

Diana Bryson: All right! I am fortunate to be sitting here today. Well, virtually sitting with Dr. Bill McCloud, who worked and was friends with Minson Rubin. Thank you for joining me today, Dr. McCloud. I appreciate your time.

Dr. Bill McCloud: It's wonderful to speak with you about a very good friend of mine who helped so much in shaping the Gibbs Junior College Alumni Association - which I am the president of - and helping to really chronicalize the historical aspect of Gibbs Junior College, one of the first African American College (Junior Colleges) created in the state of Florida. So that's how I began to do the interaction with Minson Rubin and his quest to have a historical aspect of saving that history. But my first interaction with Minson Rubin was on the basketball court; Minson and I were competitors. I grew up in Sarasota, Florida and went to Booker Creek Highschool and he was at Gibbs Highschool in St. Petersburg and that rivalry of basketball, back in 1961 was the first time I met him on the court. He was a very fierce competitor and he brought that through to our days at Gibson Junior College on the basketball team. I got a chance to watch him grow and I went off to the military and to play basketball over in Europe. From all that, I would come back and we would have reunions and what have you, I would see him. When when I became the president of Gibbs Junior College Alumni Association in 2006 we had a chance to really talk about what his vision and goals were and to really get some real insight as to his passion and the love of where he grew up and how he wanted to make sure he's able to keep that legacy alive by putting together historical aspects of it. We talked about his goal in terms of in Gibbs Junior College and after the conversation, I went back to the board of directors of Gibbs Junior College, and we created a fund for him to go out and be able to buy things such as easels and [with]

some of the documents he was working on to laminate those and try to preserve them. I think we ended up buying some 30 easels in several aspects of what he was trying to do. So from those conversations just understanding his passion for his community and how he grew up. He would tell the story of himself being the only boy and the family and having to kind of be the man of the house at an early age, and doing those things. Of course, wanting to go to College and get an education. But he's always fierce about how he was able to overcome all the obstacles and be able to share and give back to the community. That's what his whole goal and aspiration was. We would often talk about issues when he became ill. I would tell him, I said, hey, man, the devil don't want you and God is not ready for you. You have a mission. So you go out and do what you can do to make sure you accomplish your Goals. That's kind of how I --in his last day or two-- as we talked on the phone and he shared with me, he would say, he would say, I'm tired and I'm really, really tired. I would tell him, I said, well, just hang on! We have a date to go fishing when you turn a hundred. But through the year, I think that this community can be proud of what he has accomplished and what he has given back to this community. As part of his role at Gibbs Junior College Alumni Association, which he was a lifetime member of, and inducted into our a ring of honor and our hall of fame for athletics. He also served as our community outreach and was mentoring young people at Gibbs Highschool and created our basketball team that was put together for young kids -- of which Gibbs Junior College Alumni Association sponsored. He selected the coach and would attend every ball game, it was a co-ed team as we wanted to make sure that we included all the kids and we had the kids to sign a contract with us, and we spoke to the mothers and fathers of the kids. The primary goal was they had to

show us that they also could be student athletes, and they had to make sure that they shared with us their grades. If they were having failing grades, they could not play on the team. So they signed that contract and we were able to provide a wholesome environment for the kids. He was very big on mentoring kids. Unfortunately [when] he was entering a group of kids at Gibbs Highschool, as he was stepping down off the stage [and] that's the way at his first injury of his hip, when he broke his hip. But he was doing up until the day and some of those times during his years when he became ill and he'd say, Bill, I can't get there, but I got a cell phone and I have a computer. So I will communicate with you. You tell me what you need and I'll get it done. That was his approach and support to me and says, that's the precedent and association. He was there throughout my team as the president so I will be eternally grateful to him and his family for their contribution to the Tampa Bay area.

Diana Bryson: Well, thank you for all of that. I love how you just summed up your relationship with Minson. It seems like the most common theme after talking with you, Dr. Davis, and Ms. Taylor that love is pretty much at the root of everything that Minson did. It seems like, although one could look at -- the history of St. Petersburg and segregation, and even like the red lining of the interstate, kind of like we were talking about before the recording started-- that although Minson had experienced all of these things throughout his life, it seems like they were almost like fertilizers in his growth and provided him such a strong foundation in being self-sufficient. He had so much internally, being this strong man full of love, that he was able to give back to the community and the ones he surrounded himself with for the rest of his life. So Thank you for all of that. I'm glad to know a little bit more about the Gibbs Alumni Association

because that's been one of the things that I've been reading about in his collection, but I haven't really quite un-earthed all of the documents yet. So that was established back in 2006. Was it?

