

ORAL HISTORY T-0019
INTERVIEW WITH: HENRY ARMSTRONG
INTERVIEWED BY: DR. RICHARD S. RESH
BLACK COMMUNITY LEADERS PROJECT
APRIL 6, 1970

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RESH: This tape is being made on April 6, 1970, in the city of St. Louis at the Herbert Hoover Boy's Club. This is part of a series of personal interviews with leading black personalities in St. Louis and our first guest is Mr. Henry Armstrong, a leading sport's figure in the city of St. Louis, a leading religious personality. My name is Richard Resh, University of Missouri at St. Louis; I'm being assisted by Mr. Franklin Rother.

RESH: Mr. Armstrong, could you tell us a little bit about yourself, your early life. Were you born in St. Louis?

ARMSTRONG: No, Mr. Resh, I was born in Columbus, Mississippi, and very odd it was. I don't say odd, either, but it was December 12, 1912. And, of course, during the first war, 1918, my mother and dad became, their farm lands infested with boll weevils down there and, of course, high waters from the Mississippi; and then they moved here, to St. Louis, to live, in that year of 1918. And of course my dad, who was a farmer all of his life, was very good at meats and cutting the cows and everything he knew just how to do that. And immediately during that war he got a job at the Independent Packing Company here in St. Louis. And after becoming a pretty fair meat cutter my brothers and his sons, you know they were older than I, they all got jobs there; and, of course, that's where we went along and I can say that that sort of job, working in the packing company, practically killed them all, you know, it's just a terrible job at that time. They didn't have the right ways of helping people against diseases and so forth.

Nevertheless, I was always ambitious and I was, believe it or not, the eleventh child of a family of fifteen, you know. And I wanted to, after the struggles, I wanted to accomplish something in life. I saw everybody around me, well the big doctors and lawyers and so forth, they were riding in these big fine cars and I had an idea that that's where I should do, I should be riding in cars, too. But I had the hope and I had the dream and my first scheme in order to do this I read how to do it was to get an education. Well, I started in school here at the old L'Ouverture School. Toussaint L'Ouverture, he was you know, a great liberator, I think of Haiti or something. And this school was named after him, and I graduated from L'Overture School in about 1924.

Then I went to John Marshall, another intermediate school. And then I attended Sumner High School-at that time we only had the one here in St. Louis. I attended Sumner High School, and I went there for about a year and a half; and then about 1927, I think it was, the new school was built here, Vashon, and it was in my district so I was changed from there, from

Sumner to Vashon, and this is where I graduated. I graduated from Vashon in 1929.

Well, right at that time you can remember we had a great depression to hit our country, the banks went broke and men were travelling all over the country. And I had good grades after I graduated, but no money to go to college. And in my family, everyone had practically passed, my mother and my brothers, a lot of them: my father he'd gotten older and was suffering from arthritis. The only one I had to really take care of me then was my grandmother who was a slave during the administration of Lincoln, and, of course, she wanted me to become a minister. That was her great idea, that I become preacher. But I scanned the doffers I should say, of the preachers and they wasn't getting much money, and I told her, I said, I wanted to buy me a Cadillac., I wanted to get a big home, and the preachers don't do this, pail know-not at that time, anyway. So I said, "I want a bigger job, I'm gonna go to school-and become a teacher and then eventually become a doctor."

So I didn't have any money, as I said, after graduated and then eventually I got a job on the Missouri Pacific Railroad tracks out here in Carondolet. That's where I was working out there because I was strong enough to lift the rails and even hammer them down with the big hammer, you know, the nails in the rails and everything. I was a small little fellow, but I was very strong because I secretly had a desire to become a great athlete and I would do training (while unbeknownst) to everyone, in fact I would do them secretly. What I would do, I bought all kinds of training equipment and I took them to my basement when we were living over on Josephine Street and this is where I religiously went into training and getting myself into condition. And then I would get up in the morning, early morning, before going to work or school and I would run. I would run around Forest Park. I was just a manic for running, and I guess you know when I started fighting they used to call me "Perpetual Motion," and "Other Side Hank," you know, and all those names. And this stamina that I acquired in my youthful days really helped me.

Then when I went to work this railroad I was anticipating on getting money enough to continue my college education and when I found out after two or three weeks of working there-- my check wasn't large enough to really help with the household chores and my poor grandmother she was scuffling and trying to help me, you know, by picking pecan nuts at a factory down on Chouteau Avenue where we lived. I saw her one day come home and I noticed that she was getting blind because was cutting her fingers every night with that short knife, so I told her to quit, I was gonna be the bread winner.

Well, that took on, I took on a lot then, and then, of course, finally one day I looked at this check that I got from the foreman of the railroad and it was very small and at that time I was putting my tools with the fellows in the tool box and strangely enough there was a newspaper story, the *St. Louis Post Dispatch*,-I can never forget this incident- and it was a great writer on there, this man was a great sports writer and especially a boxing writer and his name was Ed Wray. Everyone know him here? He's passed away now. But he had a great story about the great little Cuban fighter, Kid Chocolate, beating Al Singer at the Polo Grounds. He weighed 126 pounds and in one-half hour's work this man earned I just told everybody on the railroad, I said, "Well, this is what I'm gonna do, I'm gonna be a champion," I told them. And I said, "It's nonsense working here for maybe \$40.00 every two weeks and I can make :4,75,000 in a half hour." I says, "I'm gonna be champion. An I'm gonna quit this job." And really they told me, "Why you little fellow you can't fight." They had the ideas about big big

fighters at the time, you know: like at that time my idol was Jack Johnson, you know, everybody thought that I had to acquire the weight and the stature of Jack Johnson. I said, "Well, these fellows are 126 pounds, I'm weighing 124 now and if they can do it I can do it, too." I says, "I'm gonna become a champion." So they said, "Well, you got a lot of ambition." They said, "Well, what are you gonna do now?" They said, "You know it's gonna take a lot of training and everything." I said, "Well, what I'm gonna do," I said, "I'm gonna quit this job and I'm gonna get me a pair of boxing gloves and I'm gonna get me a manager." I said, "That's the way it's done." And I said, "Read here," I says, "he's going back to Cuba with a Lincoln Continental that Henry Ford gave him. But you fellows just watch, when I come back here, I'm going away too, because I can't fight here"— they didn't allow mixed matches at the time, you know. I said, "When I come back here," I said, "I'm gonna be driving a Cadillac." They said, "Little fellow, you sure talking big to have nothing. You ain't got twenty five cents yet." I said, "Well you just watch and see." So I quit my job and I went to buy me some gloves and I went into Sears, see, and I tried to find ways of getting out and getting fights. So I bought me these boxing gloves, and what I did, I lived on the South Side over on Chouteau Avenue. And what I would do every evening I would take these gloves and tie them over my shoulders and walk around the streets and anyone that wanted to fight me, why you know, put the gloves on I thought that was the way to get training. I had read where Kid Chocolate, was as discovered in the streets of Cuba fighting, you know, by Chedisios, the man who was his manager and I figured that someone would see me. Well, there was a great white promoter here at that time, George Welshman. He had heard about me but he said he had a colored boy then, by the name of Allen Matthews. And he said that, "I don't know," he said, "I got enough and for the little fellows it's pretty tough and rough to get along," So then I said, "Well, okay, I'll try elsewhere." So I went to the YMCA--the colored Y there that was on Pine, I think—and heard they were training fellows over there. Well, there was a boy there by the name of Harry Armstrong. This fellow was larger than I was. He was at that time a middle-weight, what you call, about a hundred and, well, a hundred and sixty-some odd pounds. And I only weighed 123-124. And I had been fighting fellows on the streets, boxing with them with my gloves on, you know. And I didn't care just how big he was, I wasn't thinking about weights or divisions or anything at the time. I just wanted for someone to fight me. So I read where the great fighter, former heavy weight champion of the world, Bob Fitzsimmons, would hit fellows in the stomach, you know, and when he hit them in the stomach they would, of course, naturally come down, you know, their chins would bow, and then when their chins would bow he'd hit them on the chin. So that's what I, that was my first strategy of fighting. I'd hit these big fellows in the belly and they would come down and I'd hit them on the chin and they would go down or fall out and then they would throw their gloves off, you know. So, I fought big fellows and they didn't know anything about fighting. I was just a natural fighter I guess. And I just went into them and rushed into them and got my punches in. And I practically knocked them all out, see. So I went over th this Y and I met this fellow, Harry Armstrong. Now Harry Armstrong, we finally called ourselves brothers, but we're not. This isn't my, name is Henry Armstrong now, I made it official, but I was born, my mother and my dad, I was, my father's name was Jackson. I'm a Jackson by birth. But I'll tell you how this came about, how I changed my name to Henry Armstrong. Harry was just about my color, but larger and everything like that. So, what happened at the Y, he told me, he said, "Now, little fellow, what do you want?" He says, " You got all those gloves on you, what do you want?" I says, "I'm gonna be a champion." He said, "You can't fight," he said. "You can't lick your

