Singleton, Charles (Interview 2)

Charles Dennis Singleton
Will Scott
Peter Rutkoff

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Charles Singleton Interview

Charles Singleton: I don’t think they had. The person that hit me, he was driving but he didn’t have a license. But anyway, because of that, my head hit the steering wheel. I got this thing called dementia. My brain still work but it ain’t as sharp as it used to be. So I just wanted to tell you that. So sometimes it takes me a long while to bring up some things.

Will Scott: Well, we noticed it felt, after talking to you last summer, was your brain works terrific. It just take a little more time.

CS: Yeah.

WS: And since I’m 68 and he’s 71, we’re very sympathetic, alright. You’re talking quicker and younger than the rest of us.

Peter Rutkoff: But I have to say that I find you more alert. Sharper today, than a year ago. I think this is a positive change going on, so enjoy it.

WS: Yeah, I agree.

CS: Yeah, my head don’t hurt as much.

PR: Well, there you go.

CS: It seem like it’s kind of-

WS: And they are saying, you know, they used to think that nerves couldn’t heal themselves but now they know they can. But it is very slow, so, you know, the best days may be ahead.

CS: Now I’m going to go look for something.

PR: Okay, thank you.

CS: Move freely and stuff.

WS: And if you can think of, or have access to, you know, any videos or films of him growing up anytime up to today.

Anita: We didn’t have a whole lot of um…

WS: But, you know, like photos.

PR: Like here’s a whole stack of them over here. Family photos.

WS: Oh, that’s great.
Anita: Fact. CS probably got the biggest collection of family photos since he’s the one that basically archives stuff more than anybody else.

WS: Yeah, Charles has clearly got a lot of adventures to go beyond boxing.

Anita: Mhm. Mhm

WS: You know, an inspiring artist as well as a boxer. Boxing page one, alright. But also, as I was explaining, the filmmaker we’ve talked to, who is real nice and real excited about it. He works at Kenyon in our film department and he’s young. But he wants to be, he’s kind of like CS was at CS’ age, you know, when CS was in his twenties. He wants to be an important documentary filmmaker and this would be his first step, so he’s very talented but he doesn’t have a lot of high level professional credentials. But I think we’re going to get more out of him for it. And he’s interested in it, not to make money, but to establish himself.

PR: So this is him, isn’t it?

Anita: Mhm, right there.

PR: And it’s when he was looking at Atlanta, so it’s when he was in Georgia.

Anita. Mmm, it could. Yeah, probably.

PR: Yeah, so this is an 85 inch reef port. So maybe that’s something.

WS: If we could get two or three films of him boxing it would just be-

Anita: I know he was a, like uh… housed to be on like world class boxing.

PR: That’s what it was called? The program?

Anita: He used to come on like, sundays. I remember. I think when he boxed in Poland or something like that it was broadcasted on the world wide sports, or whatever.

PR: Oh god, the Wide World of Sports.

Anita: Yeah, something like that, yeah.

WS: Knew Polish.

Anita: I think it’s when he was in Poland. I know he was-

PR: Because that was the national AU team, I think, and I know they fought in Russia.

Anita: Yeah, he didn’t go. Oh gosh, I know the year that the olympics were supposed to have been in Russia.
PR: Oh, the Carter Olympics, in 1980.

Anita: No, this is when um… Nixon was in office.

PR: Yeah.

Anita: And um… he was only U.S. boxing team but that’s the year they had that bomb go. We boycotted it and so they didn’t go and then I take it, like in the next year or two, they had some kind of world class boxing. Was it back in Russia? What I remember was televised on television.

PR: Yeah, that’s the thing we’re trying to find. Find who’s doing it, then we can get to them and get the films.

WS: If we can get names in place-

Anita: I mean, is there any way to just google it?

PR: We’ve done that.

WS: We’ve done that. Oh PR, one of his former students is a world class film researcher and she works for the big companies, and she’s working on it.

PR: We’ve found two or three-

WS: She’s found some things.

Anita: Okay.

WS: And so, if it happened, I think- and we can give her some hints. We’ll find it.

Anita: Yeah, um… I, oh gosh, all I can remember was un… who or something. What he say?

PR: White WSed us first.

WS: But that’s already, that’s a big couple of ratings.

PR: Do you know who that is?

Anita: Um…

WS: Bet CS does.

Anita: I don’t know. You’ll have to ask him.

WS: Bet CS remembers everyone of his buddies.
Anita: Yeah.

WS: So our ambition for the film is for it to be picked up by ESPN. Is it called 30/30?

PR: 30/4/30.

WS: They have a film series 30-

PR: 4/30.

WS: 30/4/30, which does the thirty minute portraits of sports or athletes that have not quite been the headlines, so they’re not the George Foreman. So this is perfect for them and if it gets on them then it WS be broadcasted nationally, which- and they probably WS polish it off and make it shiny. And if it gets on ESPN, CS becomes known as important as he is. People believe that he is important but him as a whole person. As I was telling you, you know, all of us have failed in our ambitions, you know. George Foreman may not have, but everybody else did. His was more dramatic and more powerful. But he’s really telling everybody’s story. Because as a man he coped with it. And because he almost got there, the challenge of coping with it was much bigger than the rest of ours. So he just said, you know, “Well, I’ll be a teacher”, and he has to always explain that to people. But his triumph as a person is just as important as his almost absolute triumph with boxing. And that’s the story that ESPN WS love.

Anita: And then to think about CS as, you know, um… coming back…

CS: This is (someone’s name).

WS: Oh yeah, we see her all the time. Now we’re going to get you with her.

Anita: Yeah, you know, him coming back and the work that he did with these young boys-

WS: That’s going to be really good.

Anita: I think that even with his illustrious boxing career, which was wonderful. I think the impact that he came back here and community and not just the young men that he worked with the program that he was employed, but CS and Crystal both. They’re the kind of people that pick up anybody that’s, you know, the rest of us say, “Here, we need to help them over there. We keep them over there. They’re the ones that actually break into ya’ll home. Sometimes they have the least resources but give the most”.

WS: And that’s the story that I think is gonna be really powerful. And it gets powerful because, you know, he was there, he was there. He overcame his pride and got a powerful life.

Anita: He’s always had a humble spirit, very humble spirit, very humble spirit.

WS: Oh, that comes through and it’s wonderful.
PR: So, lets-

Anita: Wait a minute, so ya’ll need me to call Scott now?

PR: Well, lets at least brainstorm now and think of as many possible names.

Anita: Okay, here’s Scott’s number then.

PR: Okay.

Anita: 843 - 812 - 0755.

PR: Is his last name?

Anita: Groomes. Scott Groomes.

PR: Groomes, okay.

WS: Is he still around?

CS: On several people that were, you know, good close friends.

David: Who was the boy that you skipped school with when you told that wonderful story about playing in the park and then going home?

CS: Oh, that was David.

David: David. What’s his last name?

CS: I don’t remember David’s last name, but you know David?

Anita: Hattibrown?

CS: Hatti, yeah, his last name was Brown? You remember David? They moved to California.

Anita: Yeah, I know. I don’t know whether David’s last name was Brown or not.

