

GRTC

Interview: Carl Brown

Carl Brown: ...this particular girl, she's just as sweet as you wanna be. But she not on her medicine, there's no telling' what she may do.

Laura Browder: Well, that's the thing, isn't it? It's like on the meds, off the meds--

CB: Yes.

LB: ...people are so different. [Pause.] I mean, we definitely see that in the classroom, too. My husband had a student who was nice, talented, everything he could be when he was on his meds. One day... my husband's an art teacher, and... he went to go back into the classroom, it was locked, and this kid was stark naked--

CB: Ooh.

LB: ... nothin' but his socks. Screaming obscenities out the window, locked himself in.

CB: He would've stayed locked in and I would've--

LB: Well, they took him in a straight jacket.

CB: ... went and got some help [laughs].

LB: They did.

CB: Yes [laughs]. Ok, you stay there, you stay locked in and I'll be right back with some help [laughs].

LB: But I would totally imagine that... Benjamin, should I not even be saying anything -- are you recording yet?

Benjamin: Yeah.

LB: You're good, --

CB: Oh. You are?

LB: ...you're good then.

Benjamin: Yeah.

LB: Then you're fine! We edit. Don't worry about it [laughs].

CB: [Laughs] I hope! [Laughs.]

LB: But I would imagine, especially on the buses, this would be an issue cuz so many people who are on heavy medications can't drive, right?

CB: True.

LB: So they're on the bus.

CB: Yes.

LB: And then they're on and off of their meds.

CB: Here we go.

LB: Thank you so much.

CB: Ok.

Benjamin: Yeah, you can say anything. We...

CB: Oh, ok.

LB: Yeah.

Benjamin: I'm a--I'm a sound guy and I know how to edit things.

CB: Oh, ok [laughs].

LB: [Laughs.] So, Mr. Brown, can we start off by you telling me something -- a lot -- about where you grew up, how you grew up, tell me about your childhood.

CB: Well, I had a good childhood. I come from a family of ten. Eight boys, two girls.

LB: In Richmond?

CB: Uh, no Surry County.

LB: Ok.

CB: Below Prince George.

LB: Mm hmm.

CB: And... I was the first to finish to school. And first to get a associate degree or any kind of degree. Um... I had--my parents died--well, my father died when I was twelve. And my mother died, I was... thirty. But had good parents. And my mother, you know, that was--that was my

heart. Cuz nothing like a good mother. [Laughs.] She was great. So after my father died, she did as well as she could, you know, to... make sure I had what I need. Even though... I wasn't a baby, there's one younger than me, but... I guess she... I don't know, thought maybe she--she thought I was a baby.

LB: Must have been so challenging with ten kids being all alone like that.

CB: Yes, but most--when my father died, though, by most--I'm next to the baby.

LB: So most were out of the house by then.

CB: They were out of the house, yes. It was only three home. So that was a good thing.

LB: And what got you from Surry County to Richmond?

CB: Well, I joined the military, and after I got out of the military, um... I came to Richmond just to visit some friends and... I was thinking well, maybe time for me to move... out of Surry County. So... I did.

LB: When were you--in the military, what was your service branch, or what was your MOS?

CB: Um, Army, and I was in, um... supply.

LB: Ok.

CB: People would I was (?) quick rank, which it... was, I only stayed in three years. Yes. So I could've made E5, had to reenlist (?) but I didn't. Wasn't... a challenge.

LB: Yeah.

CB: I guess it's my fault cuz I guess I should've gone into something more challenging [laughs].

LB: How do you ever know at the time, especially when you're young. It's so hard to tell what's gonna be what.

CB: TRue. But I could've reenlisted and found out, but I just didn't

LB: So you came to Richmond, you liked it, and then?

CB: And then, um, I start... manage--well, I managed Bojangles for about nine years. And then I realized that really wasn't the way to go cuz they didn't have any kinda benefit's. They pay--had insurance, but as far as retirement or anything, they didn't have.

LB: Yeah.

CB: And... I didn't have sense enough to put anything away for retirement, so I said, well I

ought find something else.

LB: Again, who ever does at that point in life, right? It's so hard to imagine ever being retired!

CB: Yes. So that's when I came here.

LB: So tell me about... your training and tell me about what it was like when you first started operating the bus.

CB: Well, I thought the training was... good. Because, uh, the... trainer was hard. He was h... he didn't... he wasn't easy [laughs]. He said you can do it this way... or else you can hit the door. Which was good.

LB: Yeah.

CB: Because, you know, you have that many people lives in your hand driving the bus, you need to be--need to be aware of what's going on, you need to listen to what it--they have to say.

LB: And what year was this?

CB: This was in seventy... nine.

LB: Ok.

CB: Yes.

LB: So you must've come in... right around the same time as Deborah Hopkins.

CB: Yeah, I think she came here just a little before I did, I...

LB: Yeah.

CB: Yes.

LB: Yeah. So... there you were. Had you driven a bus before, ever?

CB: No.... First time.

LB: What was that like?