lips while you was trying to get the best of me." And I looked at him and I said, "Well, I put on gloves with fellows bigger than you and I've knocked them down." I says, "Why don't you try?" And he says, "Okay." So he put on the gloves with me. Of course, he had, he knew the strategy of boxing and everything. So he kept me moving around with his left hand and keeping me off with his left hand, jabbing and moving, see, while I didn't know that. And I was, all I did was come into these other fellows and they didn't know anything. They was swinging wild, but he knew, he knew how to block and pull out punches and everything. And move out of the way. And I was going after him and finally in about a minute and a half he got tired because I was catching up with him, see, because I had the stamina, see. And Ad said, "Well, time, time." And I said, "No, three minutes isn't up." I said, "Three minutes it up." He says, "I know we fight three minutes." He says, "Time, time." He says, "I want to tell you," he says, "if I'm gonna be your teacher," he says, "I got to instruct you," you know, and he was just blowing it. And he said, "Now you see, I've gone a minute and a half and you haven't laid a glove on me." And I said, Well, I haven't, no, but you didn't give me time." He said, "Well, why waste all this energy for nothing? If you have the knowledge of how to get it over?" I said, "Well, what do you mean?" He said, "Now," he said, "every time you start to right hand or left jab anything," he says, "I jabbed you right in the face and I step back and you have to start all over again, didn't you?" I said, "Yes, you hit me. I remember you hitting me right on top of the head with a glove." He says, "Now that was what you call a left jab." And he says, "That is the way Gene Tunney used to fight. that's how he beat Dempsey with that left jab." And he says, "And when I hit you on top of your head or the body," he says, "I break your movements and you have to start all over again." I says, "That's right, yes." He said, "Well, why don't you, why don't you miss them? Make that left jab go over your shoulder. Why don't you spar? Why don't you counter it, you know? I said, "Counter it? What do you mean?" He said, "What I mean is when I stick this jab at your head, instead of letting your head stay there," he said, "just move over," he said, "slightly and that left jab will go over your shoulder. And when you go over, and when that left jab goes over your shoulder," he says, "my weight and your weight is together and then you're coming into me and you know you, if you hit me on the chin, if you can, you're right over my chin then because you're into me," he says. "Then you'll hit me with 200 pounds." I says, "Yes, that sounds right." He says, "Do you think you could do it?" I says, "Yes." So then he said, "Okay, let's try it again." So he jabbed me this time and when he jabbed me I did perfectly. I just swerved, I let the jab slip over my shoulder. I ducked it and counter-punched it and hit him right on the chin and knocked him flat on the ground. I mean, flat on the floor. He was, he was really out. "Oh, my goodness," he said, "you can really punch!" So he said, "That's enough," he says, "I'll teach you from now on." Well, that started the combination. Were in the First Midwestern Amateur Fights here in St. Louis. They had them at the Coliseum, the old Coliseum then, this was about 1929. And at that time I was scheduled to fight a colored boy over there by the name of J.D. Birch and there was other boys fighting along with me. And we couldn't fight the other fellows. We had Indians here. Joey Parks fought here, a little boy, a very famous kid here. So this was supposed to go on for several nights but when I fought this colored lid I knocked him out in two rounds. Well, then I was just acclaimed then the Colored Feather

Weight Champion of the World, I mean of St. Louis. And no more fights, you know. So then I got a little trophy—I still have the thing, it's all tainted now. And I brought this little thing, I mean, I got out and I was still worried. I said, "Now where do I go from here?" Well, now, there was a colored promoter here who tried, his name was Ed Voy. well, this man he was interested in fights, but he didn't know too much about it. And he figured that if he would

take this same bout between me and J.D. Birch and claim that this was a return bout to give him a chance to win his title back, you know, to win the title. And so he promoted this fight between nothing but Negro boys; on Jefferson Avenue, I think-there was an old hall there that the pigeons used to use- upstairs. Now what happened in this fight, I fought Birch again and I knocked him out again. But he had all kinds of fighters there. He picked them up in the streets. Anybody that could fight, he just picked them up and we were the main events and, of course, he got Mr. Ed Dray and Jackson of the St. Louis Argus to give us a lot of newspaper stories.

RESH: Oh yes, I meant to ask you about that. Was the Argus very much interested in you and your development?

ARMSTRONG: Well, yes. They had a man down on there by the name of R.C. Jackson, I think his name was, and he was a sports editor. He was very interested in boxing and then my name was, you know, similar, so he was writing me up all the time. You see, he gave me a lot of, that was the only paper here then at the time, you know. We had a scandal sheet, but then that wasn't much. But, this thing here, this paper here, the Argus, was really a great paper. So, in this fight we drew, oh we drew, a tremendous house! I guess it was about, close to 2 or 3 hundred people there. And they were paying 250 to 500, and that was a little money they had. It was big at that time you know. Well, then the man I had, this was the time, the first time, this fellow was a great little puncher, and he hit me in the nose and this was the time he broke my nose, for the first time in fighting, and I never did have it fixed after that because the doctors told me that that cartilage would be stronger, it would be helpful to me if I was going to continue fighting. But he broke my nose, but I knocked him out again. This time I knocked him completely out of the ring. I was really after him. So, this fellow gave us, the promoter, gave us all slips, you know, and he was telling us, he was a jive artist, you know. He said, "You fellows, we're not allowed to pay you amateurs anything, but you can get, you can get things at Spalding's. Now here's a little, I'm gonna write you out a ticket and this'll be paid for. Whatever boxing equipment you want you can go down there and get it within the range of 5.00, you know." I was gonna get me a pair of boxing shoes, because my shoes had really the soles had gone off of them. So I went down there, feeling very proud, the next morning, you know. With my nose all swollen up and my chest puffed out. I was showing them that I was a boxer. And I said, "I'm Henry Jackson, I come down here for my boxing shoes. Mr. Voy's paid for them, here's the note." And this fellow looked at me with sympathetic eyes and says, "Little fellow, I'm sorry," he says, "this guy's been sending you guys, all you winners, down here," he says. "He hasn't left a red cent down here for you. So you better go down there and try to catch him, you know."

So, I went back. Now, here I got a busted nose, the red eye, the swollen eye, and no money at all. And I went back to the place and when I went back to the place, why, I found his associate there. Well, he gyped his associate too. His associate told us, he said, "Well, Henry," he says, "he's gone," he says "I don't know where he is myself," he says "He left me here. I got to take all this stuff down, you know, because I'm responsible too." He says "I don't know, he didn't pay me," he says, "last night we took that money out of here," he says, "and I haven't seen that fellow since," you know. Well, I felt pretty, well, gyped, in my first fight, you know, because I'd heard so much about it, you know, people were talking about the managers gyp you and all that and I began off, began that way. So I went back to this fellow, Harry, again and said, "Well, what we gonna do now?" He said, "Well, things, fightings, are pretty bad," he says, "I don't know," he says, "I got a friend on the coast, out on the coast,"

he says. "But they got a lot of little fighters out there, your weight. They got Filipinos, they got Mexicans," and he says, " they got no prejudice; these you can fight all of them out there." And I said, "Well, that's where we should go you know."

RESH: Could you fight whites out in Los Angeles?

RESH: Let's see, what year was this?

ARMSTRONG: This was about, this was 1931. This was in '31, I went to Pittsburg, Pittsburg, Pennsylvania. Well, we went there to fight but what happened in Pittsburg, I had learned to fight pretty well and I was always training and I was just a natural puncher, you know. And when I got to Pittsburg, we went there, we went looking for amateur fights. And what we did, we went there to try to get a fight. We went to the gymnasium and these little fellows, my weight, they were professional fighters. They were fighting 10 rounders and all like that, but they were my size. So, I didn't care about fighting with them, so I got in there and I started to fighting them. And I was one of these types of fighters that fought you, you know, I just threw punches. And I was hitting them and everything. and I was knocking them around the ring, and so finally after we worked for the main eventers there for several days, my trainer, Harry Armstrong, came up and said, "Well, fellows, can you help us? We're running out of cash, we'd like to get an amateur fight around here." And they looked at him like he was crazy. They said, "What are you talking about, an amateur fight?" "For that little fellow?" they says, "he's a professional." He said, "No he isn't. He only had three amateur fights in St. Louis." "Three amateur fights? Why that's Jackie Rogers and Jackie Rogers is fighting the main event in Millville, Pennsylvania next week and he's knocking Jackie Rogers out of the ring. He beat Jackie Rogers up. What are you talking about?" So he said, "No, he's not a professional fighter, only had three fights." So they said, "Well, we ain't gonna issue him no amateur license around here." So then what happened, they wouldn't issue me a amateur license in Pittsburg. Now of course we had another fighter there with us, a fellow we took with us named Foster. We called him 'Eddie' Mississippi, you know. So I used to sing all the time, they used to call me "Melody Jackson"--you hear about the old timers in Pittsburg, they know all about me. The greatest promoter on the Coast now (Mickey Davis), he was there, and he always called me 'Melody.' He's promoting on the Coast with George Parnassus and all those fellows. So I signed up to fight professional under my real name, Henry Jackson, and they called me 'Melody' Jackson as a moniker, you know. So when this happened, when I signed up, then we run out of money. My brother, I called him my brother, eventually I did call him my brother, Harry Armstrong, and Eddie Foster; and Chen- we had a big old police dog, Foster had a police dog and this dog ate as much as we did. So he carried this dog along with him, and we'd get -our exercise and this dog would run with us in the morning, you know, like that. We got to the place where we run out of food, and the lady was good enough, she knew we was getting a fight, six round fight in Braddock, Pennsylvania. See, I fought over there, my first professional fight against a little Italian kid named Al Idvino. And this little fellow--he was a good little puncher--wasn't strong at all, but what happened with me, I had to train all that week on a loaf of bread, nothing but whole wheat bread, believe it or not and water, no meat or nothing, just bread and water. And I was getting \$30 for this first fight. When I got in there, I didn't have to make the weight 'cause I weighed, I went down to 122 pounds. I had nothing to fight with. And we finally signed for the fight, then eventually we went to Braddock and I was really weak. I was almost fainting