WS: Where out in California? Do you know?

CS: Mmm, I don’t know.

David: Yeah, but he’s told a wonderful story about how they skipped school and played in the park. And then, when the bell would ring, they came home at the right time!
CS: Mmm, that in fact- that was the first time I ever skipped school. It was in kindergarten but kindergarten used to be right there. The barbershop is about two blocks away from the house, here. Right up there.

WS: So this is the area you grew up in.

CS: Right.

WS: Right here?

CS. Mhm.

PR: But the Singleton family, the barbershop is not your same family is it?

CS: Our family was another Singleton. Half of that barbershop was the kindergarten.

PR: Oh really? Oh, so we can-

WS: And then the family, his friends, church all have become an important part of the story, you know, helping these kids.

Anita: Pete Dawson probably be somebody you need to talk to.

PR: You started giving me Dingles’ phone number.

Anita: Yeah, uh 843-379-2363.

PR: 2362?

Anita: 2363.

PR: And who are they?

Anita: Well, Tracy DeWhite, grew up with us. She went to our church. We lived right across the street. And then CS, when he was working at the Genesis home, which was a residential home for troubled boys, they were what they called, the Teaching Pair and he was the ultimate teacher there. And that’s where he met Crystal because Crystal came and she started working part time there, so…

WS: So at the middle school, when you were working at the middle school, what was it you were doing?

CS: Um, I had a class full of students with behavior problems and, I guess this was a class, instead of sending home, they would send them to me. And then I would work to try and turn them around.
WS: Did you feel like you turned any around?

CS: Yeah.

WS: So those are the people we should talk to because you really meant a lot to them, huh?

CS: Mhm.

WS: Can you describe your um… the people that come to your gym?

CS: Mhm, yeah. Well, um… some of the guys that came to my gym um… I guess one of the first guys that I can think of um… what’s his name? Well, one was Joe Armstrong, Olin Frasier.

WS: Oh, is he any… no.

CS: No, he’s not related to the Frasier family. But um… he came to my gym one day and he said, “What’s this”? And he was this little kid and uh… “This is some boxing gear”. “Oh, I wanna learn how to box”, and the next thing I knew, I was training him. And um… in the end, taking him to boxing matches.

WS: Wow, that’s a great story.

CS: Mhm. And um… then he had a friend um… lemme see. What’s that guy’s name? Quintain, do you know who Quintain is?

Anita: I remember Quintain.

CS: Quintain lived in Lady’s Island um… He used to train at the gym too. I can’t remember Quintain’s last name right now myself but uh…

Anita: It was Moses’ grandson is the one that you really worked with. The one that ended up in the accident. Remember, it’s Moses who used to take her back and forth.

CS: To go to North Carolina to see him, right. Yeah, I know who you’re talking about. I worked with him at Jim’s.

Anita: His lastname was um…

CS: Um…

Anita: Was it Darkford?

CS: I know who you’re talking about. I can see his face. I can’t call his name.

Anita: Allen’s last name.
CS: Um…

Anita: Jamal, huh?

CS: I know who you’re talking about. I can see his face. I can’t call his name. Um… I worked with him at the gym that’s all for boys.

Anita: Mhm.

CS: That’s what your talking about, right?

Anita: Mhm.

CS: Um…

PR: Does he live around here?

Anita: No, he doesn’t live here now. He lives in North Carolina.

CS: I don’t know. He might be.

Anita: Because his grandmother was still living here. And CS would take her back and forth to visit him. Because he ended being, i guess, in a wheel chair. He was in a bad accident or something. And um… CS, until her death, he used to take her a long time to visit.

WS: So we outta talk to her.

Anita: No, she’s deceased. Yeah, now you talk to her, but she ain’t going to talk back.

PR: Well, sometimes, you know, the names may come to you in even a day or two. We’ll leave a list of things that, you know, you can-

Anita: His name was Jamal, Jamal Allen. I think that’s his name.

PR: Jamal what?

WS and Anita: Allen.

WS: With an ‘en’, ‘en’ at the end?

Anita: I think it was Jamal Allen. Yeah, ‘en’, Jamal Allen. Because Gary Lewis, his daddy and that was Moses’ son.

WS: Why did you start the boxing?

CS: Why? You mean uh-
WS: The gym.

CS: Boxing gym. Well, a guy told me this, you know, when i was in Philadelphia, you know, he said he was watching me from outside the gym. This is when I’m training at Joe Frasier’s gym. And he said, “Singleton, I’ve been watching you”. He said, “You a good boxer but you know something, you ain’t going to box forever”. And he said, “But when you get out of the ring, you can still stay in boxing, it’s just that you ain’t a boxer now but you can be a promoter, a manager, or trainer”. And I said, “Okay”. And I, you know, listened to him. And, you know, I said alright. Well, at that time I was in my early, like my early to mid twenties and um… you know. I was going to the gym like five days a week, you know. We used to get up and, you know, at 4:30 in the morning, you know, to do road work because that was part of the training for boxing. I um… and so um… at that time, you know, I wasn’t thinking about the end. I was just- I’m ready to keep things going. Um… and nothing like (someone) said get on that experience sheet before you turn pro and I did that. Because um… like I said, I um… I had 82 amateur fights before I turned to coaching.

WS: 82?

CS: Yeah, I had 82 amateur fights. Um… I made the U.S.A boxing team. In 1978, I finally won a national tournament and I remember one of the guys that was on my team. He came to me and said, “Charlie, guess what”? Now sometimes you hear me go from Charlie to CS because when I left here I started using my first name, Charles. So they knew me by Charlie, so… or Charles. Um, he said, “Charlie, guess what”? And I said “What”? He said “The fights going to be on TV”. And I said “What”? And um… I said, “Okay, okay, I’m ready”.

WS: What city?

CS: This was in um… I think it was Albuquerque, New Mexico.

PR: Yeah, that’s where the Golden Gloves…

CS: Yeah.

PR: But then there’s this one from Shreveport.

CS: Louisiana.

PR: Yeah.

CS: Okay, you know what, this was probably- I think this was my last fight. When I was still fighting out of Georgia.

PR: Yeah, before you went to Philadelphia.
CS: Before I moved to Philadelphia. And I think this was my last fight in Georgia because see here, this is the Georgia-

PR: Yeah, I saw that.

CS: Thing here. So um… this fight was in Shreveport, Louisiana.

PR: Yeah.

WS: Golden Gloves?

CS: I don’t remember. This was either Golden Gloves or AAU because the AAU and the Golden Gloves, those were the two major tournaments for amateur boxing. And um… both of them were national tournaments. But this one… I’m not… let me see.

PR: I think it’s just, yeah. That Shreveport, 1975?

CS: Yeah, Shreveport, 1975.

WS: So the Albuquerque one that you, your friend said that it was going to be on television, was it?

CS: Yeah.

WS: Was it?

CS: Yeah, it was as far as I know.

PR: We haven’t found anything.