CB: It wasn't too intimidated because, um, bec--when I was in the military, we didn't--I--I didn't drive the bus, but I drove big trucks.

LB: Ok.

CB: And had to go to a supply room and pick up stuff, so I had big farm trucks that I had to

drive, so.... It wasn't that in...timidating, and it wasn't that hard, it's just a matter of... making sure you don't turn too soon because you have a big bus versus a little car you can just turn on a dime. But the bus, you know, you have to have the front end out a certain way cuz they teach you about... your shoulder's supposed to be even with the curb, some--for you start turning and it works.

LB: That's interesting. Did they have power steering? When you started?

CB: Um, some buses. But they had some that did not have power steering, which... I would think they were the better buses.... But... I'd rather have a power steering. Because when you drove a bus without the power steering, it's almost like you have to stand up to make the turn.

LB: I can't even imagine.

CB: Yes.

LB: It sounds very challenging.

CB: But as far as going straight, oh it's... fine--

LB: Yeah.

CB: ...but just when you make turns.

LB: Which you're doing a lot, right?

CB: Yes. Yeah...

LB: And you must've had--did you--did you have radios at that point in your bus? Cuz I know those came in a little late in the game, too.

CB: Yes, they had--they had radios, yes.

LB: So, what do you remember from your first days of driving the bus?

CB: Uh--

LB: What route did you start on?

CB: I started--that was kinda... scary. Because I was on the 3. But yet I was doing the 4 also.

LB: So what... for people who don't know what routes are which, can you explain what the 3 and the 4 are?

CB: Ok, the 3 is Whitcomb--I mean, uh, Fairfield Court.

LB: Mm hmm.

CB: And it goes to, um... the West End to, um.... Mm. My mind's gone blank. [Laughs.] Uh, go-it goes, um... in the West End by, um... mm. I'm...

LB: It's ok if--

CB: I haven't--I haven't done it in a while.

LB: Yeah.

CB: [Laughs.] And the other one goes to West End to be--it goes by the stadium. So, like, the opposite side.

LB: Right, right.

CB: Yes.

LB: So those first days...

CB: Yes.

LB: You started off on those two routes and...

CB: And I had my left-right turn shape cuz while you're in training we're supposed to take notes. Um... left here, right there -- now they do it for you. [Laughs.] But still we have to take notes even though they print it out for you, but we have--gotta take notes. So I... had my notes and plus I had, um... a... friend that drove the 4 that knew the route. They volunteered to ride with me also.

LB: Thank goodness for that.

CB: So that helped. Yeah. And plus I was told if I needed help that wa... the trainer said that they would come out and ride. But I didn't think that was right. I mean they get them out... to ride with me, this was on a Saturday, too. So... I didn't think that was right to get them out of their home to ride with me.

LB: So you had your friend there with you. And you're driving your route. And what were your first impressions?

CB: Well, I was... I felt good. Because... you always feel better when you're out on your own versus somebody over your shoulder, watching you. But the only thing on the... East End, you just have to be careful, cuz you make that left turn on 21st, they both go turn left on 21st. You just have to be thinking, now which one are--am I doing, am I doing the 4, am I doing the 3.

LB: Right.

CB: Because the 3, you make a right. And the 4, you keep straight across. And... not that particular day, but... I have done... [laughs] made the wrong turn, which you just have to circle a block. And get back on schedule. Most of the times, the passenger will say, well... you're going the wrong way.

LB: [Laughs.]

CB: And that's another thing. Um, if you... just come outta training, the passenger, they will help you.

LB: Oh, that's good.

CB: If you just let them know, just get one that ride every day. And just tell them, well, I'm new... on this route. If you will help me, I will appreciate it, and they will. With no problem.

LB: That's super nice. So you've been operating the bus for thirty-three years now?

CB: Oh. That--well--now what did I say? No, uh--

LB: '79, it's probably my arithmetic.

CB: No... maybe I'm--no. About sixteen years or so, what is that? [Laughs.] Um...

Benjamin: '79 to '89, '89 to '99... '99 to 2009... Plus three...

CB: Ok, well... Oh...

LB: It's been a while.

CB: Oh, yeah.

LB: So what are the best and worst things about your job typically, day to day.

CB: Well the best thing is dealing with the nice... customers. Because some of them are really, really nice. I have some are so nice they... bring you water and... that's when it's hot, they'll stand at the b--not just me but other drivers who they'll stand at the bus stop with ice cold water and hand out water to the drivers.

LB: That's really sweet.

CB: Yeah. Then you have some, they bring you fruit and... So any--but the worst thing is the bad ones. You try to do your job, but yet if you say something, they--lot of 'em give you attitude. Mainly the younger generation.

LB: How do you deal with that attitude?

CB: Well... as long as they--if I ask them--especially if they're swearing, and I ask them if they'll watch their language cuz we have women and children... And if they do not, I just pull into a bus stop and push the button and ask them to send supervisor and communication. But most of the time, they'll go ahead and be quiet. And if they quiet, I just continue on.

LB: So once you push that button, does that mean that--like, the whole bus kinda stops until the supervisor comes?