that night for the lack of food. I got in and they tell me that this fellow knocked me out in the third round. I was exhausted, just exhausted. I couldn't stand up. Well, we got our \$30. But they said I was fighting like mad when I went out, even at that. So I made such an impression until they brought me back the next week in a place called Millville, Pennsylvania, right across the Monongahela River there. Now we got \$30 and, boy, we could eat now. We got everything. We paid up our rent for \$3 a week. We were all living in a loft together, my brother Harry; and the dog, and Foster, and myself, and we had this loft and the lady was charging us \$3 a week for it. So now we could pay that up, and then we got steaks. Steaks and bread and the eggs and all and milk, and I was a little pop-eyed the next week. And they put me in against a kid, a colored boy by the name of Sammy Burns, in Pittsburg, I mean in Millville, Pennsylvania. So I'm gonna fight him six rounds and he was supposed to be the Ray Robinson of that day. He was very good. But then I had my strength and my style--continued stamina and all that--I just had him on the floor. I beat him up bad. I think I retired him that night. So I looked very good that night, and the managers there, the promoters there helped us get that fight, and they also got my sparring partner Foster a fight, and he got knocked out. Well, he was discouraged and he had the automobile and we had to follow him home 'cause he was gonna leave. But that night we got our money. We got \$60--\$30 for me and \$30 for him. They wanted to put me in a main event then. After that fight they wanted to send me against Eddie Shay who was up in the class of Kid Chocolate and those famous fighters at the time. These fellows were champions--they had over 75 or 90 fights, you know. And they want to put me in Cleveland against him, because they were looking...they said, 'now here's a great little fighter and he looks good and he's ready.' And I had only four fights at that time. And they want to put me up there. So Harry said to me, "No, we can't go too fast you need developing because you'll fight anybody, but I know what we should do." He says, "You got to develop, you're just young yet and we still got **our eyes on** California. They're gonna have a 1932 Olympics out there. Now what you can do, you can go out there and get into amateurs and train up and to that time so you can get all the know-how and everything. And I can teach you."

RESH: This would be about a year later?

ARMSTRONG: Yes, this is about a year later. He was just talking this to me in Pittsburg. He says, "Well, what we should do, we should leave here and these guys are coming back by tonight." "We had got home with our money, \$60, and they want their cut, but I ain't gonna give it to them, because we need this money to get back to St. Louis." So these guys came by about 11:30 that night "Hey, Harry," they was hollering, "Harry, where's my cut?" Harry says, "I'll see you tomorrow. I'm too sleepy to come. I'll fall down the steps," he says. He was quite a guy, that Harry. They said, "Well, man, you won't get no more fights around here if you don't give us the cut." He said, "I'll give you the cut tomorrow, but I can't come down tonight. I'll disturb the lady downstairs." So they went on. Well, that morning about, oh, about 3:00 in the morning we got out of there. We got the old car, it took us about a half hour to get the car started, you know. So we went to Chicago. Well now, after getting to Chicago we figured that, well, we could get started there and now I'm a professional, see, I'm fighting under the name of Melody Jackson, and that's my real name, Henry Jackson. Well, when we got there, I never will forget, Sam Coulon, this fellow Billy Connors, I think his name was--he's a great little fighter. Then there was a promoter there who was one of the great promoters) these fellow's names skip my memory at the moment. But anyway, these fellows, when we went around to get fighters from them they told us, they said, "Well, look

fellow," he was talking to Harry, my trainer, he said, "Take this little fellow back to school, say, he's nothing but a baby. He can't fight." I was a kid then, 18, 20 years old, and my hair was long and all that kind. And I did, I guess, have a baby face, and didn't look like a fighter, you know. But so they said, "Well, take him back, I'd get killed if I gave this kid a fight, see." So then I told Harry, "You see that promoter there," I think his name was Carl Layden, or something like that, I can't think of the name. But anyway he said, "Yeah, what are you gonna do? Put a curse on him?" I said "No, but he's gonna be one of the sorriest guys in the world one of these days. You watch and see." And I said, "I'm gonna make him eat those words." "Well okay," he said, " but we need a fight, if we don't we're gonna starve to death." So then finally we couldn't get no fights there, everybody run us out of the gym. They said that I was too much of a kid, So then we come back to St. Louis, and I'll never forget this trip back to St. Louis, When we got around Joliet, coming from Chicago, we run into one of these big storms, sand storms, you know how they hit, and this old car, we had an old Nash. This thing was about 1926 and it was about 3 or 4 years old now in '30 something, you know. And it had one of those, the touring car with those black tops on it, and the wind just blew the stuff, the top all together, all off it, it was just like rags and everything. And then me and the dog was back there, and Harry- he always smoked a pipe like you, and he didn't care, he had his feet over the top of the visor you know, the wind visor. Foster, he never did make a fighter. He always had the ideas about a fighter, you know. He always had his long cap on like a fighter, his shirt and all like that jive, and the turtle neck and everything. He thought he was a fighter. And they was driving down to where I lived. They brought me home first, see, on Chouteau Avenue. Well, right on Chouteau Avenue and Jefferson over on the South side where I lived. I lived on Josephine Street--just two blocks west of Jefferson Avenue, and when we got there at Jefferson Avenue, Jefferson viaduct we called it and Chouteau, well, now, I never will forget, looked like the biggest Cadillac in the neighborhood was standing on that corner at the time when the light stopped us. I mean, we had to stop for the traffic going across And he saw us and here I am, and I had promised to come back in this Cadillac, and here I am in this ragged car. go, I looked at him, and when I passed over, he looked at me and he said, "No not Henry Jackson?" and I says, "Yes, it's me." So he started running and I said, "I know what he's gonna do, he's gonna tell the story." He said, "No." They let me off at my grandmother's, so she said she had a dream that I was coming home and she had things fixed for me. So then finally what happened, I got restless again. I got very restless. And then I was going with a little girl then, this girl wasn't my wife, 'cause my wife, this is my second wife. In fact, this girl I married now was really my first love, you know. But when I went away and she got married, and then I was gone 7 years) and finally I divorced my wife and she divorced her first husband and now we're together. But this little girl who at that time inspired me, her name was Yvonne Cruz, she's passed now, but at that time she was quite a help to me because she would come over, and talked with me. I wouldn't go out to see nobody 'cause I knew they would kid me. So sure one night, she did get me out to see my friends, to talk with my friends, fellows my size and all like that. The little fellows, too, so she said, "Come on out," she said, "you're just brooding yourself over. You know you can go back on the railroad. You can work there. You can work down at the hat shop, you can make money. You can still make it, Henry." She says, "Why be discouraged?" I said, "I'm not discouraged, I'm just thinking about what I'm gonna do next." So she said, "Well, will you promise you'll go with me tonight over to our friend Charles' house? They're gonna play cards." I said, "I don't like to play cards." She said, "Well, just come over and look." So I said, "Okay, we'll go over there at 8 o'clock tonight and see the kids tonight." And I said, "Now I don't want to get into a fight over there, because these kids, these fellows gonna kid

me about my coming back." She said, "Well, if they kid you, we'll walk out together." I said, "Okay." So then I went on over with her. So I got in and everybody was glad to see me and pretending, I could see it was all jive. "Come on, champ, sit down. Hi, old champ. We got the champion with us here tonight. Come on have a drink, come on have some Coke." I said, "No, I don't want a drink." "We don't have to play cards." "Well, I'll just look, fellows." and so finally the little kids come in and say, "Oh, man, boy, did you *see* that fine Cadillac?" And so I said to the girl, "You *see*, it's coming up now." And so then the bigger fellows, my size, they said, "Ha, what car you talking about?" "Oh, man, that Cadillac." "I thought it was a covered wagon." "You mean to tell me, what the champ was riding in?" "Oh, no he promised us a Cadillac, a Cadillac it is. You was looking wrong. You was seeing wrong." And so I told my girl friend, I said, "Now look, let's get out of here. I'm boiling over. I'm gonna tear this place apart." She said, "Okay, let's go." So the bigger fellows say, "What's the matter, champ, you want to stay around a little bit longer." I said, "No, I'm gonna tell you fellows. I know you put these little guys up to do this. I know you did. But just you wait and see. I'm gonna bring that Cadillac back here I'm gonna prove it to you that I can bring it back. You just wait and see." They said, "Oh, yeah we believe you'll bring it back." And so I walked out and she said, "Now what you gonna do?" I said, "I'm going to California." She said, "You going to California?" She said, "Gee, do you know how far California's from here? It's over 2,000 miles, 2,300 miles from here." I said, "Yeah, it's there all right. They made it a long; time ago, the old pioneers. They got trains going out there now." She said, "No." I said, "They show it in the movies now. I saw Admiral Lincoln, you know, and all like that." She says, "Boa constrictors and everything out there." You know, she was trying to discourage me. I said, "Oh, that's all movie stuff. I'm gonna be champion. Now if you wait for me, we'll get married later on, but not now." I said, "I got to make a man of myself." She said, "Henry, I won't try to discourage you. I just wish you luck." So now this particular girl, I mean. I left her. At that time there was a lot of transit, you know. People who were traveling hobo's and everything. and I read all kinds of histories. I read the life of, oh, this great hobo writer, I can't think of his name. He sold several books on his life story, Babies of the Night, or something like that, Jim Tulley, Jim Tulley. I read his book about how he hoboed, you know. You could catch the trains easy then. So I looked. I went out on Jefferson Avenue where the train was under the Compton Bridge. And I looked at those guys catching those trains, and I said, "Why, I can do that. That's the way to get to California." So then I was trying to get some money together and I couldn't get nothing. I just found a penny, that's all I could get. I couldn't ask my grandmother for nothing. So I told my grandmother, "Grandmother, I think I'll go to California." She says, "Oh, you don't know what you're talking about. California's too far. YOU can't get there. That old automobile won't take you there." I said, "Oh, yes, it'll take us there. That car it just don't run too fast. It'll take you anywhere." So she said, "Well, okay, son. I'm praying for you, but you gonna go on a dangerous trip." So I said, "Well, alright, I'm gonna see what my friends got to say, Harry and Eddie Foster. I'm gonna see what they gonna say." So I went over. I had looked at how to hobo and all like that. I went over to Harry and he was always comical you know, he was a funny guy. He said, "Well, come on in champ." said, "Yeah, Harry, you know you want to be my trainer?" He said, "Yeah, sure. Why, what are you talking about?" I said, "Well, I'm going to California." He said, "Oh, turn around. Have you sprouted wings?" He said, "Look, all I got is 50 cents. That ain't gonna get me just a cup of coffee and a donut." I said, "Well, I'm gonna tell you. Now, if you want to go, I've decided to go tomorrow night. You can go with me, but if not I'm going by myself." "How we gonna get there?" I said, "I've been all day looking at how they hop those trains out