CS: Um… he came to me and he said, “Charlie, guess what”? I said “What”? He said, “The fight going to be on TV”. And I said, “What”? And so, I said, “Okay, I’m ready”. And um… I’ll tell you, I’m so glad my mother was a school teacher. My mother had something to do with that fight because she used to encourage me to, you know, to do my schoolwork and being a schoolteacher I learned to read. I learned the importance of reading. And um… leaving Philadelphia before I got on the airplane to go to Albuquerque, New Mexico, I bought a book. The book was called The Magic of Believing and that book really worked because the guy that I was getting ready to… because when you go into these national tournaments every state in the United States is sending fighters. And I think it was eleven weight divisions. And um… excuse me. I have these coughing coughs every now and then. I had my tonsils taken out a few years ago. But anyway, um… I remembered… I had put that book in my bag, you know, with all the other stuff I had like the headgears and gloves and stuff. And… I remembered I grabbed that book and I started reading. I didn’t read the whole book. I may have read a chapter. But I read, all of the sudden, I read enough where it seemed like, in my mind, my mind click. And all of the sudden I said, “I can beat this guy”. I um… now this, I was never a big muscular guy. This guy, his arms was twice the size of mine and I was thinking about that. And then I start thinking, “Wait a minute,
there’s a whole lotta guys in Joe Frasier’s gym with they arms is bigger than mine. I got in the ring with them and I did pretty good”. I said and I started thinking about- I said, “Weren’t they”… I um… Because I remembered in boxing, I lift weights one time for about a couple of months and all of a sudden, by lifting the weights, it was slowing me down. In other words, my arms were getting bigger and my punches seemed to be getting a little bit, you know, I could hit a little bit harder. But it was tightening up my muscles, so I stopped. I said, “I can’t mess with these weights anymore”, and I just stopped. And I started stretching my arms to get it loose again. And that was the way to win then. I’ve been boxing a long time without no weights on me. I don’t need no weights. My guys were putting up punching power. And so I just depended on, I say the speed, you know. And then, also, I had good trainers. In Atlanta, Georgia, I had a good trainer, a guy named Mr. Carter Morgan.

WS: Carter Morgan: Carter Morgan?

CS: Right. He was guiding training at War Memorial Boy’s Club, in Atlanta Georgia.

WS: War Memorial?

CS: War Memorial Boy’s Club. He didn’t just train me. He also trained Evander Holyfield here because when I got to Atlanta, Evander was about eight years behind me. I was eighteen and I think he was ten. I’m not sure but something like that. And um… and I remember one time Mr. Carter asked me to take the young guys behind the Boy’s Club to run because running is part of training for boxing. And I remember I was taking young guys back then I kept saying, “Ya’ll, come on, come one, pick it up, pick it up”. And all the guys, something, most of the guys were just kinda dragging their feet, you know. They wasn’t trying to really get around. They didn’t see the importance of it at the time, I’m assuming. But I heard this one person that was right behind me. He was like right, right, it was one my foot pick up but he kick, you know, kick this guy. You know, when I got to the end and I turned around and looked, I seen this guy and he like this here, “I’m right here with you”, you know, he was. And it was Evander Holyfield and I know he had that motivation and so um… of course, later on in life, he ended up a tremendous boxer, you know. Um… I told you about my story with- working with him and his first fight with Tyson.

WS: No.

CS: Yeah um… what had happened, this was after I had came back from Philadelphia and the reason I came back is um- One day I was in the gym. A guy threw a punch. It wasn’t a hard punch but as I slipped the punch, the punch kind of grazed my eyes. And I had (something) called a detached retina. Who’s that other guy? He had the same thing too um…

PR: Oh, um…

CS: Sugar Ray Lennon. Sugar Ray Lennon took about a year, year and half off from boxing and gave his eyes some time to heal up. When I hit my detached retina, I had just signed a contract with a… main events promotion. At this time, they would give me anything, you know. I had just signed a contract with them and they would give me anything to get a title fight because I had a perfect record as a professional. Um… they knew about my amateur career and um… at
the time, going into my last fight, I was 17 and 0. I had eleven knockouts. Only six guys had
gone the distance with me. And so I had a perfect record. And they were getting ready to… they
gave me like a warm-up fight and then the next fight was going to be a title fight for whatever.
Now, when I’m telling you these things, you know, you gotta check it out again because
sometimes I may not-

PR: No, we have all the… written stuff, so that’s fine.

CS: Well yeah, so I um… going into my last fight, that was the only fight I didn’t train for
because, you know, especially when you getting ready, when you turn pro, you gonna make sure
you’re in tiptop shape… when you go into a fight. And I always did everything that was- I
needed to do to keep myself in shape, but I didn’t train for that last fight.

WS: Why was that?

CS: Because of the detached retina. I was afraid to, you know, I didn’t like… for instance there
was a big park in Philadelphia called Fairmont park. I guess it’s like that park in New York.

PR: It’s like Central Park.

CS: Yeah, we used to go there to run and um… all the boxers would go to that park, that I knew
of at Joe Frasier’s gym. So, I didn’t go to that park because I was afraid. Once I had the detached
retina, they did surgery on the eye. Then they told me not to do too much activity because they
didn’t want me to shake the detached retina, so I didn’t do no road work. I didn’t run. I didn’t go
to the park. And then, I think it was a week before the fight, I went into the gym. I think I jumped
rope, shatterboxed, hit the bag a little bit and that was that. But I knew I wasn’t in the shape that
I’m used to being in because normally I would go to that park. And I can remember sometimes,
you know, running 8, 9, 10 miles in the snow when I was in that park, when I was in real tiptop
shape. And um… I always made sure that I was in shape for a fight. But this last fight, I didn’t
really train for it because I was afraid of messing up the detached retina.

PR: So can we remember any of the names of the people who were around you then, like uh…
who else was working at the Frasier gym, trainers, any of those names?

CS: Mr. George Benton.

PR: Yeah.

CS: He was a trainer. Um…

WS: Is he alive?

PR: No.

CS: No, Mr. George Benton passed away about- I think about a year ago now.
WS: Okay.

CS: So Mr. Benton, he was in fact, when I um… got to Joe Frasier’s gym, he was the guy that came to me one day and tap me, he said, “You Charlie”? And I said “Yeah”. He said “Let me see the jab”. I threw a jab. “Let me see the right cross”. I threw a right cross. “Let me see the hook”. I threw a hook. He said, “Hold on, let me tell you what you gotta do with that hook. You gotta twist your body to get more power behind the punch”. And that was Mr. George Benton.

WS: Who was the person who… telling you you weren’t always going to be a boxer and so you needed to think about other things?

CS: That guy, I don’t know. It was a guy that- he was just outside of the gym and he saw me and he, I don’t know, something that I did just, he just felt like he needed to tell me that. And he said, “Singleton, come here”. And he said “Let me tell you something”. He said “Man, you know, you a good boxer”. He said “But remember, I just want to tell you something, you ain’t going to be able to box forever”. And he said, “But when you get out of that ring, you can still stay in boxing”. And I said “What you mean”? “Oh, you know, you can be a promoter, a manager, or a trainer”. And I said, “Okay”. Course at that time I was heavily in- I was into boxing and I knew that that day was going to come on, but at that time it was so far away. And um… so…

PR: But back to Frasier’s gym. In addition to George Benton, are there other people, do you think? Can you remember like… Holyfield? Was he training there?

