any of the events after you came back from the Marine Corps? Any of the Blue Chip dances?

46:23 **Charles "Pete" Gray:** Yes. We went to, Jenny and I went to, what was it, Cherry Hill? What was it? What was the name of the club there in Cherry Hill?

46:37 **Richard Gray:** I'm trying to remember, I think I saw one of the programs for one of the events. And I can't, but I remember Cherry Hill.

46:47 **Charles "Pete" Gray:** Yeah. Jenny and I went a couple times.

46:49 **Richard Gray:** Okay, okay.

46:51 **Charles "Pete" Gray:** They ran a pretty nice event.

46:53 **Richard Gray:** Yeah. Did you go to the Lionel Hampton, the time Lionel Hampton came to town?

47:01 **Charles "Pete" Gray:** No, no, but I used to go to, to Red Hill Inn over on 130. Man, they got... that's first time I saw Lionel Hamilton in person. The Red Hill Inn, right there at the junction of Route 130 and 73. Was an old farmhouse. Man, that place was nice. The acoustics were good. And I saw Mandy Ferguson, Dizzy Gillespie, Ella Fitzgerald, and Sarah Vaughan and Donna Washington. I mean, I was there every weekend, yeah, after I got out of the Marine Corps. I rode.

[Laughter]

But if it wasn't for that, I would never have got to see all those people in person,

47:49 **Richard Gray:** Right, right. Do you remember Grandfather or Grandmother ever frequenting the West End Center or being connected to it?

47:58 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** My mother? No, no, nope, no, not that I remember at all, no. The only time she would show up there was when Jenny got married, and she got married in the West End Community Center, right? But no, not my mom.

48:28 **Richard Gray:** Okay. It's, is there...? It's so if you, you had mentioned the baseball, if you were to say that, a lot of people talk about just memories they have connected to... For me, was always the, I remember going there right before it closed, because it was a place where we had the summer program and so...

48:48 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Okay.

48:49 **Richard Gray:** ... we'd go there and play knock hockey. So if someone were to ask you, what's your, your, your either your best or your, your strongest memory of the Center in connection with you or connection to the community what would you name? What would be that thing that you would say, this was it?

49:07 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** I think it was the Friday night dances.

49:11 **Richard Gray:** Ah, okay.

49:13 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** We had every Friday night. It was a dance. And if there was a high school football game, that Saturday night was a dance at the Community Center.

49:23 **Richard Gray:** Okay?

49:24 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** And that's when we got to, all the Black kids, teenagers got to go to a dance. And as a matter of fact, Marie was one of the supervisors, not supervisors, overseers at the dances. You had to be somebody a little older than we were, and Marie was one of them. And you know, you know, what strikes me is, remember the lady at the Evergreens that was, I went to high school with?

49:57 **Richard Gray:** Yes, yes.

49:58 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** And she asked me one time, “Why don't the Black members of the Class of 55 ever come to your class reunions?” You know, right? It was like 12 of us. It was like 207 in the class. It was 12 of us, Blacks, girls and boys. And she said, “How come they never come?” I said, “Because you never taught... You never made them feel like they were part of your class.”

50:32 **Richard Gray:** Mm-hmm.

50:34 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** I said, “You, we got out of school at 3:15 and you went up Main Street to the to the soda jerk place and we weren't welcome. So, we went down Church Street to the West End Community Center, and I never saw you here. And you never saw me in the soda jerk place up on Church, up on Main Street.” But she said, “I never thought about it then.” “You didn't include me in anything,” I said. “The only reason you treated me different because I was athletic, you made me, you made me class president...”

[Laughter]

51:13 **Richard Gray:** Right, right.

51:14 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** “...for one reason, you know, and the rest of the kids you know, you never made them feel like they were...” Because I would go to a class reunion every once in a while, but nobody else. I'd be the only Black there, because nobody else would come. “And the only reason you treated me differently because I was an athlete.” But she said, “I never thought about it like that.”

51:39 **Richard Gray:** So, for the for the high school students you're talking about, and this, this would have been when these dances took place, while you were in high school?

51:48 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Yes.