CB: It--it only--it doesn't stop on it's own, we just have to pull into the bus stop--

LB: Yeah, yeah.

CB: ...until you have--until the supervisor's.... And you don't... want to inconvenience the other passenger, especially if they're going to work, but sometimes you just can't help it. Cuz people just go on and on and...

LB: It's unpleasant--

CB: You don't wanna hear that.

LB: ...No.

CB: It is.

LB: No. No.

CB: And it's not good when you're driving and you have to listen to all that. [?] Concentrating on driving and not what they're saying. And looking in the mirror, making sure they're not coming up to do anything to you [laughs].

LB: So what... what is some of the most challenging experiences you've had while you were operating the bus?

CB: Mmm.... Oh, that's a good question, cuz... for the most part... really hasn't been too much of a challenge.

LB: Or, you know, like people or--

CB: Yes.

LB: ...you know, de--situations that have come up.

CB: Yes. Well only--the bad situation I had is like two... passengers almost got in a fist fight, but other than that.... And that was because one came to my rescue cuz I asked them to turn their music down and stop swearing. And they just said, "Well, old man, you better look where you're

going, just drive this bus" [laughs]. So the passenger, you know--if you have a good passenger, they would do that. They'll step in and say, well... I don't want to hear it either. So that's what he did, and they got into it, but... I asked the lady to... exit the bus and she did with no problem, thank goodness.

LB: That's good.

CB: Yes. [Laughs.]

LB: What about some of the most memorable things that have happened to you while you were operating the bus?

CB: Well... I think the... mmm. Mainly with the disa--disabled. Because some of them are just so sweet. And the least thing you do, they have--their face just light up like a Christmas tree, and that is something... that you always remember. Well something I will always remember.

LB: I bet it makes a huge difference to them.

CB: It makes a huge difference to me, too.

LB: Yeah.

CB: To see them, you know... and I--it could be just something simple, just... ask them can I walk you across the street or... whatever, and--and they just light up like a Christmas tree and [laughs]...

LB: Cuz I imagine there are a lot of disabled people taking the bus.

CB: Yes, and you got a lotta nasty disabled people, too. They all are not sweet. Some of them, I don't know what they think--they--um, what they think that you owe them something or... I don't know. Some of them really can get nasty.

LB: That's tough.

CB: Really nasty. Yes. And it's just something that I just hate seeing that because... they have a disability so... why you wanna be--be nasty with someone.

LB: Seriously.

CB: You never know when you may need their help. We have one lady, she's not--that she's disabled but she's elderly lady. Every time she rides, she has this huge suitcase. Please don't ask her to help--if I could help you, though. I wanted to tell this lady one day, uh, don't ask, but the lady said, well, mam, can I help you? She shouldn't've... asked that. That lady went off. Which I already knew so that's why I never [laughs] --I did it once and made that mistake so I said I'd never do it again.

LB: Mm.

CB: She just went crazy on that lady. You would be surprised how some of the elderly can swear [laughs].

LB: [Laughs.] It is surprising cuz they don't come from that swearing generation.

CB: True, but...

LB: But they pick it up.

CB: They pick it up somewhere.

LB: So, do you have p--passengers then that you've known for years and years riding your bus? Have you kept the same routes by and large?

CB: No, I... most of the time, every run pull, which are supposed to be, like, every three months... I pull something different. Not... by--cuz I want to, but sometimes you can't get the same--

LB: Yeah.

CB: ...route, so.... But I've seen people... from a little toddler grow up riding the bus. And they'll remember you, even though you don't drive the same route. But they remember you if they see you on another bus.

LB: Which must be kinda nice.

CB: It is. Because a lot of times, you know, you drive something different and you see people on the street, everybody waving at you [laughs].

LB: [Laughs.]

CB: I mean, so you have a lot of good people--

LB: Yeah.

CB: ...that ride the bus. Cuz you have some that... you really don't mean--care if they see you again.

LB: Have you noticed any change in the passengers over the time that you've been driving the bus? You know, since the late seventies?

CB: Change like how?

LB: I mean, is it the same kinda people taking the bus, different kinds of people--?

CB: Oh. Mmm... well, no I think they're more aggressive. As far as language and all. The younger generation today... uh, they have no respect. And when I first started, they did have a--*some*... respect--

LB: Yeah.

CB: ...but now, like, they don't have no respect. They don't care ol--how old you are, if you're a woman or... child. They just have no respect. And that's really sad.

LB: So that sounds like it's been a change for the worse.

CB: For the worse, yeah. And I think what it is, a lot of the people that live in the project, they... think that we cater... to the people that really that--need--they don't need the bus. That's what they be thinking. Is that they have automobiles, so why you cater to people with a automobile. Which I would probably feel the same way, too, but... I wouldn't come across the way that--you know, I get my... get it across a different way.

LB: Yeah.

CB: Yes. So sometime, you know... some other driver made them feel that way, they cater to people that a automobile versus the people that... never driven before. Because, like, on the weekend, we have certain routes, the could've counted on what the buses out there or so (?). And they can't get to the mall, which--which should be good cuz they can keep their money in their pockets, but anyway...