CS: No, Holyfield was in Atlanta.

PR: How about um… Marvis Frazier? Was he training there?

CS: Yeah, Marvis Frazier.

PR: So, did you, were you…

CS: Yeah, I used to get in the ring with Marvis sometime because see, Mr. George Benton was training me and Marvis Frazier. That’s Joe’s son. And um… I saw Jackie Frazier sometime too.

PR: Uh, who’s that?

CS: Jackie was Joe Frazier’s daughter.

PR: Ah.

CS: Do you remember when Jackie Frazier and Layla Ali fought?

PR: Sure.

CS: I remember I had a little bit, a little say so in that fight because um… I remember, this is after I had moved back to South Carolina, and I was on the phone talking to Marvis. We were
just having a “Hey how you doing”? “Everything alright”? “Yeah, I’m doing alright”. “You having a good day”? “Yeah, everything is alright. I’m doing alright today”. And then the next thing some one gets another phone, another phone, and it was Jackie. And she said, um… “Charlie, what you think about me fighting Laila Ali”? And I said, “Huh? You wanna fight Laila Ali?” “Yeah, what you think about it”? I said, “I think you’d do good”. I said, “Let me tell you something Jackie, that gym that your father got in Philadelphia, that gym was the highlight of my life. But there’s so much talent in that gym, I know that you can find a trainer that can train you and you can beat Laila Ali”. Next thing I know, Jackie, next time I call her up there she done won three fights. And then she gotten hungry and, “I won five fights… I’m eating them”. And then she was moving up. And then she got to be about… I think it was eleven or something fight. Then the next fight she fought Laila Ali. Now, you know something, right now, because of this thing I got, I don’t remember who won that. All I know is she did real good. I think she won that but I’m not sure.

PR: Our research assistant will find that.

CS: I’m not sure about that.

WS: That’s a good side story.

PR: So that like, in your last fight, the one in 1984, the one that, you know, ended your career, who was in your corner? Who was the cut man? Do you remember?

CS: Well, Mr. George Benton he was in my corner and his assistant trainer. His name was Val. Val was originally from- I think Val was originally from Georgia. I’m not sure about that now. But I think he was originally from Georgia and somehow he got up to Philadelphia.

PR: But you don’t remember his last name?

CS: I don’t remember his last name. He was like the assistant trainer to Mr. George Benton.

PR: So he was part of the team?

CS: Yeah, he was part of the team. Sometimes, if I had an amateur fight, Val might go to work my corner.

PR: Okay, great.

CS: And then um… Val was a good guy, you know and um… never had problems with him. We always had a good relationship. Course one thing that my parents taught me when I was a kid growing up, you always have respect for elders, you know, so one is older than you. And so that was part of me. So I would come in and say, “How you doing, Mr. Val”? Then after that he tell me, “You ain’t gotta call me mister”. Then I said, “Okay. Alright, Val, how you doing”? But I would tell him, “Okay, Val”, after he give me the whole- He said, “You don’t have to call me mister”, because some adults would tell me when I got to Philadelphia, “You ain’t gotta tell me mister”. Well, you know, that’s how I grew up. When I used to walk down these streets here
growing up and if I didn’t tell my neighbors, “Hello, Mrs. Julie Mitchell”, or some other neighbor in the community, if I didn’t say, “Hello, Mr. This”, or Mr. That or Mrs. This or Mrs. That, you know, that might be a whipping because my daddy, you know, he did a good job of rearing us, you know, to have respect for your elders. So um… that’s what I do.

WS: Now, he was the teacher or your mother was the teacher?

CS: My mother was a teacher. My father, he was in the navy. Then he um… I think he went down to that school in Alabama.

Anita: Tuskegee.

CS: Tuskegee.

WS: Oh, wow.

Anita: Tuskegee.

CS: Yeah, he learned to be a painter.

Anita: Welder.

CS: A welder and a painter. And um… so he did that. That’s the kind of work he did.

WS: He came back here?

CS: Yeah.

Anita: He helped um… blow the Savannah (rental plant) because he was a welder there. And then he came back and um…

David: The part you were getting about reading the book, getting ready to get on the plane, and that fight. Tell them what happened because you were just telling me on the porch about how the book helped you in the fight and this was your last-

CS: Oh oh, The Magic of Believing. Yeah, um… well, at the time I was fighting amateur, you know, winning one of those national tournaments was like the premier success and I think in 1970, the year before 1977, it was a national tournament in Hawaii and I made it to the last fight and lost the championship. But anyway, this year, I um… when we was leaving to go to Albuquerque, New Mexico, in Philadelphia, I was looking around. Then I saw this book at the airport. The book was saying, The Magic of Believing. For some reason, I know I didn’t read it all, I must’ve read to something, I bought the book. That book was so valuable because when I got to Albuquerque, New Mexico um… you know, I was doing like the year before when I was in Hawaii, you know. I was going, you know, through the fights and I won my fights. And then I got all the way to the last fight and I said, “Boy, I sure don’t want to lose this fight. I want to win this fight because winning a national tournament is like winning a title to an amateur boxer. And
this guy comes to me and he says, “Charlie, guess what”? I said, “What”? “The fight is going to be on TV”. And I said, “What”? I said, “Okay, I’m ready”. And then that’s when I grabbed that book because I put that book in the briefcase before I left and I started reading it, *The Magic of Believing*. And it talked about how you got to sometimes visualize. But the thing is I didn’t read the whole book because I didn’t have enough time. But I read to chapter two. And all the sudden my mind clicked and I said, “I can beat this guy”. I started thinking about where I was trained. I said, “Man, I trained at Joe Frazier’s gym. I have been in the ring with Jimmy Young. I have been in the ring with three middleweights at Joe Frazier’s gym that was world contenders”. One of them was called, well, we used to call him, they use to always make their name rhyme, Willie Monroe. There was another middleweight class Bobby “Boogaloo” Watts. Another middleweight, his name was, Eugene “Cyclone” Hart. And um… there were three middleweights that I had been in the ring with. These guys, at this point, they were royal contenders. And I said, “You know what, I’ve been in the ring with Joe Frazier one time and he didn’t hit me with that left hook that he hit Muhammad Ali with”. And it isn’t like he couldn’t, I made sure he didn’t hit me. And I thought about all the experience of training at Joe Frazier’s gym. I said, “Man”. I said, “I’m ready”. And after I had visualized and thought about that, something in my mind just clicked. And I said, “I can beat this guy”. And when I got in the ring, one thing I remember seeing this guy almost twice the size of me. But I said, “That don’t mean nothing”. Punching power. It ain’t being about how big your arm is, it’s how hard when you connect with the power that comes behind that punch. So that guy hit me. Hit me with one punch. The first punch he hit me with I could feel the blood in my mouth bleeding. He busted my lip and I could feel myself bleeding on the inside. And I said to myself, I didn’t panic, I said, “You got yours. Now, I’m going to get mine”. I threw two punches and the guy went wobble, wobble, wobble, BAM! The fight was over. I had knocked him out.