there, those hoboes. If those hoboes can make it, I can make it, too." He said, "You talking about hoboeing?" He said, "Why didn't you tell me about that. I'm a master at that stuff." He said, "I didn't know you had the guts. I been hoboeing for 10 years already. I know all about that. Let's go." I said, "Okay." And I said, "Well, what we got to do, get Foster to come over with his car and you guys pack like we're, I'll have a little bag, much as I got, and take me from the house to let my grandmother think I'm going in the car, because she thinks I'm going in the car. He said, "Okay, well, we'll be there. We'll be here at 6 o'clock and pick you up and we'll be all dressed and we'll have the dog like we had before and all like that. Give her the impression." They come over like they said, and Grandma she kissed me goodbye and prayed for me. She didn't have no money to give me, 'course I didn't have n anything either but a penny. And so we went on out and he took us on down to the railroad tracks and that's where he left us. We went on out to Carondolet, not downtown because we were known down there because we lived right on the railroads. We went way out South, and sure enough we hopped this train and we just didn't know, we were just going West. We finally ended up in Freeport, Louisiana. Boy, we was down there and we ran into a lot of trouble. I'll never forget that night in Freeport. We got in there and it was awfully cold. It was that penetrating cold, it was sort of raining and drizzling. We had got into what we call a hobo jungle, and so we went over there and we saw a lot of these men smoking and, well, no, they was sleeping) and a few was just drowsing. They had a fire going and the fire was just about dying out, the drizzle was putting it out. And I got there and I was a little cold and when I looked around, I said, "Well, jimminy, why don't you fellows put some wood on the fire?" I said "Will they run us out of here?" And one old fellow says, "No, they won't." And he's sitting right by the wood, he said, "No, they don't bother us. You want to put wood on the fire, put it on the fire." And I said, "Gee, is it alright?" And he says, "Sure." So I got those logs, you know. Some was cut off and everything like that. So I threw it over there and it just like spread right up and burst like a furnace. So when it started to burning, it got so good, so warm and comfortable, it started waking the guys up. And there was one large man who looked like Laughton, the big movie actor. Big white fellow, and he had a mustache and beard and he was just as dirty as he could be. And he woke up. All around the state at that time they had come in. The fellows they'd come in from different trains. We'd beg them, you know. So we got to a little place, and it was Mexican people, a lady. So I told him, "Now you're the bread winner, why don't you get some bread?" He said, "Okay." So he went up and knocked on the lady's door and he says, "Lady, miss, could your would you help us? We've been traveling we're on our way to California, we're poor boys." And the lady said, "Oh, no sabe, senior, no sabe." "These people talking different languages," I said, "we ain't gonna get no food here. We gonna starve to death. We better hurry up and get out of here." "Is it all that way in California?" I said. He says, "No, they call them Mexicans, and that's Spanish." I said, "Well, now, what you gonna do?" He said, "You just wait and see. I'll show you how to get something." So he went up to another Mexican and he knocked on the door, and the lady siad, "Oh, no, no, no, no comprende, senior." So he said, he said, "BLOOOP." And she said. **Oft**, si, si, comprende que pan, que pan, pan , pan." He said, "Pan, pan." She said "You want some bread--que pan." So she gave him some hot rolls and everything. Boy, hard, they was real hard, and no meat at all. But even that was good. So finally we got out of that town, Phoenix. We got the next train going west.

RESH: Well, let me ask you just briefly a little it about your trip. Did you find that whites and blacks and Mexican Americans were all riding the rods together?

ARMSTRONG: Oh, yeah, we were all riding the rods together. We had different places, like in the reefers, we called them, the refrigerator trains and all. And at that time you could stay on the treadles behind the trandles there. We'd get on a big car and, you know, when you're on a train, nobody, we didn't run into this where they wanted to push you off the train because at night we were riding and everybody was tired and wanted food and stuff.

RESH: Just to be left alone.

ARMSTRONG: Yes, just wanted to be left alone. But this old guy when he woke up that morning it was really disgusting how, everybody's a bum now he doesn't want us laying down with him, what was he thinking about?

RESH: That was back in Louisiana?

ARMSTRONG: That was in Freeport, yeah.

RESH: Let's pick up with your career in California, Los Angeles.

ARMSTRONG: When we got to California, we went to a flop house the first night. And, boy, the flop house was terrible, because it had fleas, chiggers, and everything in it. And I told Harry, "Boy, we can't stay here long, because if we do, we be eat up by these things." So he said, "Well, we'll try to get out of here and see what we can do." Then this other fellow, Foster, now he didn't hobo with us. He was kind of a proud guy. He drove the car out eventually. And so what we did, we went around to try to, I always had this feeling of maybe I was gonna starve to death--I don't know why. But I was always looking for food. I wasn't thinking aut studying or nothing, I just wanted to get something to eat. And if you didn't get a place to stay at night, you get in the old Mission, they called it a "Midnight Mission," it's right down by the gymnasium where I started. We'd go down there at 9 o'clock and if you're not there at nine o'clock you can't get in. So we ate there several nights, and they put you in line to eat your food. But there was another place, a millionaire guy had, his name was Lane, they called it the Lane Foundation. He set up something on Towne Avenue down there. You could get in there and stand in there for about two hours and get some hot cakes and coffee, that's all. You had to leave. But they got in knowledge of me a little bit because I was getting two hotcakes, I was being served twice. I was so hungry, I was always afraid, you know. But they would get you, the lady would talk about it because they would it was a religious concern, this man was very religious. The ladies would tell us, "Now don't take food from your brother's mouth. We seen some people eating here twice. When you do that, you're eating from somebody else." Because I had long hair, sometimes I'd comb it down and then I'd see a spot down there, it was a long row and I'd run down there and grab the plate. Because they were just throwing them out like that and I'd grab another plate and I'd look down and they'd have nothing but the fellows that was bumming on the streets like. They said, "Well, okay, he's a bum, he's got to eat. It don't make no difference." But I felt kind of cowardice after that, but I was always afraid that I was gonna starve to death I don't know. So then finally we went to the gym, and we tried to get these fellows to manage us because we wanted a white manager, you know, because we had run into trouble with the other guy. And there was a fellow by the name of Ward Ross out there, he had nothing but professionals, he didn't care about amateurs. But there was another guy named Cox and several other fellows who was interested in fights. And one fellow, I'll never forget, an Irish guy, he's dead now, Paddy Quay. Well, Paddy handled colored boys, too, he liked them. And well, he took them all over and every boy he had to fight, he'd get a dollar for him, and five dollars for bringing the group out to see. So he could take out sometime maybe five or six boys, seven, eight boys and they could get him ten dollars for the boys and five dollars for the carriage and all

like that and that's fifteen dollars a night. Well, that's pretty good, see. So he didn't care who he had, he just wanted the fighters. So what we did, we went to the gym and we got to the gym. Harry, he was the seller, he was trying to sell it out. These guys, he says, "Well, look, this is my brother," you know, he called me his brother out there, see. He says, "He can fight, and if you fellows want him, you can have him for nothing. Just, you know, just give us a little money, you know, for some bread, coffee, ham." So he said, "Well, we don't save no colored fighters, but that's the guy that Cox, we'll tell you about him." Paddy Quay came up and said, "Well, I'll look at him. Let him box." And Harry said, "Well, he can't box today because he's just stiff. But he'll box for you tomorrow, if you leave 25 or 15 cents to get in downstairs."--you had to pay 15 cents, you know, to get in. He said, "Okay, I'll leave it down there in the name of Armstrong."

So we went home. We had a little place there to stay at that time. And I went home and I slept, you know, to try to get myself together. But you know, after hoboing eleven days, you're still stiff. So he had a boy for me to box. And this boy was a long, tall, skinny kid with, well, almost six feet. And so I got in there and this kid just run.. He was doing nothing but running and long arms. And I'm trying to hit him, and so I didn't impress Paddy at all. He said, "Ah, come on. I got nothing but bums already. You ain't nothing but a bum. Bring him out of there." And so Harry was trying to tell him, "You haven't seen him yet. He isn't warmed up yet." He said, "He's warmed up enough for me. I don't want him." So then I come on out, and I was still stiff, and I told Harry, "Harry, you see that guy?" He said, "What you gonna do? Put a curse on him?" I said, "Boy, I'm gonna make him the saddest guy ever in life. He'll never get a champion, but I'm gonna turn that around on him." He said, "Well, okay, but we got to get somebody to manage you."