51:49 **Richard Gray:** And you said they were, they were, were they Saturday night dances or Friday night dances?

51:52 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** They would have been Saturday night dances.

51:54 **Richard Gray:** After the game. So they'd be after... yeah, got you and so...

51:59 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Yes. But the high school, the high school, had a white dance at the gymnasium every, every after every game.

52:07 **Richard Gray:** Right. But you didn't go to that.

52:09 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Oh no! You weren't welcome.

52:13 **Richard Gray:** And the gym, you're talking about, the one right over there, right across the railroad tracks, one where the, the gym we used to go play basketball, right over by where the library is?

52:22 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Yeah, exactly, that same gymnasium. Yes.

52:25 **Richard Gray:** Got you, got you. So that was the social, so for, for, for Black folks, high school, like you said, after school, that was the place you went, was the West End Center?

52:36 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Yes, yes.

52:38 **Richard Gray:** And it sounds like, Uncle Pete, and this is consistent, that it wasn't just Moorestown Black folks going there, but it was Black folks coming from Palmyra, from Burlington...

52:49 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Pennsauken. Yes.

52:49 **Richard Gray:** Pennsauken. And so was, was there a, do you know of another place like, did you all go someplace in Palmyra that was similar to the West End Center? Or was West End Center the sort of the, people were coming there. That was the, that was sort of a unique magnet for Black folks?

53:06 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** You went to places in Palmyra, but they were all commercial. It was the, it was the Meadowbrook, which is where your Daddy met Chilly.

53:24 **Richard Gray:** What's it called? What was it?

53:25 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Meadowbrook. It was a secret, a dance hall.

53:24 **Richard Gray:** Meadowbrook?

53:25 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** It was called Meadowbrook,

53:24 **Richard Gray:** Okay.

53:40 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** And then there was a, another club there in Palmyra, where all the teenagers used to hang.

53:45 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** We didn't go to Burlington, too tough, because you get your ass kicked by Burlington kids.

[Laughter]

53:57 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Yeah, that was a good place to stay away from.

54:00 **Richard Gray:** Oh, that's funny Uncle Pete. That's, that's a good one, right there. So, so, you said you didn't go there too. Was it? Was there a place in Burlington? Maybe that's why mom went to Palmyra to get out of, out of Burlington.

54:15 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** No, there was no place to hang in Burlington. Not unless you're ready to fight.

54:19 **Richard Gray:** What about Mount Holly?

54:22 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Mount Holly? As a teenager? No, no place to congregate in Mount Holly.

54:30 **Richard Gray:** So again, I've heard this because Aunt Marie said, when she told the story of a girl scout troop, asking Mr. Adams to be able to start a Girl Scout troop.

54:43 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** I remember that. I remember that.

54:45 **Richard Gray:** And she said that before that, the only place you could go if you wanted to be a Girl Scout, you had to go all the way to Palmyra. So, it seems like there's this connection between Palmyra and, you know, particularly Black folks, Palmyra and Moorestown.

54:59 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Yeah, that's true. That's true. But we, you know, we were cousins to half the people in Palmyra, and I see the time I was in the Meadowbrook, and this guy, he's, he used to just fight for no reason. And he was coming after me one night, and Eddie Grimes was a, was a special police officer or something, and the guy was turned around, come right at me. And Eddie said, “Oh, man, that's my cousin.” And the guy did an about-face and walked away. He but he was just, he just fight for no reason.

55:39 **Richard Gray:** Is that right?

55:41 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** But I had so many cousins in Palmyra. Yeah, it was safe to go to Palmyra.

55:46 **Richard Gray:** Got it. Got it. Yeah, I got it. I got it. And so tell me a little bit about the dances. So, what, what, when you went in, did they have a band? Did it...? Was it a was it records playing? What? What was the, what was the vibe like?

55:58 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Records playing. We never had a band. Okay, it was all, had a little record player, and somebody spun the disc and we danced.

56:09 **Richard Gray:** Okay, okay.

56:10 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** No, we never had, never had a band. One time... the only time I'd ever seen anybody entertain... Remember Dave Roberts?

56:22 **Richard Gray:** Roberts?