**WS:** First round?

**CS:** First round, with two punches. And um… and at that time I was the national champion. In fact, I saw that… it wasn’t him. This guy, this was another tournament. But um… this but this guy here… this… I don’t remember but do you know who this guy here is? He won a fight. He made a championship and I fought at another championship and I beat him.

**PR:** But this is obviously an amateur fight?

**CS:** Yeah, this is an amateur fight.

**PR:** The head gear.

**CS:** Huh?

**PR:** Because of the head gear.

**CS:** Yeah, yeah. But it wasn’t him, the guy that I beat. The guy that I beat-

**Anita:** Was it this one here?
CS: I think this guy, I fought him in Louisiana. I think no, no. It wasn’t him.

Anita: I remember seeing that fight in New Mexico.

PR: You saw the Albuquerque fight on TV?

Anita: On TV.

PR: Do you remember if that was Wide World Sports also or is it something else?

Anita: I think it was on national television because, I mean, you couldn’t have saw it in Beaufort if it weren’t for national television.

PR: Did you see the fight, the last fight when he lost? That was on TV.

Anita: I don’t remember.

PR: We have a record of that being on TV but we haven’t found the tape yet.

Anita: I don’t remember.

PR: One other different question. From the people from Main Event, the promoter, do you remember any of the names of those people? You know, who’d you sign a contract with? Um…

Anita: Was that Don?

PR: Don King, Main Event?

CS: No, Don King wasn’t Main Event because the three big promoters was Don King, Main Events and what’s the other one?

PR: Top Rank?

CS: He was another guy. It was Main Events Promotion, Don King, Bob Arum, a guy named Bob Arum. Those were the three biggest promoters at that time and um… yeah I had signed a contract with Main Events. And I think at that point I had a perfect record as a professional. I was seventeen years old. Had eleven knockouts, only six guys went the distance with me. And the next stop was, they was giving this guy that I fought, this was a warm-up fight, and then the next fight was going to be for the title.

PR: But the people at Main Event, do you remember who any of those people were?

CS: I can see this guy’s face I just can’t recall his name.

PR: Okay.
WS: It’ll come.

PR: That’s something to think about. If it comes to you, write it down.

CS: Okay, I will. I just can’t see his face.

WS: Did Don King ever promote any of your fights?

CS: Well, this is what happened. Ever since he did because see, I went as a sparring partner for guys. Ever since the first time in 1979 there was a fight in Albuquerque, New Mexico um… or someplace out west? It was one of those big places where, like a casino-

Anita: Las Vegas?

PR: Oh, Las Vegas.

CS: It might’ve been in Las Vegas, Nevada. Yeah, it was a casino and they had a lot of boxing matches out there.

WS: Yeah.

CS: And um… I went as a sparring partner for Jimmy Young. And when we got out there, I guess Don King must’ve saw me, you know, working out with Jimmy and two times I was out there he put me on the card. And so, um… and both times I’m pretty sure I won, yeah. Yeah, because I lost my last and I won this one. So he just put me on the card. He found me an opponent and put me on a card. And um… yeah because I was moving up then. I remember I started off as a four round fighter, then I was moving up to six round, eight round, and ten round. And then towards the end, the next stop was- the Main Events was they was looking at me because they- See, Mr. George Benton, at this time, he was doing a lot of work with promoters and a lot of times those guys saw me with Mr. George Benton and um… he was making a name for himself. I had a book I had one time. I can’t find it right now. It’s in this house, I know it. But we done moved in and out of this house some many times things get moved around, you know? But I got a scrapbook. If I could find that scrapbook, It’s called, *The X Middleweight Who Won Ali’s Title* and what that was talking about, the X middleweight was Mr. George Benton because he fought in 1940s and he was fighting at a time that um… what’s the guy? His name was Sugar Ray…

WS: Robinson.

CS: Robinson. They say Sugar Ray Robinson didn’t want to fight him because they know Mr. Benton was real good at defense.

PR: Yeah.
CS: And um… I was lucky. One time I was watching the TV, I got to see Mr. Benton fight one time on the TV and he was in the old fights they was showing on TV. And I saw him fight one time and um… yeah, he had this style, he knew how to bob and weave, and, you know, um…

WS: Would you describe your style as Muhammad Ali?

CS: I wouldn’t say my style was exactly like his. I um… I guess some of what I did may have been similar to him.

WS: Speed seems to be, you know, both of you are-

CS: One thing I learned, you know, certain things you know that you develop. For instance, like my jab. I knew I had a good jab. But also when you start going into these tournaments and you be fighting so many guys you sometimes, you gotta have that knockout punch too, and I had that. Um… and um… I think um… I really acknowledge both of my trainers because trainers are so important. Mr. Carter Morgan in Atlanta Georgia and Mr. George Benton, those were two of the best trainers anybody could ask for. So I have to give my respects to both of them because both of them were good trainers.

WS: Yeah.

PR: Do you think that Carter Morgan is still alive?

CS: I don’t know. I don’t know how to get in touch with him. The only way that I could get in touch with him is probably through Evander Holyfield.

WS: You said Columbus, right?

PR: Where does Evander live?

CS: In Atlanta, Georgia.

PR: In Atlanta.

WS: Oh, yes.

PR: So, if we contacted him and used your name, that would be okay?