LB: Now... can you tell me an example of good leadership that you've experienced?

CB: Well... I've never had any problem with any of the [laughs]... upper management. So... mmm....

LB: Or, you know--leadership--people take that question--

CB: Yes.

LB: ... a million different ways. Some people talk about management at the GRTC. Some people talk about... you know, other operators. Some people talk about passengers. Some people talk about the president of the United States [laughs.]

CB: True. Yeah, cuz as far as management, like I said, I never had any problem with them. But... I just... I think... their fair. I think--for what I can see--

LB: Yeah.

CB: ... they're fair because, like, no talking on the phone.... CEO, you know, it's not just for the operators, its for supervisors, too, which I thought was fair--

LB: Yes.

CB: And good. So I thought, then I said, well, that's a good thing to do. So I guess I could consider that as... good management [laughs]. Treating everybody, you know, the same.

LB: Yeah. No, that makes a lot of sense. Um... have you had, you know, over the years, can you--can you think about the biggest moments of change that you've experienced? In your job?

CB: Um... I--well... cutting out some of the runs. Other routes. I think that's the biggest one I've... noticed. Which I understand that too if you don't have the money, you gotta do what you gotta do. That's part of management, but [laughs]--but as far as change, I think that's the biggest one I've seen.

LB: Um... How do you think that people in Richmond that don't ride the bus--how do you think they see the GRTC?

CB: Well, I think they see GRTC... now, now they just the opposite all the people that live in projects, never driven. I think they see, like, the bus is designated for... that type of...

LB: Mm hmm.

CB: ...people. That... never driven... and need transportation, so they get on the bus [laughs]. I may be wrong but that's the way--

LB: No, that makes sense.

CB: ...you know.

LB: So it's like a mirror image, almost. Can you talk about the kinds of changes you've seen at the GRTC since you started here?

CB: Well... a new building. For one. [Laughs.]

LB: That's a big change.

CB: That's a big change, yes. And... [pauses] well... that's--I don't see too--to be honest, I don't see a lot of change when we go through different CEOs...

LB: Yeah.

CB: Because the rules are still there. And the policy is still there, so really... as far as CEOs, I don't see too much.

LB: I guess the equipment's changed some since you started.

CB: Now the, um--we have newer buses and--yes, and as far as training, they have--now they have the, um, simulator, which they did not have when I started.

LB: Which looks amazing!

CB: Yes. So, that's a change, too, yeah, that's what they... I guess they're getting more modern or more... which is good. You don't need live--'s keep (?) living back in... way back in the day when things would change and we need to change with them, I think.

LB: Now, what do you like to do when you're not at work?

CB: Well, believe it or not, I'm a--I like to bake.

LB: I love baking.

CB: Yes, and--and the yard.

LB: So what's your specialty baking?

CB: I don't have a specialty cuz I like doing it all. Bread, cakes, pies....

LB: That's very--

CB: It doesn't matter. I just like doing it all.

LB: It's relaxing, don't you think?

CB: It is. And likewise, working in the garden is, too, for me.

LB: Yeah, me too.

CB: Yes. I have a garden so I have to... keep the garden clean and... I love working and cutting' grass, believe it or not. My own grass. I don't like to cut other people's grass [laughs].

LB: Well, [that always?] smells so good, don't you think? When you're cutting it?

CB: It does. It really does. And I have a little dog, of course, and... and she like running around in the grass, too. So I have to make sure she doesn't roll int he grass. Cuz she'd end up being green aft--after [cutting?]. [Laughs.]

LB: [Laughs.]

CB: Yes.

LB: Um... what kind of changes have you seen in the city since you began... driving... here?

CB: Well, seems like they have more construction... than ever in the city. I'm not sure what all they're--what all this contraction is coming from, but... I never seen so much construction in the city before. And seem like most of all the stores are... moving... into the county cuz you had Miller & Rhoads and Thalhimer downtown. And now you just have like the little mom-and-pop-type stores. Which is fine, but you have people coming out of town, I think they need to see more than just little mom-and-pop store. And they can't get on the bus and go, cuz we don't go to... [laughs]--well, you can go to White Oaks, but they don't go to Short Pump. And... which I've never been there myself, either, and I have a car but anyway. [Laughs.] But when you come out of town, though, you need some place for the people that isn't in the city to go.

LB: Yeah.

CB: And they need transportation, cuz they may--if you don't know your way, you don't want to be driving your car anyway. It would be nice if they had transportation that they could go to different places and see part of the city but anyway...

LB: No, it's... true, it's... I mean it seems like Richmond has changed so much over the past--

CB: Yes.

LB: ... few decades.

CB: For--yeah--but hopefully it'll get better. Maybe... I guess we just have to wait and see I guess.

LB: Do you feel like it might be on an upswing?

CB: I think so. Least I hope so. Specially for the people that are visiting the city.

LB: Yeah.

CB: You know, it's....

LB: Um, what do you think the hardest thing about your job is?