Dr. Bill McCloud: Well, the Alumni Association was established back in 96 and the College, of course, was established in 1957 and it only lasted 10 years to 67 and then it merged with St. Petersburg Junior College, and then it became the Skyway campus. In that lifetime, as long as 10 years, two of our graduates became president of colleges- Dr. Walter Smith the president of Florida A&M and Dr. Paul Moore became president of Talladega College. We've had lawyers, we've had a bunch of educators. We've had doctors who found their beginning because at that time, when governor Leroy Collins created the two systems, this was part of the separate but equal even after the law had been struck down. But, there were 22 white Colleges that was established in the state of Florida and 11 black Colleges. Gibbs Junior College was the first one to be fully accredited, and it was the second one to open of the Black junior colleges. It started on Gibbs Highschool campus and it was a night College. John W. Rembert who was the principal of Gibbs Highschool, who'd do the principal thing in the day, then at night, he was the president of the Gibbs Junior College at night. So they had night classes until the campus was built in the same spot that Gibbs Highschool is now. So it's history, then of course as it was phased out and Reverend Mac was very much foremost in getting the Gibbs at the St Petersburg Junior College campus at 66th Street, it was named the Gibbs campus in honor of Gibbs Junior College. Gibbs Junior College was named after Jonathan Gibbs. He was the first African American Secretary of Education for the state of Florida. It was an interesting history because this was back in the

1800s. The governor that appointed him, of course, got a lot of flack for that appointment. Unfortunately both of them died mysteriously within weeks of each other. So that's how Gibbs Junior College and probably Gibbs Highschool was named after Jonathan Gibbs, for his contribution to education.

Diana Bryson: Thank you for that. So the history of it is important and understanding, but one of my main goals with talking with you and the other people on the committee knowing Mr. Rubin, is kind of getting a personal insight as to what it was like back in the day when, when these changes were happening. As Gibbs became affiliated with St. Pete Junior College. Can you talk a little bit about how the transition into being desegregated kind of effected the students? I know it was probably hard and there was probably pushback from white students and white teacher teachers, and things like that. It wasn't just an easy thing. So do you have any specific memories about that time - anything that you experienced as those changes were happening?

Dr. Bill McCloud: Well in 67 I was coming back from my career, from Germany on my way to Korea and coming home and speaking with you know, folks who were in that transition at that time in 67. Of course all of the challenges facing the staff, the faculty, and grading them into St Petersburg and Pinellas County [schools] was all over Gibbs Junior College and all that. Trying to integrate those professors in the program there at St. Petersburg College was not easy and also to get in there and to be able to do those things. So it was not an easy thing because we had, at that time, African Americans who were, of course, very proud of Gibbs Junior College and the level of recognition that it had across to the country. There was some pushback at first, and then people recognized that things change and that this in itself had to happen. It was just a matter

of time. If not now, when? I was very pleased that it went off as well as it did. That a lot of the staff or professors were able to integrate some left, went to do other jobs, but it was difficult, but doable, and they did it in a very professional way.

Diana Bryson: Yeah. I think that, from what I've learned is that it was like scholarship and sports and music and religion were kind of the four pillars to the African American community, especially here specifically in St. Petersburg. From my understanding, when the schools were desegregated, it almost felt like a part of something that everyone had built was being taken away, because it was like the Black community here was self-sufficient in its own right. It was its own ecosystem. Then all of a sudden the Gibbs campus went from being 100% percent black to 30% black. I'm sure that that wasn't easy for any of the students involved.