CS: Well, you can use my name but, let me say this, I learned this a long time ago that somebody told me, um… a guy told me, he said, “Singleton, you know something? You gotta be careful, sometime when you start doing business with other fighters and stuff because what happens is, sometimes, these trainers, they feel intimidated and they start pointing their finger at you. And they find all kind of things that you doing wrong because they don’t want you around”. When Evander Holyfield had his fight with Mike Tyson- this is after I had come back from Philadelphia, and some how I found out that there was going to be a boxing match, a amateur boxing match in Atlanta, Georgia. So I got my guys together, my gym is on Lady’s Island, and I
got the guys together and said, “Listen, do y'all want to go to the boxing matches in Atlanta”? They said, “Yeah yeah yeah, we’l go. So I um… load up a car. I think we took maybe two cars up there. And after the fight was over, when I got up there, I didn’t know until I got there, the fight was at this school and this school was owned by Evander Holyfield. He had made so much money in boxing that he had done bought this whole school. And so, in fact, he had at least one of his sons boxing in a boxing match. And then when the fight was over with, I walked over to him and we said hello. I said, “Hey man, how you doing”? “Hey, Charlie, hey how you doing? Everything alright”? “Doing okay”. So we had a good little hello like that. And before we left I said, “Evander, you know something”? At this time, Mike Tyson is knocking out almost everybody he’s getting in the ring with. I said, “Evander”. I said, “You know something”? He said, “What”? I said, “You can beat Mike Tyson”. He said, “Yeah”? I said, “Yeah, you can beat Mike Tyson but there’s something you gotta do”. He said, “What’s that”? I said, “You gotta improve your defensive techniques”. I said “I don’t know how come you didn’t”. I said, “Didn’t Mr. George Benton work with for a little while”? And um… and then he said, “Yeah”. I said, “Well, Mr. Benton, he’s real good at defense”. And I said, “Me and you had the same training. Mr. Carter Morgan was a good trainer too”. I said, “Mike Tyson can punch hard but if you got a strong defense you slow that down”. I said, “Tyson can’t beat you”. And after I told him that, he said, “Well, you come to camp and you do it. You teach me”. And I said, “Wait a minute”. I said, “Evander, when I was in Philadelphia, guys told me see, you gotta be careful about messing with other people’s fighter because sometime they get jealous and they think you tryna takeover and start having a whole lot of problems”. So, he said, “No no no, you come and you teach me”. And I said, “Okay”. So I told him, you know, he knew I was in from South Carolina, and I said, “Well, the closest airport is in Savannah, Georgia”. So I went to Savannah, Georgia, got my ticket. I flew from Savannah, Georgia, into Atlanta, Georgia, and when I got to Atlanta, Evander got on the plane. And we left from there and went to, I’m pretty sure it was Houston, Texas, to train. And I worked with him in Houston. It was just me and him there, at this time and all I did is drill in on his defensive techniques. And I called Mr. George Benton and I asked him and I said, “Listen, George”. I said, “I’m working with Evander for this fight with Tyson”. He told me, he said, “Don’t try to do too much. Just pick out about four or five good techniques that I taught you and just teach him that. And just drill that in him”. And that’s what I did. And after that, when his trainers came, and they came after I had already worked with him. I think three weeks to a month that I spent in, I think it was Houston, Texas, and then his other trainers came. And then they finish because from there, when they came, we were the only two who knew where the fight was going to be, and I’m pretty sure it was in Las Vegas, Nevada. And um… then, of course, when the fight was there, I was just like anybody who was coming to watch the fight. And, of course, you know what happened? Evander beat Tyson the first time. And um… but something had happened towards the end of my time that I spent in Houston, Texas. It seemed like all of the sudden they were pointing the finger at me, like I could do no right. I just felt like that was happening and I can remember when it was time for me to, after the fight was over, the first thing I wanted to do was get me a ticket and get out of there. And that’s what I did. I just um… when he won the fight against um… Mike Tyson, soon as the fight was over with, I was heading for the airport. I got a flight out and I just flew back to Savannah, Georgia. Someone must’ve picked me up. Anyway, all I know is I got out of there and I came back to South Carolina. Um… my relationship with Evander um… I think I saw him once or twice um… somewhere and, you know, well, I said, “Hey, Evander”. “Hey Charlie, how you doing”, it was something like that. Um… I wasn’t at the second fight and I didn’t want to be. Um… because
what I had done, the defensive technique, I knew I had done my part. He is defensive strong enough to keep Tyson from hitting him with a good shot. And um… but… you know, I um… I just kinda backed off and just got out of there. I remember what that guy had told me in Philadelphia years ago. I mean, I experienced it.

WS: Uh huh.

PR: Sure.

CS: And um… it wasn’t a good feeling but I learned how to survive, just got away from it. I went there, you know, he um… I don’t remember the exact amount but he paid me a good salary for working with him. And um… even today, if I see him, I’ll say hello. And um… you know, I guess our relationship has just kind of like, I don’t know. Um… I don’t have any bad feelings towards Evander but I do have some negative feelings towards-

**New Video**

CS: We wasn’t married.

WS: Okay.

CS: But um…

WS: The mother of your daughter.

CS: Yeah, she was the mother of my daughter.

WS: Okay.

CS: She’s in New York.

WS: Was she the one that was a fighter?

CS: No, that was Jackie Frazier.

WS: Jackie, okay.

Anita: Tommy, Tommy Frazier was her step-father and Tommy Frazier was Joe Frazier’s brother.

CS: Right.

Anita: So…

PR: So there was a connection with Frazier and family for a long time. Not just a…
Anita: Well, basically it started even here because where Joe’s sisters, Flossy and Rebecca were involved very much with the Civil Rights movement in Beaufort, as our parents were. So when we integrated, we were one of the first families to integrate, the school said Joe Frazier’s nieces and nephews also integrated with us-

WS: Both of you went to integrated schools?

Anita: Mhm, Mhm. What is now the University of South Carolina. Beaufort campus was Beaufort Elementary school. So um... you know the Frazier’s children along with the Singleton’s children and then they had the Copelin’s and the Washington’s and um...

WS: The Copelins?

Anita: Mhm.

PR: This is a wonderful chapter.

Anita: Mhm.

WS: I grew up with some Copelins.

PR: Now, was this part of the Septima Clark? Who voted?

Anita: No no, that was here. That was...

WS: Separate.

PR: Okay.

Anita: Yeah, um... that was here. In fact, Pat Conwell, he was a young liberal teacher here at the time. So he used to meet at our parents’ house because they would meet at our house or the Washington house, living in Washington with his wife-

WS: And this is a story that has never been told.

Anita: The Civil Rights Movement.

PR: Here we go.

WS: I think its gotta be told.

PR: This is an hour film. No longer a thirty minute film.

WS: Yeah, two part.

PR: Yeah.
CS: You know, I often say I had several brushes with boxing before I actually started getting involved with boxing. Um… I think, here, when I met Joe Frazier’s nephew, I think that was the third brush. Let me tell you the first and second and I’ll bring the third in. My first brush with boxing was after I finished the first grade. Um… it was a weekend. It was a Saturday that me and my brother went out to Seabrook, South Carolina to spend some time with our oldest brother Lin. Now, Uncle Jack, our daddy’s brother and his wife Aunt Mary, they reared my oldest brother Lin. And um… I remember, one day- we was in a cornfield helping uncle Jack pick some corn and um… Mary Alice, one of my cousins, she was looking in this book and she was saying, “Ooooo”. And she was acting crazy, you know, she was “Oooo”. And I was wondering what was this that was making her act like that? And when I went over and looked at it, it was a picture, at the time he was called Cassius Clay, he eventually became Muhammad Ali, and I was saying, “Now, if a picture can make somebody act like that, I want to have that power. I want be able to do that, you know”? So I told daddy, when I came home from Seabrook, I said, “Daddy, when I finish high school, I want to be a boxer”. Daddy said, “Son, you can be anything you want to be”. That was my first brush with boxing. My second brush with boxing was, after we had um… integrated the schools, um… I think I was going to… yeah, this school right up here, USCB, now it’s a college. I went in that building. I went there for fifth and sixth grade and um… and then from there, I went to Beaufort junior high. And one day, we go into gym class and the coach, his name was coach Thompson, he said, “I want two guys to pick up the boxing gloves and start boxing”. And this was kind of strange because, you know, you go to gym class, sometimes you run around the, you know, the track, or you play basketball, or football. But he had two boxing gloves on a mat about that thick and he said, “I want two guys to start boxing”. And so, this guy from off the island, his name was Burl Sultan, he grabbed the gloves, and pick up like this and said, “Look coach, ain’t nobody want to box me. They scared of me. Ain’t nobody want to box me”. And so, all of a sudden, I wasn’t no big leader in the school, but some of the guys started looking at me like, “You scared of him too”? You know, at least that was what I was feeling, so, all of the sudden I say, “Burl, I’ll box you”. Now, I didn’t know what I could do with Burl. Burl, in my opinion, was, you know, his arms was maybe bigger than mine or whatever. But I had remembered I had seen some guys boxing on TV one time, where you could stick and jab or whatever. And there was another thing in school that guys do, they used to call “tapping”, when they tap you, POW POW and, you know, back up. So I said, “Well, maybe I could tap him”. So that’s what I did. I just kinda pop’ em pop’ em and running around. And well, I got through. Coach Thompson… or was that Coach Johnson, he was there um… you know something, he’s in one of my books. Yeah, I think it’s this book right here. When I got through boxing, Burl, he asked me, he said, “Singleton, who taught you how to box”? I said, “I ain’t never had no boxing lesson”. And um… he said, “You look pretty good”. Well, those are the words- what he said, he said a few other things. But when he got through talking to me, he had me believing that, “Hmm, maybe I could be a boxer”. And course, at that time, I knew about Joe Frazier but I just sorta knew because his nephew told me he had fought in the Olympics, and I knew the Olympics was a big tournament. But um… okay, this is the coach right here. I think it’s this guy right here.