56:23 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Roberts, yeah, his father was a pastor. He was a Baptist pastor. His name was Dave Roberts, and they lived back in there where Richie used to live, your dad, with Uncle Peyton, back in that area. And she played an instrument, Mrs. Roberts, and the Reverend Roberts played an instrument. And so when Dave came along, they made him take piano lessons. That guy, he took piano lessons from the time he was four years old, until he was 20. Man, he could beat that piano half to death.

[Laughter]

And one day I walked in the Community Center, and all these people were sitting there. Here was Dave Roberts and he was playing... I never heard him play anything unless it was a religious song. He had on a pair of dark glasses and a hat all broke down on one side, and they had a piano up on the stage in the Community Center. He played every Ray Charles song and sang it. He had the whole... he had 50 people sitting there listening there, play piano and sing all the Ray Charles' stuff. If his mother could have saw him, she'd have beat him half to...

[Laughter]

But that guy, he could really play piano. But he didn't live very long, for some reason, I don't know what he was doing, but he, he died. He wasn't even 30 years old.

57:58 **Richard Gray:** Is that right?

57:59 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Yeah. But, boy, he could play that piano.

58:03 **Richard Gray:** Well, Uncle Pete, it's about an hour. I didn't want to take up too much of your time. I've enjoyed it. I definitely want to follow up with you on some things, and if there's some things that come up you want to talk about, even got the questions you may say, “You know what I want to, there's something else,” you just let me know, and we'll set up a time to be able to...

58:22 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Yeah, okay, very good. And I like to get a closer look at that picture of the baseball team.

Richard Gray: I sent it to you. I’m gonna bring it to you.

58:29 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Oh, okay, because I might recognize some of this guy. Yeah.

58:35 **Richard Gray:** What's it? Loray, what's Loray’s last name, Green. Is it Loray Green?
Lo-ray, Loray Green.

58:48 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** No, I don't remember him

58:49 **Richard Gray:** Of the Greens. I think he's related to what's, what's Mr. Green's name?
Was it Adolphus or something?

58:59 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** I'm not recognizing the Green, Greens.

59:01 **Richard Gray:** Not the Greens? Well, he had posted it, he's, he had shared it as something he found.

59:07 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Oh, is that right?

59:09 **Richard Gray:** Yes, I'll, I'll bring it with me so you can look at it.

59:11 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Okay, let me take, let me take a closer look at it.

59:13 **Richard Gray:** Yeah, I'm going to try to, Uncle Pete, I'm really, what I want to try to do is, there's a, this is a team called the Moorestown Crescents baseball club, and so I there's got to be some history. I actually reached out to the Negro League Baseball Museum to see if there's any record of this kind of club or, or any history of it, because it's, they played in Moorestown in 1918 but I, other than this picture, I never heard of any.

59:40 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** 1918?1 Oh, wow!

59:45 **Richard Gray:** No, yeah, this, that picture that I, that I was showing you, was from 1918. I don't know how old Mr. Muse would have been. Howard Muse would have, uh, Pen Muse would have been then.

59:51 **Charles "Pete" Gray:** He, Pen Muse, he would be, right now he'd be about 120.

1:00:03 **Richard Gray:** He'd be about 120, so he was probably, he was probably in his, in his 20s, then, late, mid to late 20s, yeah, okay, he looks like they have uniforms and everything.

1:00:19 **Charles "Pete" Gray:** Yeah, they were more organized and than we were. You know, we never had uniforms as baseball players. But these guys, I mean, they were, baseball was a big deal back in the day,

1:00:31 **Richard Gray:** Was it?

1:00:32 **Charles "Pete" Gray:** Because that was one of the few outlets where you didn't take a lot of equipment and expense. They could draw, you know, they could draw a nice crowd, right?

1:00:46 **Richard Gray:** More so than basketball?

1:00:49 **Charles "Pete" Gray:** Oh yeah, yeah. Basketball is a late thing, man. I take, for instance, I think I was the first Black player to play basketball in high school.

1:01:02 **Richard Gray:** Is that right?