Dr. Bill McCloud: Yeah, and again one of the things growing up in Sarasota, Booker High School, and what has happened at the Booker campus today is [it's] predominantly majority. So it's, it's always interesting how things turn but the key is to me - I always talked to Dr. Williams about the importance of getting an education - for us to be available to the community, to be at the forefront of making sure that kids are educated. I also talked to her about my concern that a degree doesn't make you educated. So we have to make sure we educate- not issue degrees, diplomas, or certificates, that they are able to go and be a part of the community and make the team better. That "growing up in the Gibbs and Junior College mindset" and the mindset of being able to go out and be educated. So you can think for yourself and reason and understand why things are the way they are, and then overcome them. If you're not gathered with a degree and

you can't do those things and you can't function in those matters, then you're challenged.

Diana Bryson: Right. I think one of the biggest take aways from looking over Minson's Collection, is there's this love of the community, but there's also this total pride. He was so proud of the work that everyone did during his time and of his colleagues and friends and everything. I think that's one of my goals with looking through his Collection and with the privilege of being able to present- it is being able to instill that pride in the St. Petersburg Southside community. It seems like a lot of the students - I did a few internships at our schools over here at Fairmount and Campbell Park. I think those kids just need a little bit of love and some pride, and to know that they can do whatever they want to do. Then institutions like SPC, our mission statements talk about education creating economic mobility. Like you were saying, through education, students need to be given the tools that they need to survive. Not only just to have this piece of paper stating that they accomplished something. It's - okay you accomplished something, now what can you do with that? How can you apply these skills and all of these things? So I think it's, it's really cool to, as someone who's 23 just starting in my career and learning a lot. I'm really proud to be affiliated with SPC, having such a rich history and with people like you and the Alumni Association it is so cool to be able to connect with the past history of this institution, through you all. I mean it's amazing to be able to learn from you.

Dr. Bill McCloud: The future belongs to you and how you carry out your calling and your responsibilities. But one thing about Minson when I talked to him, Jordan Park was this thing. I didn't grow up in Jordan Park, but the pride and the talk about the people that

came from Jordan Park and the people who was able to make it out of there and do some things and come back. He just had this fierce pride of the South Side of St. Petersburg. We would talk about the different aspects of the Tonda house, and the different places and different things, and you could just see the excitement. He says, "I just feel Bill all of that history will be lost if I don't do something myself, to make sure that we're able to save that history and that kids can look at it." My theory is he said, was that after I'm gone, what's going to happen? I don't know of anybody else out there trying to do that. That was truly his commitment right up until the day that he passed that he was concerned about what was going to happen.

Diana Bryson: Yes, I started with SPC back in January, and I know he passed away in February and I wish that I could have met him and just thanked him for all the work that he'd done and told him that I'm here for him and for the cause and for all of that. I'm lucky to be in the position to be able to present this amazing body of work that he had and these archives in a new way-- so that students today can connect with it and feel his energy and all of that through presenting it in a new light. You know what I mean? So, What I want to talk about now is - when you were first introducing Minson, you talked a little bit about his vision and his goals with the Alumni Association. Did he have any specifics that you think I should know about- other than preserving history? Did he have any other specific goals?

Dr. Bill McCloud: Well when we asked him to be our kind of historian, he and his wife sent me a lot of the stuff, in a packet, of the Gibbs aspects of some of the things he had preserved, and he really wanted to make sure that those 10 years of the Junior College did not go without being put in some type of historical aspect. I don't know if you know of



Dr. Walter Smith who wrote a book called the *Magnificent 12*. He went through all of the Black Colleges that were created under Governor Collins and so that aspect of it and we would talk about the history that Gibbs Junior College played and that time of the country in particular in the state of Florida. So he wanted to try to make sure that that history did not get lost. As an athlete, he was devoted to Dr. Norman Jackson who was the coach, our coach at that time. So when Gibbs Junior College was no longer, there were a lot of trophies and memorabilia that was lost. He led a group of people and got donations to go back and redo reconstruct the trophies and some of the things, and got some of the basketball players, baseball players who kept old jerseys, old shoes, and things that they had, while they were playing at Gibbs Junior College. The baseball to the tennis team, golf and all of those things to donate them so we could keep them. So when we were doing the ring of honor and the hall of fame induction, and we were able to recreate some of that stuff and put in the trophy case of things, it was very exciting to see those recreations. So that's kind of how he was so fierce about making sure that history was not lost. When we went out to recognize faculty and alumni of the Gibbs Junior College, then our induction ceremony for the athletes (some passed away) but of the 73, I believe of the athletes that we contacted, or their families, there were 67 who were either there or represented by their family. So, yeah, we were totally blown away. Dr. Bill Law resolved the Course Master Ceremony and honor to do the inductions and recognize those folks, but it was amazing the numbers that showed up. I had not seen some for 40-50 years, but Minson led that castle. He was the chair of that committee and that took us about two years to go out. We had those ceremonies out at the Gibbs campus at St. Petersburg College, in the music room, and the place was packed. But