So this Tom Cox heard about me. Well, Tom Cox wasn't there. Tom Cox, he wasn't Jewish, he was a Scottish boy and he wanted that money. He knew he wanted that money. So he heard about us, and he asked us to come up to his place. We walked out to his place out in Watts, you know, he lived in Watts. And he give us three dollars to sign up a little old amateur contract. And we signed under the names of Henry and Harry Armstrong because we were going as brothers then. That's how the name came about and nullify this name of Jackson in Pittsburg. We thought we'd change it to Armstrong. So he signed me up for three dollars. Well, that was kind of a lucky omen for me, 'cause every time three appears, I get going.. Well, we walked on back and we got a big whole loaf of bread and a big weiner of sausage, the long ones, and we put it in there and put jelly and the milk, boy we had a feast. The first food we ate like that in a long time. So this guy took me out of the old Main Street Gymnasium and took me to a private gym. And that's where I got strong. And then he gave me money to get a shoe shine stand, and I was shining shoes at that time, a nickel a shine. So now I'm coming up. I'm eating, got a place to stay, I'm making fifteen to twenty dollars almost a week on my shoe shine stand and I'm getting clothes and everything like that because you could buy clothes for nothing at that time. These guys would steal, bring you a suit back, you could get a suit for three dollars and all like that.

So now we get all ready and I'm training, I'm getting myself balk . Over at this place I'm hitting the bag, ain't boxed anybody, just hitting the bag. So he takes me down to the Main Street Gym now and he says, "All these little Filipino fighters, they're feather weights, too. That's Speedy Dado, Young Corpus, and all those guys." Boy, I run them guys out of the ring. I'm knocking them crazy, you know. And so then they knew that I was still an amateur there, they recognized me as an amateur. So then he started me in amateur fights, and I was a terror. I was knocking out three or four guys a night.

And we were getting ready for what they called the Olympics. You know, they had clubs

going all over California Pasadena, Englewood, Santa Monica, all arounds. Well, in going over my amateur career I was at that time in 1931, it was the latter part of '31, just before the Olympics. They were getting prepared for the boys to fight in the Olympics. So they started running clubs all over Southern California, and fights were practically every night. So what happened with me, I got to the place where I was running out of competition there because I was, feather weights wouldn't fight me hardly because I was knocking everybody out. I got to the place where I had to fight heavier guys and it was all right, too. But even then they got afraid, some of the light weights and the welter weights. But what happened at the time is that I got so famous until all you had to do was just hang my name out on the door, "HENRY ARMSTRONG FIGHTS IN PASADENA," and you'd have a crowd. I packed the rings. And Englewood, they even wanted me to move to Englewood because I got so famous. And then finally I realized that I was getting things my way and so forth, and I was making money. But this manager, I guess it was the Scotch in him, he wouldn't give me no more than my two dollars for a fight, and I was the main event. I drew all the people and I also had, I also was the reason for him getting his other boys on because he would promise these promoters, "Now, if you don't use my fighters, if you don't put my other boys on, then you can't use Henry Armstrong." So he would get the whole side of the card with me, you know. And he would take me out to these fights. He would charge me, just like he charged the other boys for transportation, 25 cents for gas, and then take my dollar and everything. So what I did, I said, "Well, this guy's beating our brains out. Why don't we do something for ourselves?" He said, "You just go over and promise Marty Cohen that I'll fight for him and have the fighter ready about 8:30, because I'm gonna knock this one out in one round and I'm gonna come over there." This was Monte Bella of Pasadena. So I can run there in about five or ten minutes.

RESH: So, you're going to fight two fights in one night?

ARMSTRONG: Oh, I had sometimes three or four fights a night, I'd knock guys out. And I chalked up a good number of fights in one year. I'd say about 60, 70 knockouts. So I got to the place where it was just afraid, nobody would fight me. But now I'm running independent because I got a little money saved in the bank and I'm getting ready anyway for the Olympics. I finally had my last fight against a kid in Pasadena, a little Mexican boy. And Marty Cohen tricked him into the ring that night because he didn't know he was gonna fight me. See, you never knew your opponent. You just say, "Henry Armstrong fights here tonight," and everybody says, "Well, I'm not gonna fight Henry Armstrong." And he said, "No, you're not gonna fight Henry Armstrong." And he kept me on the outskirts of Pasadena until he got this guy in the ring. When he got him in the ring, I run in with my shirt on, with my coat on, and it was really terrible. I had knocked out so many guys, my trademark was the skull and crossbones on my robe. I was the only fighter that had skull and crossbones. And the Commission said that that was the reason these guys was getting afraid of us, the skull and crossbones. They said to take it off, blot it out. We had to get another robe. But anyway, I got in the ring to fight this little boy and everybody was hollering for me, "Where's Henry Armstrong?" Because they didn't see me in the arena. I wasn't in the arena. So when I got in there, the ring was way down in the seats, and I come in strutting like a bull. I was always going from one ring to another, keeping warm. And boy, when we got to the ring and this kid saw me coming, his manager Chris Cardenes couldn't have him to get out. He said, "Come on, we stay, you know he's trying, "You can beat Armstrong. You can out-box Armstrong." And this poor little Mexican boy was so scared he turned black, he really turned black. But he was scared to death. So I got in and I tried to help him along, too, to make him be a little courageous when the guy was giving us information, the referee, no punches and

all like that. At that time I ranged, they didn't have the patterns like they have now. And what happened with this kid, he started off, and when the bell rang, he went around the side of the ropes and I just came out and really actually I made a jab at him, I was gonna hook. I didn't even touch him and he just hit the floor. He just fainted, and knocked himself out.

The only knockout I never hit a guy and he was knocked out. Well, I saw that he was knocked out, his eyes rolled back in his head, they had to give him smelling salts. So then I told my trainer, "Well, this kid's that scared, I'm gonna stop fighting them." So then I stopped; I stopped until we got into the Olympics, the finals there. Nobody would fight me there but a little fellow named Johnny Hines. Johnny Hines was a little Irish kid out of Redondo Beach. He was a good little left-hand puncher. We fought for the trials of the Olympics at the Auditorium, at the Olympic Auditorium. We were scheduled to go three rounds. You know, we packed that place. It seats 11,000, we put 12,000 in there, just to see an amateur fight. I actually hit him with a left hook in the second round and knocked him out. I really knocked him. He couldn't get up. but they say I fouled him, and they gave him that round. Then the second round, I mean the third round, his manager just told him to run and hold me, you know, no fighting, run and hold max, and of course he did that. I couldn't catch him, he was all under my legs and all behind me and at my back, and so they gave him the decision. They said I fouled him, they gave him the decision. So he was the one to represent in the feather-weight division in San Francisco, the American trials. But I had made such a hit, they said to me that if I could go there, I could go to the Olympics and fight and participate if I go in and fight as a bantam weight. Now I got to come down to 118 pounds, from 126 to 118, and it's really making me weak, you know, 'cause I'm a growing kid. And so in order to do that, I could represent Southern California in that division if I wanted to go, because they had a little kid by the name of Mussoline, a little Italian kid. He couldn't fight at all, and they said I could take his place. So I told my manager, /es, I'd be willing to go, to try that. So Harry and I got together. We tried to get ourselves down, and he knew how to get me down to a weight, stop eating too much food and all that. And so I worked. This is what actually happened. When Johnny Hines and I fought for the Olympic, for the money to go, for the Olympic expenses, boy they bought the beautiful sweaters and all like that. I didn't get a penny of that. What I had to do, they got a tough Mexican, and this kid out-weighed me by about ten pounds, Perfecto Lopez. I had to fight him to get enough money for me to go, to bear my expenses to San Francisco. I had to fight him *see*. And I never will forget, I think she gave some money to my manager, he never let me know, Mae West. When she come up to make that picture, "Come Up and See Me Sometime," she came down to the old Main Street Gymnasium there. She came in with Timothy, her manager or something like that. I never will forget, she was a beautiful woman that night. I think she'd heard about my dilemma and she said, "I'll come down and make it..." They didn't know she was coming, but it did get out by some people and she sat down with a beautiful white clothes on, sit down on those chairs.

And of course I thought this guy, he got into season that night, but then I got money from that to go. So now I go, and they wouldn't even give me a sweater, a beautiful sweater. I just went as a little second child, *see*. So we stopped in I can't think of the name of the town, near Salinas. I think it was Salinas, we stopped there for the night. My manager, he had the Scotch in him, he was always telling me, "Don't eat too much." He didn't want to spend too much money. He wanted to feed me on chocolate bars, he told me that those things give me strength. Well, I went there. I knocked the first fellow out, a little kid from, oh, Portland,

Oregon, little Italian kid, I knocked him out. Then the second fight, I won the second fight but they gave him the decision. It was an Oakland boy, *see*. And then I said to myself, "Well, I'm glad of that anyway." Well, that eliminated me, just one fight eliminates you in the trials. I didn't come back to Los Angeles to fight in the finals. See, I quit then. So when I was eliminated, now I'm back to California. And this Ward Ross who didn't handle nothing but professional fighters bought my contract, I think for \$300 from this fellow who paid three dollars, Tom Cox. He bought it for 300. Now he's ready to get me into the professional fights. The first fight that I had was against a Mexican kid there, I can't think of his name now. But anyway, this fellow carried me along pretty good in the fight game. In less than three months I was clamoring for the feather weight champion of the Coast, Georgie Hansford. Well, Georgie was an Irish kid. He said, "No, I'm not gonna fight Armstrong, give him the title." So when he gave the title up like that, then they gave it to another kid. No, no, they put it in balance so to say, and we had to fight it out. So there was another kid, little kid, he was an Irish kid, too. He fought me in Sacramento, in the capital, for it, and I knocked him out in four rounds. Now, I'm the feather weight champion of the state of California. At this particular time there was another boy, we had some great fights together, Arizmendi. He was the one who I got my real start off of. He came from Mexico City, I think he was born in Tampico. And he was a Mexican, a little Mexican, 126 pounds, but he had the dimensions of the neck and all like that. They said when he was a kid he used to take the exercises for that to fight paralysis. And he had developed a seventeen-and-one-half inch neck for a 126 pound man, and a big head. You couldn't hit him. He's never been knocked off his feet in his life. Well, he's been stopped, but by cuts really. So now we were challenging each other for the title for the feather weight title. He came into Los Angeles from Mexico and Tampico, and he was fighting around there, but he went to New York. When he went to New York, he fought Mike Belloise who was supposed to be the state champion of New York, and Baby Arizmendi was the state champion of Mexico, and I suppose, I was the state champion of California. And I was trying to get this thing kind of threshed out and decide who was who. So Mike Belloise fought Arizmendi and Arizmendi beat Mike Belloise for the title of New York state and Mexico. And then finally Arizmendi and I fought for that, the same titles in Wrigley Field in Los Angeles. Well, this is the time, after I had fought him several times in Mexico City, they stole my money down there at the first fight and stole the fight. The second time, I got my money but they stole the fight again, so I come on home. And the third time, I got him in Los Angeles. Now this is the time that I really got in shape. 'many, boy, I rode everything, I went and did road work on the beaches in the sand and everything. and I gave him a beating that night. didn't knock him out, because as I said, you just couldn't knock the little fellow out unless you cut him up. I threw so many punches at him, this was the night that they called me "Perpetual Motion," "Other Side Hank," and everything. It came right from that night. And they thought I was gonna fall out, they said, "Why, this man's got to fall, you know." I just got faster as it went along. So now, after that fight, Al Jolson got interested. Jolson, the great movie star.