CB: I think the hardest thing is dealing with the different attitudes. Because [as far as?] driving a bus is fine. And like I said, I get along with the supervisor and upper management, I don't have any problem with that. But, you have so many different attitudes on the bus. Today they can be, like, super nice and tomorrow they might bite your head off. [Laughs.] So, you know, you'd be sitting there, 'ok... is this the same person?' You can just speak.

LB: Yeah.

CB: And I guess they have a bad night or a bad morning but they got on the bus, so.... had to take it out on somebody.

LB: So what do you do when someone starts doing that?

CB: Well I just shut up. [Laughs.] Just end the conversation, I don't say anything else. And just... drive.

LB: Just wait till they go away.

CB: Yes.

LB: How do you think driving the bus has changed... your outlook on life and your outlook on the city?

CB: Mmm... as far as life, it hasn't changed my outlook on life cuz I'm always--I've always been a people person. But... that--as far as the city, I'm not from Richmond, so really I... learned the city pretty much by doing [that?].

LB: Yeah.

CB: And you go in a different neighborhood and you see how people... different people live, which is... nice... and not so nice, but--

LB: It's eye-opening. That's for sure.

CB: Yes [laughs]. But you know, something said, ok... I just need to make sure that I don't drop to that level, so...

LB: What's your favorite part of the job?

CB: ...oh, well, man (?), it's just... meet the people. Because everyday... you--well, not [always?] meeting people. Everyday you may see something that you think that you've saw it all. Every day [laugh]--you might get a surprise.

LB: What's the craziest thing that you've ever seen on the bus?

CB: Do you really wanna know?

LB: Mm hmm!

CB: I've seen two women back there making out. I look in the mirror, I said, uh huh.... So needless to say, I had to pull the bus over and... put it into that... and... I've seen--this other--the woman I was talking about earlier... have her dress over her head. Exposing herself. But like I said when she's taking her medicine, you don't have that problem--

LB: She's fine, yeah.

CB: Yeah. But not only her, though, you have a lot of passenger, for some reason--not really

passenger, but just people, period... for some reason they do not like bus drivers. Don't ask me why. [Cuz?] there's another lady, she--well, I think she's on medicine, too. Well, a couple of them. And... they just see a bus driver and they just go off.

LB: It's so weird.

CB: It is. Cuz this one lady... you might have to edit this part. She's a black lady. And we have a van that bring us--take them--well, bring us to [release/relief?] point. And the van pull up one day, and a bunch of drivers on the bus. She look and said, "Oh my goodness. Look at that bunch of gorillas" (?) [laughs].

LB: That's...

CB: Yeah... [laughs].

LB: ...pretty wild.

CB: It is. So--well I got a good laugh out--I thought it was funny.

LB: [Laughs.]

CB: But they didn't think it was funny.

LB: I'm sure they did not.

CB: But I was joking with them. I said, "Oh my goodness a van full of gorillas" [laughs]. I just told them what the lady said, but they didn't think that was funny, but I thought it was funny. But I knew she didn't have it all so...

LB: Yeah. Yeah...

CB: So some things, you know, you don't take to heart, and--

LB: No.

CB: Well, I don't anyway. But I know a person have a problem, I don't take it to heart. They can cuss me out, oh well. I can take it. Just don't touch me. But--

LB: Right.

CB: [Laughs] you can say anything to me, but just don't touch me. Yes.

LB: What kind of advice would you give someone who was just starting off as a GRTC operator?

CB: I would tell them whatever they are taught in training, do it. Do not take shortcuts. Because

you'll get in trouble. [Laughs.] And even though another driver say, well... do this do that, if you're not taught that in training, don't do it. And I would let them know that the job, even though you may talk to one--one guy and they say, 'Oh, I hate this job.' The job is not that bad. I'd say you have to make your own decision... and go from there. And I say whatever you do, just treat the passenger nice and nine times out of ten, you won't have too much--to many problems. And you don't. Unless, like I said, they have a problem.

LB: Now, is there anything that I didn't ask you that you would like to talk about?

CB: Mmm... Well, like I said, I don't have any problems [laughs].

LB: Yeah.

CB: So I [laughs]--

LB: Doesn't have to be a problem, it can be something positive.

CB: Ok... well... I like my job.... Well, I love my job. And I'm the one--I'm one that do not miss time. I come to work every day. Get perfect attendance. And have been getting perfect attendance for... pretty much the whole time I been here, other than when I fell and broke my foot.

LB: Ugh.

CB: And I was out for two-and-a-half months. But other than--

LB: Did you--did you have that at--at work happen?

CB: No, I was on a cruise, and I was in the middle of the cruise and we decided to go horseback riding. And the guy--was in Jamaica. And the guy said, "Well, stay on your horse and I'll come help you off." I thought I was John Wayne.

LB: [Laughs.]

CB: [Laughs.] I jumped off and I thought my foot was out of the stirrup but apparently--

LB: Ohh... ouch.

CB: And I was more concerned about falling in horse... manure than... so I didn't think about the foot. And I stood up and I said, "Please tell me there's nothing on my back." Thinking about horse manure. And they said no. Went to take a step. I said, "I need help."