PR: This is Frank Small. Gareer, Gold, Goonwer, Small and Mike Lapadca.

CS: Okay. Well, it was this guy right here.
PR: Frank Small, okay.

CS: He was the one that asked me who taught me how to box.

PR: He could still be around.

WS: Oh yeah, there are only 500 Mike Smalls in Beaufort County.

PR: He’s white.

WS: Huh?

PR: He’s white.

WS: Oh, he’s white.

PR: Yeah, so that helps. That limits it.

WS: to 200.

PR: Yeah.

CS: Yeah, but here, he was the one that asked me.

PR: Alright.

CS: That’s him right there, again.

PR: So, this is Beaufort high school?

CS: This is um…yeah, but you know something? I think he went from the middle of school to the high school. But he was the one- I know that’s him.

PR: Okay, great.

CS: I think he was, at the time, he was in middle school, then he went to the high school, at least that’s what I think. But I know that’s the guy.

WS: Is that the year he would have told you? That was ’72, is that when he told you?

CS: No, it was earlier than that. I was in middle school.

WS: Middle school.

CS: Right.
PR: There’s a hundred Singleton’s on this football team.

CS. Yeah.

WS: And fourteen Smalls.

CS: Yeah.

PR: Yeah, there are a few Smalls but Joe Singleton, Pat Singleton…

CS: Yeah, there’s a lot of Singletons out here.

PR: Eddy Singleton, Raymond Singleton.

WS: (It’s like Yogur in the Hoppes County)

CS: But when he showed interest, just the fact that he had showed interest he said, “You, you a pretty good boxer”, or something, and he said a few other words. All I know is, when I got through, he had me believing that one day I could be a boxer because the words that he said, I can’t remember exactly everything, but he made me believe that I could be a boxer and that I had talent. And, you know what, at this point, even though Joe Frazier was from Beaufort, I mean… and his nephew told me he had fought in the Olympics, I mean, I guess at this point he hadn’t really made it big yet. But coach Thompson had me believing that I could be a boxer one day.

WS: So did you immediately follow it up? Or didn’t it happen till you were older?

CS: Well, let me see. Well what I did, I thought about it but the thing, at that time, there were little boxing gyms in Beaufort, so if I was going to go do something, play any kind of sports, it was usually going to be basketball, baseball, football. Those were the main sports that I saw on TV everyday. All on the weekends or whenever, you know, I would see those kind of things. And then um… then every now and then it would be another sport that would come up, like soccer, um… something different. And um… but anyway, that is what I call my second brush with boxing. My third brush with boxing was… oh…

David: Didn’t you go to visit somebody in Indianapolis?

CS: That’s right. Thank you Mr. D, thank you. Yeah, the summer after I had finished eleventh grade, um… I spent the summer in Lafayette, Indiana, with a guy named Mr. Ferguson and his family. Now, Mr. Ferguson and my father, I think both of them were in the military or something together at some point. All I know is that Mr. Ferguson came down here, I guess to say hello to my father and spend some time with him, so when he spent some time with him, this is his family, and somehow me and Mr. Ferguson hit it off. We were good friends. He invited me to come to spend the summer to his house in Lafayette, Indiana. So when school was out, after I finished eleventh grade, I remember um… my mother, we was in Savannah, Georgia, and I got over going on the Greyhound bus in Savannah and went to Atlanta, Upstate and went through
Tennessee. And then the next stop was Kentucky, and he was in Lafayette… let me see, Lafayette, Indiana?

WS: That’s where Purdue is.

CS: Yeah, Purdue University. I remember that college was there. Yeah, Purdue, and while I was there that summer, Mr. Ferguson, him being a carpenter, he got me a job working for the company that he worked for. And um… what I did is um… Monday through Friday, you know, we would go places they were building houses, I in the truck with another guy. The guy that was in the truck with me, you know, he would go to the local company and buy the logbook and then drop it off at different sites throughout that city, and that’s where I would job. And on the weekends, I would… on the weekends I would go to parties, you know. One night I um… I went to a party and this guy walked by and he had a T-shirt, the t-shirt said, CCC Boxing Team and when I saw that I jumped up and I went behind him and tapped him on his shoulder, and I said, “Hey man, are you a boxer”? And he said, “Yeah”. I said, “Man, I always wanted to be a boxer, But where I’m from Beaufort, South Carolina we ain’t got no boxing gym”. So, I ask him, “Will you take me to the gym that you train at”? He said, “Sure”. So I told him where I was staying at, Mr. Ferguson’s house. He came and found me, and got me, and took me to the gym. The gym was in somebody’s basement and we were down there. He got on a pair of gloves, he told me to put on some of gloves and we get in the ring. I think he had already had a few amateur boxing matches and we was in the ring and we was just kinda like, you know, sparring. And then the owner of the gym down there, he came down, he saw us, he said, “Who taught you how to box”. I think I had the same statement that I had earlier with coach Thompson. I said, “I ain’t never had no boxing lesson”. He said, “Man, you look good”. He said, “I bet you could make the Olympic team”. Well, when he said that, my head blew up like an elephant. I knew the Olympics was a big tournament and when he said that, I was determined. I said, “I’m going into my senior year now when I get back to South Carolina, and I’m going to be a boxer”. So as I was coming back, when I went to Lafayette, Indiana that summer, I went up on a greyhound bus but I made enough money that summer that I bought a car. In fact, it was one of Mr. Ferguson’s daughters’ car and he did a little repair work on it and he sold it to me, and I drove that car back to South Carolina. And he told me, he said, “Take I so and so here, I so and so there. And when you get to Savannah, Georgia, and you can’t get home, you in trouble”. I said, “If I get to Savannah, I can make it”. And I remember going through Tennessee and going through Georgia and, you know, Atlanta. And then when I went through Atlanta, I looked at it and I said, “Hmm”. Then, when I got from Atlanta to Savannah, Georgia, I said, “Atlanta ain’t too far away from South Carolina”. I said, “I bet they got a boxing gym someplace in Atlanta”, because it was a big city. So that’s why, when they made that announcement, when I was in the classroom my senior year, “Anybody interested in being an electronic technician, there’s a school in Atlanta, Georgia called Divide Tech. After two years of study, if you successfully complete the course, you’d be an electronic technician”. Now, I didn’t even know what an electronic technician was all I knew is that that school was in Atlanta, Georgia, and I knew that I could force myself to study and learn what I need to learn because my mother was going to want me to pass and, you know, being a school teacher. And so that’s what I did. When I finished high school, I went to school in Atlanta, Georgia, Divide Tech. I went to class the first day and when class was over that day, I got on the phone. Started calling like the YMCA because I know they had something to do with athletes. They said, “No, we don’t have no boxing gym”, but they gave me the number to War
Memorial Boys Club. I call War Memorial Boy’s Club and they told me, “Yeah, we have a boxing program if you wanna come in”. They gave me directions on how to get there. Now, you know something, I grew up all my life in a small town like Beaufort, but I found it, I was able to find. And they gave me directions but I kept looking, looking. I made a few wrong turns but I found War Memorial Boy’s Club. And when I got to War Memorial Boys Club um… that day I met Mr. Carter Morgan, he was the boxing coach and everything just kinda clicked, in where, I forget the director’s name, but me and him kicked off real good to the point where he ended up giving me a job. That day I went there I got a job. And one of jobs was to drive the Boy’s Club bus because I showed them that… I guess everything was falling in place. Whoever was driving that bus, something had happened. Either he was sick but he just wasn’t doing it and they needed a bus driver, and I told him, I said, “I know how to drive a big bus”. He said, “Yeah”? I said, “Yeah, I was a school bus driver in South Carolina. I drove school bus for two years”. So after I showed my school bus license and then I showed him that I knew how to drive the bus, I had the job. I would go to school, come to the Boy’s Club, get the bus, go pick up all the guys and bring them to the Boy’s Club, then they’d stay at the Boys Club. And then, when it was time for me to go home, I took them home. And one of the guys I picked up everyday was Evander Holyfield and his two brothers. He had a brother named Bobo, so I would pick them up, bring them to the boys club and then take them back…