He said, "This is the boy I want, because I'm going to go back into the movies making my pictures." Before he made his pictures, "The Jolson Story," "Jolson Sings Again." He says, "And this is going to be some publicity." So he bought me from Ward Ross. Now Ward Ross was one of these guys they called the Kentucky hillbilly. He was a southerner, you know, from Kentucky, and he's a big chiseler in the fight game and everything. He was everything a fight man could say about him just like W.C. Fields, you know. And I admired him quite a bit. And when he come up, you know, Jolson sent out, I went over to Jolson at Paramount Theatres. He had a big studios with Paramount.

And so he was gonna buy me and turn me over to Eddie Meade. Well, Eddie Meade, he had known Eddie Meade, see. Eddie Meade at one time managed George Raft, you know, the movie star. George used to fight, and Eddie Meade was the guy who used to be with the gangsters back in New York really. He used to be associated with Arnie Madden, if you know those guys. Well, he was known even with Bugsy Siegel, Frank Carbo and all these guys, and that Arnold Rothstein, he knew all these guys, you know. And Eddie Meade was a guy who was used to bumped things if you don't pay off, and he'd do this for the gangsters. But he was a fight manager, he knew the fight game. So Jolson knew him through from this contact because Jolson grew up in New York after coming from Russia. And so he got Eddie Meade to do my handling, So we went over to see Jolson at the Paramount Studio to tell him the news that this guy gonna sell us for \$5,000, sell my contract. Now he only paid \$300, but now he's gonna sell us for 5,000. This was Ross, see. So when we go to get the contract, Jolson says, "Well, it looks like it's a good deal," he says to Eddie, "Go on, tell them I'll get the five thousand dollar check ready for them tomorrow." So Eddie says, "Okay, we can make money." So we went over to see this Ward Ross, and, but Eddie did the thing wrong, because he went to the newspaper that morning, and Jack Singer, I don't know if you remember him, but he was killed in the war, a great little writer out in New York, I mean out in California, then he went to New York, little Jewish boy, but he could really write. He was the one who started all these things about me, these monikers and everything like that. He had a great mind. So he wrote the story and sent it to the Los Angeles Times, the morning story. Before we got back to this guy, Ross, you know, with the check, he wrote the story because Eddie Meade told him, "Look, Jack, make it look big. Say ten thousand. We're going on big time now, you know. Don't say five thousand say ten thousand, see." And so he wrote on there, and the story broke out that morning: "Al Jolson pays \$10,000 for Henry Armstrong Contract." It surprised Jolson, too, you know. So we went out there with the five thousand dollar check that morning about 10 o'clock, and this guy, this old manager, he lived in Culver City, he says, "Good morning, fellows, how you feeling?" And we said "Well, where's the contract?" "What contract?" he says. We says, "Ross, you know we talked about that. Here's your five thousand dollars." He says, "Well, what's the paper say this morning, ten thousand dollars, and ten thousand dollars it is," you know, just like that. We said, "You're kidding." He says, "You think I'm kidding? You just try to get this contract." So Jolson wouldn't let him have the other money so this is how Raft come in. See, George Raft came in to help them because George really was making big money at the time, and he was a friend of Eddie Meade, because Eddie Meade used to handle him when George tried to box. So George told Eddie that he would let him have the money, he'd let him have the 10 if he wanted it, but he don't want to be associated wit Jolson in the deal. We never did mention it, but that's what happened, he got the money, the balance from George, and then he was set to go on from that, then he got the contract. So now, after we get the contract, now I fight for Tom Gallery along the Coast..

RESH: Who owns you now?

ARMSTRONG: Al Jolson and Eddie Meade. So now Jolson and Eddie Meade got ideas. And right away, this was about 1936, later part of '36, going into '37. Well, right in '37, Joe Louis comes up and knocks out Braddock in Chicago for the heavy weight championship of the world, the first Negro to be a champion of the world since Jack Johnson. Well, when he did this, in 1937, Jolson got the idea and Eddie Meade, too, said, "Well, now look, this guy Joe Louis is gonna over-shadow everything in boxing. We got to make Henry spectacular.

Stupendous, you know, that old saying in Hollywood. And so we got something for you planned, Hank, if you want to take it. and if you want to under go it, we can do it, but it's going to be a hard ordeal." "So what is it?" They said, "We got to find, we want you to fight Peter Sarron for the feather weight title." I said, "I've been looking for that guy for six months." And he said, "For the Feather Weight title of the World. Lou Ambers for the light weight title of the world...." I says, "Yeah, and then who else?" "Walter Faus for the welter weight champ." I said, "Jimminy, what? I got to do this in six months?" He says, "You got to do it all in six months because you won't be able to make that 126 pounds no more." I said, "You're right, I'm getting too big. You're sure asking for a big order in six months. Okay, you guy's the manager, go ahead and do it." So he said, "We got to get Peter Sarron, he's in Australia." And Jolson said. "I'll send for him right away, and get in touch with Mike Jacob who's gonna put it in the Garden." So he did, gave him fifteen thousand dollars, I knocked him out in five rounds, thank the Lord. then we went after Ambers, but Ambers' manager was too clever. He said, "No, Henry's been fighting too much. He's had twenty-something knockouts out of...." I had that year twenty eight fights and twenty-six knockouts you know. So he says, "No, go after somebody else, get some more prestige so when we come in we can make some more money." So we went after Barney Ross. Well, Barney Ross at that time had run out of opponents. He beat Ceferino Garcia, he beat them all, see. So he And no opponents, and he out-weighed me. He was a welter weight, 147 pounds, and I was a feather weight, I didn't weigh more than 126, 128. 29 pounds. So Ross took the fight, he said, "Yeah, gee, I'll draw with this guy, but can he make the weight? This guy, the way he's going, I'd like to fight him." So he signed for the fight, and we fought at Long Island Bowl. Of course I had to gain weight for this fight. I drank water, ate steak, and everything that morning of the fight, and when I got on the scale, I was just like water-logged. I had water all over me, and I made the weight somehow. They didn't believe me, because I had just fought at 126 pounds and now I'm up to 142 pounds. They couldn't understand it, but I had this water in my belly, and all this breakfast and everything like that. And I made the weight and this was in my favor, the fight was outside of Long Island Bowl, and because of it being outside it looked like it just rained. It was just clouding up, just like that, and BOOM, a cloud burst. And right away the publicity men beginning to say, "Well, the fight gonna be on?" And Mike said, "No, we gonna have to postpone it until 10 days." and then after the fight was postponed, Ross told me, he said, "Well, Hank, I'm glad it was postponed, you had a little scratch." I wasn't thinking about the scratch with all this meat in my belly, you know. And so finally what happened, the fight was postponed and Joe Louis went right to Pompton Lakes where he was training to fight for his return bout with Schmeling. and then he and Blackbird his trainer, invited me to come back to show this guy how to fight, to show him how to fight Schmeling and the night that he fought Schmeling, my manager Eddie Meade was in there with him, and I told Joe what to do and Joe told me, "It won't go like it did before." And Joe told me, "It won't go like it did before." And sure enough he knocked him out in one round. But then I went back to camp and I got back down to my real weight, I come back down to 132 pounds, 133. That's what I was really fighting at because I didn't have to weigh no more. They announced that I weighed 145, I'm beyond the weight. I went in and that night I gave Ross the beating of his life, I carried him the last five rounds. He was out on his feet. He wouldn't quit, and I just wouldn't knock him out, I mean, I just carried him. So then after that I came back two months later and stripped Lou Ambers of his title at the Garden, you know, in Madison Square Garden. It was October, and some of us, I mean one of us had to fight there. It was raining on the Polo Grounds, and we went inside. So along after that I went along for several years and, well, not several years, but several months after that. My

managers got ambitious, you know. Now actually I won the title, I won the light weight title, I won the junior light weight title, I won the welter weight title, I won the junior welter weight title, and also I fought for the middle weight title. I fought a fellow, I should have had that one, they called it a draw because they couldn't, the mobsters was trying to buy that fight off, but I wouldn't take a dime. So they changed it around and they gave it a draw. Because they had bet on me, this guy was in the Philippines, they had money bet on me, and it would have been a catastrophe in fighting, if the guy had lost. I beat Garcia, it was only ten rounds, that's what we were fighting in California in the Hollywood Stadium, the Hollywood Bowl they called it out there where the old Angels started the ball game, you know. I beat him there, so I was satisfied even though I didn't get the decision. After fighting him, I finally fought Zivic, Fritizie Zivic, he was one who...