1:01:02 **Charles "Pete" Gray:** Yes, sir. Before that no, no Black had ever played varsity basketball.

1:01:09 **Richard Gray:** I didn't know that Uncle Pete. I did not know that.

1:01:14 **Charles "Pete" Gray:** Yeah. Uncle Roberts went out for a while, but he, Uncle thought he was better than he really was.

[Laughter]

1:01:23 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Yeah, but you'd be surprised. They were very my, my generation they were very prejudiced, man. I still laugh because I saw a picture of a Moorestown Swim Club. And because no Blacks was allowed in the pool, though, how are you gonna go out for swimming if you ain't allowed in the pool? And I look at it, all white kids, and kids I went to school with, they was all in swim club, I mean, swim picture, not a single Black because you weren't allowed in the pool. That's my generation.

1:02:02 **Richard Gray:** Yeah, I'm trying to remember Uncle Pete, because it was, we talked about that the, you could go to the library at the at the Community Center. Do you remember it?

1:02:16 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Yes. I used to go.

1:02:19 **Richard Gray:** I saw a picture Miss Kay had from, she looked like she might have been eight or nine years old at the library, but you couldn't, you couldn't swim.

1:02:30 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Yes. You could not swim in the pool, not allowed in the pool. And that was the stipulation of the guy who built the Moorestown Community Center.

1:02:39 **Richard Gray:** Yeah, you know, Uncle Pete, I, I'm trying to find the the the person I work with on the project, Nadine, had found a history. And there was a specific quote from the person who, I guess, who, who built the Community Center saying he didn't want Black people coming in there.

1:03:04 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Yeah, and it's the same thing, you know, the same guy owned Evergreen. That was, that was their family's summer residence. The same guy who built the Community Center owned the Evergreen.

1:03:21 **Richard Gray:** Got it. Owned Evergreen? You mean the Evergreen that we you're talking about the Evergreen...?

1:03:27 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Yes.

1:03:28 **Richard Gray:** Oh, I did not know that.

1:03:34 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Yeah. Same guy.

1:03:35 **Richard Gray:** I found it. Oh, go ahead.

1:03:37 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** It's surprising. I, when I, when I went in the State Police Academy, they said Mr. John Carter was kind of ushering me and taking care of me, right?

1:03:52 **Richard Gray:** Right.

1:03:53 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** And he said, “How are you financially?” And I said, “I'm okay,” you know? “Well, you're not going to be making as much money as you were making for the first, until graduation, which was like three months or four months.” He says, “How about if we just take a little money and put it in an account and that way if your wife needs it, it's there.” He said, “How about \$500?” I said, “Okay.” So they, all of a sudden, they gave me a \$500 interest-free loan from the Moorestown community fund. And I'm saying, “Where's this come from?” He said, “Don't worry about it. You don't have to pay it back until you can.” And they gave me an interest-free loan and stuck it in their bank for Jenny, in case she'd need it.

1:04:46 **Richard Gray:** Who, who was this now? Who set this up?

1:04:49 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** John Carter. He was the head of Mooretown Recreation Association.

1:04:52 **Richard Gray:** So, this is the same John Carter that was connected to that, that when you, you were saying that that was Mr., there was Mr. Adams, and then the John Carter was, at that stage as a white man, I'm assuming.

1:05:06 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Oh, certainly is, yeah.

[Laughter]

1:05:07 **Richard Gray:** You said, “He sure is!”

1:05:12 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** He was a lawyer, and his wife was a lawyer. They were both just nice people, you know? Very subdued, very nice people.

1:05:22 **Richard Gray:** That's nice.

1:05:23 **Charles “Pete” Gray:**, And they let me. He looked out for me like, you know, “Pete, you need anything?” “No, I'm okay right now.” “Okay.” And he'd take me in his office and sit down run his mouth with me? I think, oh, I don't know whether it was this house. Anyway, I told him I was trying to build a house. And he said, call the loan officer and brought him up here and set him down, set me down with the loan officer. And he, he, he did the mortgage on this house.

1:05:58 **Richard Gray:** Is that right?

1:06:00 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Yes, sir.