WS: And teach him how to box.

CS: Right. That’s right and while he was at the Boy’s Club, a lot of the times, Mr. Carter Morgan, who was the boxing coach, after he saw my interest and seen how motivated I was he would always ask me, you know, to help him work with the developing guys sometime.

WS: And he would work with you.

CS: Right. He would work with me. He would teach me and I would take the stuff that he taught me and I would put in and teach that.

WS: And he was a good trainer.

CS: Oh yes, he was, Mr. Carter Morgan because, I mean the first year that I started training there I saw the winning tournaments. I went to Atlanta in ’73. I finished high school then I went to Atlanta, Georgia. I think in 1974 and 1975, I think both of them, I won the Georgia Golden Glove and the Georgia AAU. Now, don’t hold me on that but I think if you check some records they keep track of that stuff some type of way because I remember the first time I went to a tournament, it was in Tennessee- and I think it was Knoxville, Tennessee. Um… I was very inexperienced. I had had about six amateur boxing matches and Mr. Carter Morgan- in amateur boxing if you ever had less than ten amateur fights you were considered to be a novice class boxer. Novice means inexperienced but if you considered to be an open class boxer you considered being an experienced boxer. Well, Mr. Carter Morgan, he wanted me to get the experience even though I only had six amateur fights. He wanted me to get the experience, you know, out in this tournament because he know in this tournament- its a lot of guys going to be in this tournament and I went to the tournament. And I remember the first guy I fought. They match you up with the guys from other states. The first guy I fought, he was from the state of
Washington. Not Washington D.C. but Washington on the other side of the United States. Well, this is the East and that’s the West. Okay so, I beat him and after I won that I said to myself, “Hmmm, I beat this guy. He from Washington. Man, I beat him I can win this tournament”, you know. Man, I was motivated. They line you up as you go into the fight and what they do when you go to a national tournament, every state in the United States is being represented and what they do is they have eliminations. The last fight is twenty-two guys and eleven of those guys are gonna lose and eleven is going to be the champion. If they was going to lose they was going to join the rest of us. But anyway, I remember going in line for my second fight, I think I got matched up with a guy named, I think his name was Michael Dokes. Michael Dokes was from the state of Ohio and I remember, as I was in line going to the fight, somebody came by and said, “Leon”. The way they said Leon, they talking about Leon Spaitz, “Leon”. And Leon said, “What”? “How many fights have you had”? Leon said, “Man, I don’t know. I stopped counting at 155”. I said, “What”?! I said, “This guy stopped counting at 155 and I entered this tournament with only six fights and if I’m going to win this tournament, I gotta beat him”. Well, Michael Dokes was my next fight because I was here and Michael Dokes was here. There were two light-heavyweights here and right over here was Leon Spaitz and his opponent. I fought Dokes. I gave him a good fight. He beat me on decision but, I mean um… he didn’t knock me out. I was still in the fight. I was doing the best I could and what Mr. Carter Morgan wanted, he wanted me to get experience and I got it. I mean the guy didn’t knock me out, I was in the fight. And then, in fact, Michael Dokes, if I’m not mistaken, he fought Leon for the championship and Leon won the championship. And I’m telling you, Leon Spaitz, he was the Mike Tyson of amateur boxing. Aggressive, hit hard, tiptop shape and he’s coming at you. But um… that was in 1974. That was the first I went to a national tournament, ’73 or ’74, I think it was ’74. But anyway, the next time I saw Leon Spaitz is after I had moved to Philadelphia and I had walked in the gym one day and Mr. George Benton said, “Charlie”. I said, “Huh”? “You boxing Leon today”, and I looked at him, I said, “Oh, that’s that guy that was in that tournament in Knoxville, Tennessee. Oh, that’s Leon Spaitz”. Well, I um… I had more experience now, you know, I learned some more things and um… I got in the ring with Leon. In fact, Leon, I remember we were at Joe Frazier’s gym and we boxing and I’m moving around and popping him with my jab, and I remember I set him up for a punch and I caught him with a good right cross. I had a good right cross. That was one of my knockout punches, but I didn’t knock him out. But I hit him with a good right cross. And all the sudden his trainer said, “That’s it”. In other words, they were saying no more sparring. Leon ain’t doing no more sparring because I had hit him and he was blinking his eyes, and I hit him with a good shot. Anyway, they didn’t want us to do no more sparring that day, so I said, “Okay”, and I got in the ring with him a couple more times after that. Got in the ring with his brother too, Michael Spaitz, um… and did pretty good against both of them because Michael was a light heavyweight just like I was a light heavyweight. Now, when Leon turned professional, he went up to be a heavyweight and that was the goal a lot of guys did try, you know, to be heavyweight fighters.

Rosa: Y’all recording?

CS: This is my sister Rosa.

Rosa: How y’all doing?
WS: Rosa, I’m Will Scott.

Rosa: Nice to meet you Will Scott.

PR: Hi, Rosa. I’m Peter Rutkoff.

Rosa: Nice to meet you Peter.

David: I’m David Easton. I live right next door.

David Salesky: Hi, I’m David Salesky.

Rosa: Nice to meet you.

CS: Yeah, Anita was here about half an hour ago.

Rosa: Yeah, I just talked to her.