RESH: Now when was this about?

ARMSTRONG: Fritz Zivic came about 1941.

RESH: So by 1941 you had all these titles?

ARMSTRONG: Oh, yeah, I had all the titles in '38. I won the last one in '38. But now I was defending them.

RESH: There wasn't anything more to win?

ARMSTRONG: That's right. I was defending them all up in this time, see. So then I finally gave up the light weight title, I mean the feather weight title. I gave that up because I couldn't make the weight. And then I finally eventually lost the light weight title back to Lou Ambers. They took it from me in 1939. I fought him in Yankee Stadium. See, I hit all the big spots. I fought Lou in Yankee Stadium, and they took the title away from me because at that time I was told that I was monopolizing the fight game. In 1939, I was in London, England. I fought Ernie Roderick over there in defense of my welter weight title, which I beat. And they had me signed, Count Ciano's son-in-law, I mean, Mussolini's son-in-law. Count Ciano, had signed me to fight Severio Turielho, the Italian, in Milan, Italy. He was offering me \$60,000. And I was supposed to fight Mercio Serdan, you know, the great French guy who got killed in an airplane accident. I went to Paris to sign a contract to fight him in that same year, but then Hitler started in 1939, that's when we got in war, see. So when I came back, I had my wife and daughter with me at the time, I was glad to get alive. I made the last crossing of the Queen Mary coming back. And I was in France, so when I got back, Mike Jacobs was right at the docks with a contract to fight Lou Ambers at \$50,000, because the Governor got on him, said that Henry Armstrong was over there with all these titles, and signing -up to fight over there. Joe Louis is in the Army, and Ray Robinson and every body else and all the big fighters. I was a pre-world war child, and my age limit beat it, so I was out here having a gay time. I remember having 23 fights.

So now they said, 'don't let this ever happen again, Mike, because it's monopolizing the game.' So when I come back, if I didn't knock Ambers out, I was to lose the title, and I did. Fritz Zivic really intended to beat me for the welter weight. He didn't legitimately, he stabbed my eyes with his tongue and he did everything. So I fought him three times. The second time we put the largest crowd ever in the Garden. We broke a record in our second fight there, because they though I'd beat him. And all of Pittsburg was there I suppose. And he beat me again, he got in a position this time to stop the fight on account of my cut eyes, it was a technical knock-out. But then I rested up about 8 months, then I made a comeback. And I asked Zivic on the Coast, in San Francisco, and I gave him the beating of his life then. I really beat him.

RESH: This was about in '43?

ARMSTRONG: This was about '43, '44, yeah. Because it was about '44, because now I'm ready, I'm just getting ready to go overseas almost, you see. I'm going to China, Burma, and India in a little while because now I'm fighting. I fought Ray Robinson, too, you know. I fought him in the Garden, I don't know, having a little trouble with the boys over in China, Burma, and India during the war in 1945. So the Government hired, I say they ordered me, conscripted me, to go over there, to take a sport unit) they called it the Henry Armstrong Sport Unit 500. And I took Kenny Washington, the great football star at that time, from California, Joe Lilliard from New York, from the city police force who used to be a great drop kick artist, and also Bill Yancey of the Renaissance all start colored basketball team, he was the one that started this trick playing like the Harlem Globe Trotters, you know, great basketball guy. And then we had Dan Burley. Dan Burley was a great writer. Dan Burley was a Negro who started this jive talk. He wrote a book on jive, and he was a song writer and also a great writer for the newspapers. And I had these guys around me, and we entertained them for quite a bit. So when I came back now from Europe, I mean from China, Burma, and India, I had the pleasure of going into, I studied the ministry quite a bit. I had the pleasure to go, I spent 14 days in Egypt, Cairo. And I saw the tomb of this Rameses the Second, you know, the guy who persecute Moses and all like that. I went around and I was getting a lot of articles and everything and reading about it and seeing it and all. It looked like, over there I just decided I was going into the ministry. Something struck me. When I came back home, I went back to California, and I, oh, I got to going around there, and I just started to drinking a little bit. And I don't know) just something got a hold of me, I guess. I don't know. And just like these things happened spiritually to Paul on Damascus Road, I had a mysterious drive one night. I don't know how. I drove all the way from the center of Los Angeles to Malibu Beach. I just had bought me a new Cadillac car, and I don't know how I did it, but looked like I was, I didn't come to until I was on Malibu. And when I saw myself driving, I was doing about 75 miles an hour. I was going right down the Highway 101. I don't know how it was, and I looked like I saw a white statue sitting beside me, a man you know, like a, oh, like a cloud. And this man's arms was folded, and when I looked at this man, he just disappeared like that, just like vapor. And I looked out at the ocean, the breeze come in, I felt free. I was just lifted up. I didn't feel any drunken feelings at all, and something just told me, a voice like, 'Henry Armstrong, you're going straight, but in the wrong direction,' you know just like that. And so I turned around, I come home, and I try to start studying the ministry. And when I was living out there, my first sermon was offered to me by Joe Louis' wife's father, who's dead now.

Joe Louis' wife's father is one of the great religious leaders out there at one time, Reverend Malone. Well this man had gone blind, and he came over one Sunday, one Saturday afternoon. The strangest thing that ever happened, he told me I gonna preach for him Sunday. And I never got a sermon together, I was just in my back lounge. I had built me a five thousand dollar cocktail lounge in the back of my home, you know. And I'd entertain people like Jolson and Raft and their friends, and the Dorsey brothers. They'd all come over, and Duke Ellington, well, he'd come there, you know. And I went back there, and I started preaching back in the lounge. And this man come in, and I don't know how he got in because I usually keep it closed, because every night I come home after a big fight in Los Angeles, people think you got your money right then, and I'd have to have all these search lights around there to light up when I come in, when I drive in my garage, to see if anybody's

around there, because I could get killed. I just had my bag with my clothes in it, but no money) because I get my check the next day. But I had that happen to me once when I was living in a smaller place, some guys threw a woman out there, they didn't throw her, they just had her lay out in front of my car, and I backed out of the alley, oh, they did everything you know. But anyway, when he come over to my house, in the back of my lounge and he told me he wanted me to deliver the sermon for him Sunday, I said, "Okay, I'm just trying to get something together here now, Reverend Malone. Well, I don't know whether it will satisfy your congregation or not." And he said, "Well, what's the subject?" I said, "It's Later Than You Think." He says, "That's it, that's a good one. Come on over." So he was raising money for his church, see, and every time three appears to me, believe it or not, it's a good omen somehow. So when I got over there and I preached that day for him, and he put it out and spread it all over the papers and all, and he told me, "Well, we made the grade, Today this collection after Reverend Armstrong spoke and everything, we made our quota which is three thousand dollars." Three thousand dollars! You know, of course, they didn't raise all of that in one day, but that was the quota, but reaching that three was kind of a, oh I don't know...

RESH: Were you ever influenced by or impressed with someone like Adam Clayton Powell, Senior, who was a famous minister in New York, in Harlem?

ARMSTRONG: Well, I was. I know him very well, we're very close. I've been to his church and everything, and I associated with him. And when he was, when President Kennedy was running for President, you know, for the first time...

RESH: No, I was thinking of the father. Young Powell, right, is in Congress, but Powell's father for many years was the pastor of the Abyssinian Baptist Church.

ARMSTRONG: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

RESH: Did you know him?

ARMSTRONG: I didn't know him, no, I didn't know him. I just heard about him. But I come very familiar with his son, the junior. I thought, now you know he's got a son, too.

RESH: Yes.

ARMSTRONG: This Powell, I think it was by this great piano player.

RESH: Yes, Hazel Scott.

ARMSTRONG: Hazel Scott, yeah. But I didn't, I've known Powell, I'm talking about the junior now, not the old man, the way he's living, I just can't understand him. He's too pompadour, so to say. And he, I just don't agree with him.

RESH: Before the tape is over, I'd like to ask you, Mr. Armstrong, a little bit about your family again. We don't want to keep you here too much longer. But what did your parents think of your boxing, what did your grandmother think?

ARMSTRONG: Well, my grandmother, she didn't think of it at all. She wasn't in favor of it at all, because she's religious and she knowed about Jack Johnson, and when I used to get up in front of the glasses, you know, the mirrors, and try to pretend big things like, she'd always tell me, "Get away from that glass before you break your hand, cut your hand little Jack Johnson. You ain't gonna be no fighter." And she scuffled very hard to make me, to put me