1:06:01 **Richard Gray:** Okay, well, that's good to know. I'm not sure if his name had come up, at least not in conversations that I had, so I'm going to really and that's it. That's something I would like to explore with you Uncle Pete, like you talked about how, um, the, like you said that, that your classmate said, “Well, why didn't you, why didn't you come back to the reunion?” You're like, “Well, you all went here, and we went to the West End Center, and you all didn't come there.” But I remember looking, not “but”, and I remember looking at some pictures, and for some reason I you would always see maybe one or two white people. Did you remember white people, that freq... that would come to the West End Center?

1:06:44 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** No.

1:06:48 **Richard Gray:** Not when you, not when you were coming through.

1:06:50 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** No. I do not.

1:06:52 **Richard Gray:** Right. Except if they were like, maybe a Mr. Carter or something, would he, would he be there for, oh, yeah, recreation? So they would be maybe somebody connected

with, officially, with the recreation, but not like somebody just from town coming to play baseball.

1:07:05 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Oh no.

1:07:07 **Richard Gray:** Okay.

1:07:08 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** No, it was, it was, it was, you were in awe when you saw a white person walk down Church Street. Past the railroad track, he didn't come down there.

Richard Gray Yeah,

1:07:08 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** But hey, you see a white person you say “What the hell is wrong with that person walking up Church Street!?” Nah, they didn't cross the railroad track.

1:07:38 **Richard Gray:** Okay, okay. That's good. Well, Uncle Pete, that's, that's all I got right now, like I said, I'll probably have some follow up, and I definitely would love to go into a couple of things. I really want to go into more is maybe, maybe once you look at the picture and maybe thinking a little bit more about the baseball connection, talk about your experience. I'd love to do that.

1:07:58 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Okay.

1:08:00 **Richard Gray:** But if there are other things that come up, just let me know, because we're really going to do this, just sort of as people have stories, you know, things that come up. And if there are particular, if there are particular stories, like, you know, we want people to describe what's going on. But, you know, being able to tell stories about the West End Center, one of them that you mentioned, that I also, that I would like to talk about, is you said that if there was a holiday, it seemed that, that if, like, Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day, it seemed like that was the Center and that field where the places that people went.

1:08:37 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** That's, that's all you had. Like, on Fourth of July, it was nothing. You know, like we would go out there and we knew we were going to play baseball, and lot of people came out to watch.

1:08:51 **Richard Gray:** Right.

1:08:52 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** And that was the congregation point for the holiday.

1:08:59 **Richard Gray:** Mom told me this story about, I'm going to talk to Mr. Wright, Perry Wright. And Mom said that she went to the second it was the, his second birthday party for Perry Junior that you know, going with Greg. And she said, she said, Richard, that was the biggest birthday party I ever saw for a two-year-old in my life. She said everybody was, you know, like everybody just came, like it was, you have a birthday party, everybody's it's almost like everybody was invited to the birthday party. And it seemed like the West End Center was like that, that if you had an event like that, if you were doing something there, that it was, people came to it.

1:09:43 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Yeah, okay, yeah. That's like, when Jenny, when Jenny and Bernard, got married, man, and it was, it was like, open, everybody could come.

1:09:57 **Richard Gray:** And that was just understood, that's what...

1:09:59 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** It was understood, that “What's happening at the Community Center?” [Changes his voice] “Bernard and Jenny getting married.”

1:10:12 **Richard Gray:** That's all right.

1:10:13 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Yeah, okay.

1:10:15 **Richard Gray:** Alright, Uncle Pete. Always good.

1:10:17 **Charles “Pete” Gray:** Alright, man.

1:10:18 **Richard Gray:** I'm come through and see you. I'm, I'm not sure how long I'll be in town this week, but I'm, I'm probably be back next week, but if I don't see, if I don't see you this week, I'll definitely see you next week.

1:10:28 **Charles "Pete" Gray:** Sounds good, man. Love you.

1:10:30 **Richard Gray:** Love you too. Love you too. Give my give my best to, to D and Doc, and, and Lori, alright. Take care.

1:10:30 **Charles "Pete" Gray:** Okay. Take care. Bye.