LB: Oh... oh, oh.

CB: I didn't feel it until I went to take that step. So I had to be--had to be pushed around in a wheelchair the rest of the cruise.... Yes.

LB: Well, at least you were... on a ship most of the time.

CB: Yes, but then--but the thing is, when it--off the ship, though, um... they would push me too close to the river and it--to the ocean and there's nothing to keep you from falling in. I said, "Excuse me, but you need to get me on the other side."

LB: Seriously.

CB: Yes. And I almost got dumped out of the chair once cuz... you always pull the person on, they're gonna push me on [laughs]. I said, "Now, wait a minute, here." I said, "Well, you--" I should've told them. I worked in a hospital. For a little while. So I know. You don't push a person on. But I should've told them.

LB: Mm.

CB: And I'd get on the elevator. And the ladies decide to rest a bag on my foot. I said, "Excuse me, mam, but you're resting your bag on my foot." [Laughs.] But it's--on the crew, they thought it was just a sprain, but I got home to my doctor who sent me to orthopedics, and it was cra--fra--fractured.

LB: Ouch.

CB: And dislocated three toes.

LB: Oof. It sounds so painful.

CB: It was painful.

LB: Out of work two-and-a-half months, what did you do during that whole time?

CB: Well, I just laid around... the house and... I still ran the vacuum, though.

LB: [Laughs.]

CB: [Laughs.] Had to hop. And even drove myself to the doctor with the cast on my foot once.

LB: Wow.

CB: And that was not a good thing.

LB: No.

CB: Cuz I broke this foot, and I had to take this foot and, like, cross it--excuse me--

LB: Oh that doesn't sound good at all.

CB: [Laughs] But I made it. With no problem. Yes. And I'm not sure who many interviews you'll have, but you may have some people that say they hate their job.

LB: I haven't had a single person say that yet.

CB: Oh, really?

LB: You are interview number... ten. And so far, you--we've had a lot of really positive--

CB: Ok, well good.

LB: ...responses.

CB: Yeah, because... way I look at it, if you hate their job, why you still here?

LB: I know.

CB: So it must... can't be but so bad if you're still here.

LB: Someone said that, you know... usually if you're really not cut out for it, somewhere between year three and year five, you'll end up quitting.

CB: Right.... Well... well, like I said when I... was in training, if you were not cut out, you wouldn't have made it anyway because, um... the trainer that I had was so strict and he didn't think you were cut out for it, you wouldn't have made it through the class anyway.

LB: Do a lot of people wash out during that training?

CB: I don't think they have too many. No, they don't have--I don't think they have many at all. Because they--um... the trainer that I had, it was just like you were out of training if you were late... you got [laughs] treated just like if you were already a bus driver.

LB: Wow.

CB: So we can't be late. It's not even--it's... couple seconds. If you're supposed to be here at five. You be here at 5:01, you'll ju--you'll... someone might--someone else might be doing your run.

LB: Wow.

CB: Which is good, because--

LB: Yeah.

CB: ...late is late, regardless of how much time after the time you gonna be there, but [?].... Some people don't look at it that way. They that they're being picky.

LB: Everyone that I've talked to so far has said that you really have to be a people person, you have to love people

CB: Yes. Yes. You really do. And I've always been a people person anyway. I love people. But there's some you just don't... tolerate.

LB: Yeah.

CB: So you just don't say anything to them [laughs].

LB: Well, thank you so much. Um, our photographer Michael Lease is gonna be getting in touch with you to take your portrait.

CB: Ok.

LB: And then the--the exhibition will be going up in September at the old GRTC--

CB: Ok.

LB: ...terminal, and then there's also gonna be... portraits of the drivers and... just excerpts from the interviews up in the buses, which I think is gonna be so great.

CB: Oh, ok.

LB: Just for the passengers to see and...

CB: Right.... Make sure there's something good now. [Laughs.]

LB: It's a lot of [?]

Benjamin: [?]

CB: Ok.

LB: Yeah. I know, it's...

CB: Cuz you don't want a--a driver get his beside the head cuz of something they done--

LB: [Laughs.]

CB: Oh! That's another thing with some of the, um...

[Knocking]

LB: Excuse me one second.

[Background -- Laura talking to someone about locking doors...]

CB: Another thing with some of the passenger. Now, you know, you have bad peoples in... any job. Like we might have bad drivers. Well not... for a driver but just added to [?].

LB: Yeah.

CB: Some... passenger... [laughs] would take it out on you even though you're not the one that they're upset with. Like one today, um, supposedly the driver just passed them by. I'm not sure, I didn't ask any questions cuz I didn't want to get him started. So he could've--it's a possibility he wasn't even in the bus stop. Cuz some people you can just pick them up anywhere but it doesn't work that way. But you have people that will take it out on you, even though your'e not the one that... peeved (?) them off [laughs]. So... you may get a tongue lashing. For someone--or for [another person at fault?]. Another driver. For something that they have done or said.

LB: Yeah, it's frustrating.