thorough; the ministerial school. She wanted me to be a preacher. And I just told her I didn't have no feeling for it. But very peculiar how my mother, my mother was an Indian, and she was very what you call psychic or religious and all like that. She was prophetic, you know, because when I was born, now this is true, when I was born, my oldest brother Argus bent over and he looked at me, in Mississippi where I was born, he looked at me in the crib and he told my mother, "Gee, Mom, my little brother. He's cute, but he's so small, he looks like a little rat." So she says, "Yeah, son, your brother might look like a little rat to you now, but one of these days he's gonna be the big cheese of this family. And before he goes on to the judgment, he's gonna be put along side of the great preachers of his day and time. But before that, he's gonna do something, he's gonna accomplish some thing in the world of tribulation that no other man shall accomplish. And that accomplishment will be emblematic of Providence." So when I had my first fight here in the Coliseum, my brother, this oldest brother saw me because my mother was dead then. He said, "Well, brother, I know you gonna win because momma said that. She made that prediction about you, and she said these wonderful things-. I just wish you a lot of luck, it's a tough racket." So, see, she said about these three titles and so forth. Well, now that's the truth, you know. I actually won five times, but I was only given credit for three. And even the other guy, he won three titles, but not in the same time Bob Fitzsimmons, you know. But I'm the only man, and now the boxing commissions of the world has it so ruled, it says I was the triple champion in London. It can't happen again, if you fight one title you got to give up another one. Ray Robinson tried, because he said I was his idol. He tried it with all his heart, but he couldn't do it. And then he had a chance to even try to duplicate it, but as you remember when he fought and I just had a feeling that it was gonna happen, because you don't break the prophesies of God, when he fought, he was trying to do it on his own. He fought this guy Joey Maxum out of Cleveland, and you know, he just stopped on his stool, he couldn't come out and finish the fight. If he had won that title, the light, heavy weight title, he was ahead at the time, he would have claimed them. But it just didn't happen, so he couldn't claim them. So it just stood up. And then as a kid in Mississippi, too, before I came, before we left there, I was a kid who was always inquisitive. I guess I had a vision of life and so forth. My mother would go to town on Saturday and buy the rations and feed and all like that, and so she went to town that Saturday, her and my dad and told my sisters, my other brothers and the other smaller children, "Now you kids get the kindling wood, and get everything ready, because I'm gonna cook supper tonight, breakfast and everything for tomorrow." Because this is Saturday night and on Saturday mother was very religious. She'd go to church all Sunday, all Sunday morning, don't do nothing but praise the Lord. So they went to town and that night they come back. As soon as Mother and Dad went around the corner, then my sister called the kids, "Come on, let's play. We gonna do nothing, we want to play." So we played until late, about eight o'clock, it's dark down in Mississippi. So my sister Mary Francis told the kids, "All you kids go home and go to bed." So we went up and didn't get any wood at all, no kindling wood. So my mother came back that night. They got in maybe nine-thirty, ten o'clock, and it's dark. And I heard them. We had so many kids, we had bunk beds. I lay on the floor with my sisters and brothers on the covers, you know, between my sister and my older brother. So when Mother came in, I heard Pop put the horses away that night and Momma coming in) she very strong little woman, she put her things on the table and all, and look behind the stove, no kindling wood. I was wide awake and my brother and sister just snoring, and so what I did, I was listening to see what was going to happen. And the strap, they forgot the strap on the wall. That strap she puts around her and ties it, you know, buckles it. So she looked around and she came over and was no wood. She came over and got my brother first,

right by his pants here, well, he just uses a shirt to sleep in. She pulled the shirt up and hit him on his naked behind. He got up and, boy, he was out the front door. He grabbed his pants. She got my sister, my sister was kind of slow and stubborn, and she said, "Get up." She started to whip her, she said, "Okay, okay." So she grabs me, I said, "Well, you want me to go with you?" She says, "Yeah, come on. It didn't take me long to do nothing. I just put on my little shirt and I was ready. So I went on out with them. We had to walk down to the road and go over a bridge, a little old bridge, just a wooden bridge. Under this bridge, there run a little stream. It ran and stagnated in the swamps like, and over in this swamp was all kind of wood that we could have gotten and everything. So we had to go over there and get this wood. We had to walk down. When we got near the bridge, I was trying to scare her, because I didn't have sense enough to be afraid. I told her the Boogie Man was coming, gonna get them, and I was making all kinds of noises. So then they was screaming, they said, "Oh, you shut up close your mouth; little boy. You're gonna cause something to happen." I said, "Oh, you're scardie-pies." Just as I was doing this, there was a little pig, it sounded like a pig. You know, you have those kind that was running around the street all the time out there in the country. So it sounded as if this pig was running in the swamps, coming towards the bridge. And my sister always liked to play with the pigs, because she catches them, and she likes them. The pig said, "Squeak," and he ran, and my brother took off, 'help,' yelling something like that. So I'm looking, listening for the pig, too, but I'm hearing another noise of a horse coming down the road in front of us. After you get across the bridge was the road like that curved, and the high stalks and everything was up. There were trees like, you couldn't see around them at all, and it was dark, but I heard this horse, and I'm waiting for the horse. I'm looking for the horse) my sister looking for the pig. There was three movements of the pig. I just heard the horse coming. The pig went "squeak" again and stopped, and then the second time, the third time the pig moved, and he made this noise "squeak," and he jumped on the bridge. And when he jumped on the bridge, looked liked to me the horse's hooves hit the same time. Plat! Plat! Plat! Plat! Four times. And we could just see the pig, the little black pig, then all of a sudden it began to turn white, and my sister said it was time for her to go. She didn't have any nerve. And then all of a sudden this pig seemed turned into a beautiful white dog, and hen all of a sudden when it turned it io this dog, it just said, "Blip," and went up over me, and over me was a horse, just the head, the beautiful mane and no feet at all, and his eyes was like glass, just shining like diamonds. They was just glowing like that, looked like something was breathing. His veins was just like the river flowing, and I looked up at this horse, and I heard my sister crying and hollowing, and I just wanted to ride him, that's all. I thought, "Ah." the moment I opened my arms out like that, then I could see all of the back of the place. When I opened my arms like that, then he disappeared. And then I went on back in and I just said, "Oh I saw that pretty horse." My mother told my sister and brother, "Well, Henrietta and Freeman, I'm sorry and I'm glad. This stove told me a story tonight. Your little brother, he's gonna be blessed of God. He's gonna have the stamina of that horse. God has blessed him tonight with that stamina. Freeman, you left him tonight first and, Henrietta, you stayed a little longer. Of all my children, I'm gonna tell you, all of you is gonna leave Henry but Henrietta. She's gonna be the last one on earth with him." And she said, "Whenever Henry needs Henrietta, she'll be there." Don't think of this as a prophecy, but that's the way it is. Sure enough, all of my fourteen sisters and brothers is dead but this one sister. Every one of them. And this sister has been in several critical and she was right there. And sure enough, I have the stamina of this horse. And it's coming to pass that I got to be in the ministry here, and I don't know whether I'll ever be placed up there with the greatest, but that's what she

said. And since these things have happened, why it seems that this other thing could come out just as well, maybe I will be this minister, just like even here now. I am associate pastor First Baptist, at one of the oldest Negro churches here, this church is over two hundred some years old, the First Baptist at Cardinal and Bell. Now ministers have had this church before me and everything. The minister they had, they chose him from Illinois somewhere. But this fellow was so radical they had to just put him out. I don't know, there was a lot of trouble about him, ministers of the churches having it now. And so the secretary, the trustees and all of the church have just selected me and another pastor to carry on until they get a pastor.

RESH: I see.

ARMSTRONG: They say they gonna put me in as associate. But I have a great feeling that maybe, if that's where God wants me to be, I'm gonna be pastor that church one of these days. I'm not asking for it, but I feel, I want to go all out, really, in this life of saving souls and so forth. Now I'll tell you another thing which is interesting. As a kid in Mississippi before, well I was about three years old, now this is what happened. This is why I say about these churches, and these things are revealing to me now. When I was a kid, I had a vision. I had a dream, and I was sleeping in my bed. I was born on what you call a plantation in Mississippi. My grandmother was a very charming African woman. She was very hefty and everything, very, very intelligent. She was freed under the administration of Lincoln, and when she was freed, the slave-owner who owned her, married her, the white man. See, my grandfather's

a white man, and my father was by the grandmother who was an African. She was very attractive, but very black. I lived on this plantation, and after my grandfather died, my grandmother gave it up, cut it up and she gave some to my father, he gave it to his sons, and she had the most beautiful place on the Waverly road. I was a kid running around there, and we got people because there was intermarriage, not intermarriage, but you know how those white people did, the colored girls, they had intercourse with them, and they had kids by them. On that plantation, I had cousins out there that looked as white as you. I didn't know the difference in people. Well, this particular night) I had a vision when I was sleeping. I had a vision and when I had a vision, I thought I saw a beautiful angelic white angel, and she was white, and I could discern myself this color. She was leading me across a stream of clear water in the clearness of the day, everything was clear. I was just a little baby with a napkin on and she was leading me on this clean narrow path over in this water. I woke up, and this dream has been with me for years and years. Well, you can't forget it. Now what happened, I went along and I was thinking when I got into the light of the fighting, I would marry a white girl. I was thinking that, well that was the way the dream was supposed to be. So I went over the country. I met the most beautiful woman, I was going to tear up my home for her, an English girl in London, Joan Jackman, boy, she was beautiful. Talk about Marilyn Monroe, she didn't have anything on this woman. I was gonna really marry her, you know, but somehow the war broke us apart. And I'm always asking, I met a girl out in Texas. This girl out of Texas, she's very rich now, and see Earl Hines brought her to California, to New York, and I met her, no, to California and I met her there. He just left her there, and she hung onto me until I went overseas in '45. She went back, and I think she, she's from Dallas, Texas and it just didn't happen see. And I was always looking. My first wife, not this wife I got now, this wife is a blessing. She was supposed to be for me in the first place, but things happen, had to go through the tribulation period. But anyway, I never could get to these girls the way I used to think, maybe this woman's going to be my wife, I'm gonna marry a white woman. This is what this dream is, but then all of a sudden, it came to me, and

it was revealed to me about, oh, about five or six years ago. Says, stop thinking about the material side of it, this church, I mean, this woman that you saw is my body, the body of Christ, my church. And he says, 'in order for you to lead this church, you must become as humble as this woman was leading you as a baby across this clear water, and as white as that snow, and as white as that day that you saw that hour, that's the kind of church I want, without a spot or wrinkle.'

RESH: Mr. Armstrong, you've had a fascinating life. Thank you for sharing some of these experiences with us.

ARMSTRONG: Think you, very much.