CB: It is and I... I just ask them, I said, "Excuse me, um... have I done something to you? Um... to make you have a attitude like that with me?" "All you bus drivers are just the same." I said, "Ok, thank you ma'am." I just leave it alone at that point. Cuz I said, well she's already upset so... but I just wanna know if it something I done. So that way I can make sure I don't do it again.

LB: I know.

CB: Yes. But... you have to--that's part of the job. And I understand that so I don't let it sting, get to me. But when I first started, I used to let things to get to me. And I--people would ring the bell and I may pass the stop up cuz... I'm thinking "oh, what I could say to them" which I... can't. But you'd be thinking of what I could say to them. But now I just--go in one ear and out the other. I don't pay it any mind. But I had to learn this.

LB: Yeah.

CB: But when you first start, you know, you don't be thinking that [laughs]. But it comes after... few years.

LB: Take it a little less to heart, yeah.

CB: Yeah. I don't take it to heart at all now. [Laughs.] And when I'm off, I don't think about the job. I don't think about the passenger, I don't think about nothing but... what I'm doing at home.

LB: Which is nice.

CB: Yes. And when I get on the job, I don't think about home [laughs].

LB: You just are where you are.

CB: I just--that's right. I don't mix the two. And I think everybody should be that way. Including the passengers [laughs].

LB: [Laughs.] Well thank you so much, Mr. Brown, this has been really enjoyable.

CB: Yes, I didn't think I was going to enjoy this, but it was... enjoyable.

LB: [Laughs.]

CB: [Laughs.] I said, oh my God, I'm gonna get in there, I'm gonna freeze and--

LB: No, you didn't freeze at all!

CB: But it was nice, I enjoyed it, too.

LB: Good, good. Well, we'll--we'll be in touch with you. Michael Lease will call you up--

CB: Ok.

LB: ...and... set something up over the course of the summer.

CB: Ok.

LB: And then... you'll be getting an invitation to the exhibition in September, and... you'll--you'll have your portrait up there and your words and...

CB: So this is just GRTC that...oh, ok.

LB: Mm hmm, it's just GRTC operators. It's gonna be twenty to twenty-four portraits.

CB: Ok.

LB: And Benjamin is gonna have sound there so people are gonna be able to hear parts of the edited interviews.

CB: Oh, ok.

Benjamin: Yeah, it's gonna be a really nice thing that I think will [presume?] the GRTC operators as really interesting people, which I think is... everyone we've met is...

CB: Well, good... Like the passenger, where they see one, they see them all, so I'm glad you see them... decent. [Laughs.]

LB: Everyone's been very different from everyone else. That's also been interesting. No two

interviews have been at all the same.

CB: Oh, oh, that's good.

LB: I mean, some--some things a lot of people say, people talk about... what its like interacting the passengers and how you learn to, you know--

CB: Right.

LB: ...roll with the punches.

CB: But I have this old lady, though... I pretty much had to... try to push her off cuz I think she got a little too friendly and here she's, like, eighty. And... and another passenger go, "You know that lady think that you her boyfriend." And I said, "No, ma'am." [Laughs.] But she used to bring me all kind of stuff. And she gets food stamps and she said, "Well--" Oh, [Lord?], I forgot I'm on--being recorded.

LB: No.

CB: Take that out, take this part out [laughs]. She said, "Well, do you need anything if I'm at the grocery store, cuz I have x-number of dollars left on my cards, I need to use it." I said, "No, ma'am but thank you, though." [Laughs.]

LB: I could see that, you know, passengers would really kind of develop a relationship with you.

CB: Yes. But they're--they're--but they're really nice, though.

LB: Yeah.

CB: They really are. And I treat them... nice and with respect. So I don't... be rude or anything. So they--nine times--they show me the same respect, which is good. Yes. And I like that. But only thing we're not supposed to be talking while we're driving, they--some of them like to talk.

LB: I imagine they do.

CB: Yeah. Well a lot of them like to talk. Some of them, they're talking about nothing, so you really... don't want to talk anyway, cuz they're not talking 'bout anything. [Laughs.] Yeah, but you really have some good passengers, so--or customers, however you wanna... [laughs]. This one man today, he showed me his picture where he went fishing--we always talk about fishing--

LB: Do you like fishing?

CB: I love fishing. He caught a whole cooler of fish.

LB: Wow. On the James?

CB: Ah, he went to a... it used to be Harrison Pier, but I think they all it Oceanview now? He went there and caught a whole--I mean he--I thought he was fibbing. But he showed me a picture so I know he was telling the truth. Unless they're on top of a cooler full of ice [laughs].

LB: [Laughs.]

CB: Yeah, but... I said I might have to go and... try my luck. Cuz I never go--I gone to Oceanview.

LB: Yeah, I've never been there either.

CB: I went there when it was Harrison Pier.

LB: Mm hmm.

CB: But, you know, the storm tore that down, so they rebuilt, and renamed it. So... Ok, I'll let you go home now.

LB: Thank you so much, Mr. Brown, you've been great.

CB: Well, thank you. And I enjoyed it. But don't... let the driver hear that part. [Laughs.]

LB: [Laughs.] We'll edit it all out.

CB: Yeah.

LB: You'll see, you'll sound good.

CB: Ok.

LB: And, um...

Benjamin: GRTC--

LB: GRTC gift bag--

Benjamin: ...for you.

CB: Well, thank you. Thank you, appreciate that.

Benjamin: Stories... yeah, thank you.

LB: Thank you for sharing your stories.

CB: Anytime. And I really enjoyed it. And you sound so pleasant on the phone, I knew you were gonna be pleasant to talk to anyway. So how did you make it in all that rain out there when you

called me and said it was raining?

LB: Oh, gosh, it was crazy! It was, um--I was at my son's soccer game and... it started thundering and lighting and then we got out there and it was just pouring, pouring, pouring. But by the time I got back, cuz I live in Church Hill--

CB: Ok.

LB: By the time I got back to Church Hill it was totally dry.

CB: Oh.

LB: It was, you know...

CB: And plus when we were talking, we're really not getting it on Southside either, at the time.

LB: That's wild.

CB: And I was wishing for it cuz, like I said, I have a little garden.

LB: Yeah, I know. I all--I'm always hoping for rain.

CB: Let me show you.

LB: Oh, please do.

CB: Oh, you're not in a hurry, are you?

LB: Mm-mm, not at all.

CB: I like showing my garden...

LB: I love seeing gardens. I'm obsessed with my garden.

CB: So what do you have? I'm talking about vegetable, I ain't talking about flowers. I don't--I can't eat flowers. But I do have a flower garden.

LB: I don't have enough sun for vegetables but I've got some fruit. I've got a plum tree, a pomegranate--

CB: Oh really?

LB: ... a quince, some blueberries.

CB: Oh, I have--[?] my blueberry's young (?).

LB: My blueberry's been hanging in there for... I don't know, twelve years now?

CB: Oh really?

LB: But the birds get most of the crop.

CB: Oh, now, see that's the same problem with my....

LB: Do you have a lot of sun?

CB: Yes, where I have my blue--now, what is all of that?

LB: But I--I have a lot of flowers.

CB: Now, I have flowers in the...

LB: Do you have a big yard?

CB: Um, it was. [Laughs.] But I have a garage built back there and I have concrete back there and... for some reason it's not--

LB: See, I've got one of those little Church Hill yards, so I've gotta use every square inch.

CB: Yes. Well, so do I because, um... suppose something--oh, there we go.

LB: Oh, there we go.

CB: Oh, these, I do--I like masks (?).

LB: Oh, so do I.

Benjamin: Oh, awesome.

LB: Oh, those are beautiful.

CB: They're ugly but I love ugly. My aunt, she came to visit--

Benjamin: This one's great...

CB: Well, let me see if I can... [Pauses.] Let me see... I like them real ugly. Now that's ugly. That's--I like that one cuz it's ugly.

LB: Yeah.

CB: That's--have a--my aunt can't believe I have something--spend money on something so ugly.

LB: I think they look great.

CB: Now I got this one at a, um... they had something on Brown's Island. Only paid \$75 for it. And he wanted more and I said [?] garden (?). [Pauses.] Oh, that's my friend [?]. Oh--these are garden peas (?)--

Benjamin: Oh, nice.

LB: Wow.

CB: I put the rope up too late, they're already laying down.

LB: Yeah, yeah, they start flopping so early.

CB: But, um... they just [?]... And this cabbage--these are what they called collard cabbage--never heard talk about--wanted to give them a try. But they're like three time this size now.

LB: Wow.

Benjamin: Nice.

CB: These are little cabbage plants.

LB: You've got a serious garden.

CB: And I--my garden peas I don't have--they were not up at the time.... Let me show you something real pretty, though.

LB: Yeah. [Pause.] Chuckles.

Benjamin: That's pretty cute.

CB: That's Angel.

LB: Angel.

Benjamin: Angel.

CB: Angel. She's a angel, she's the sweetest... do you have a dog?

LB: No, I wanna get a dog.

CB: Oh... she is so sweet, I mean... she's one--now the other dog I had, you couldn't touch her. When--when she's in the bed with you. But this one, you can just rest your arm on--she'll lay right there.

LB: That's good.

CB: Yes.

Benjamin: That's sweet.

LB: My son really wants a dog, so I think we're gonna get a dog.

CB: You should get him one. Get him a little one. Or get him a big one.

LB: He wants a little one.

CB: Ok, good. Cuz the big ones, they'll... they tear up stuff. But little one can, too, though, but...

Benjamin: She looks pretty sweet, though.

CB: She is. She's a what they call a blue... [?] terrier.... She's as sweet as she wanna be. She was given to me.

LB: That's nice.

CB: Yeah. Well, I'm gonna let you go cuz I know you all got [?] getting home.

Benjamin: Well, thank you so much--

CB: Alright.

Benjamin: Oh, no, you're great.

LB: Thank you.

Benjamin: Thank you.

CB: Ok. Have a good one.

LB: You, too.

CB: Ok.