that's the kind of passion; *once he makes up his mind*. I love that. Some of my members of the Alumni Association, would say "oh Minson!" , but he was steadfast. Once he got an idea in his mind, he was not going to be deterred. That's what I loved about his tenacity, to get things done.

Diana Bryson: He was definitely a do-er. Ms. Taylor had mentioned something like that. Like he would just give her a call and be like, I have another idea. Then she would just take a deep breath and be ready to help him out, help him make that vision a possibility. So it's cool to know that, you know, not only was he a do-er, but that he also had people like you helping him to do the things that he wanted to do. I don't think any of, any of what he did could have been done by himself. He needed the support of the community because he loved that community so much. It just gave right back to him.

Dr. Bill McCloud: Yeah. That was the thing that I would share with the leadership of the Alumni Association. We would donate the money to get him to get some of this stuff. It was like, tell me why we shouldn't do it? I mean, he would come and do it. We would have him come and he would do a presentation by the time we left everyone was like "oh God give it to him Bill." So, but that was, that was his, his tenacity. I mean we loved him and we wanted to support his vision, because it was a good vision, and that's really that. That relationship and friendship that I had with him over the years.

Diana Bryson: We're kind on the topic of your love, specifically for Mr. Ruben, can you give me maybe your favorite memory of him or something about him that sticks out in your mind? What did you love about this man?

Dr. Bill McCloud: One of the things that I really was excited about was his excitement was his family. He was truly devoted to his family. At a younger age, we would talk about the time that he didn't have food and the things that he had to go through. I remember one time, coach kicked him off the team because he missed practice to take care of his family so he got kicked off the team. Then his mother came to see coach. By the time she got through coach, Minson was back on the team. (laughs) That's kinda like one of the fond things that I remember about that. We used to say, "we gonna tell your mama!" But his devotion to his family, I think really was what I take away from him. His fierce competitiveness, whether on the court or in the classroom, he always wanted to do good and be the best at. We started a coral to have kids understand music and be appreciative of music, but he just wanted to help develop kids and be a mentor. That, that was one thing he really wanted to do. Leave a legacy that says I made a difference. I often talked with him about [what was on your gravestone]. You can't do very much about the day you are to be born, and God has the day that you die. But that dash in between will make the difference. His dash is what I'm so proud of.

Diana Bryson: You just gave me goosebumps! I've never thought about it like that, the way you said "God has control of the days that you're born and the day you die" but that dash is kind of your destiny and your legacy and what you leave behind. It's not something I would have ever thought about, but I'm glad that you put that into perspective for me. Mr. Rubin has left such a legacy, such a rich amazing, just, I don't know, like that, man, he just seems amazing. I'm so glad that he did what he did and looking back on his life and being able to learn about him has been a blessing for me and taught me so much. As we're wrapping up this call, I know that you and, and

everyone else has mentioned his love for mentoring and children and facilitating growth with the younger generations here in St. Petersburg. So I was just wondering if you could maybe give some advice or, you know, maybe what you think Rubin would want the younger generation to know or would want them to hear right now in this moment?

Dr. Bill McCloud: Well I think, what are the things that I believe he would want is that whatever your goals are in life, be good at it. It doesn't matter if he's the best dishwasher in the world, be the best in the world. If you are a teacher, be the best teacher in the world, but do something that will enlighten not only your community but enlighten others. Save one or save many, but save somebody, have them have a better life. I think that's kind of what he would want us to do and never forget where we came. I think that's kind of the history and then the future. I truly believe as we go through this space, and all that, is what is somebody else gonna say, did you do your best? Did you give back, did you make a difference? If you can say yes to a little bit of that, then you are doing okay, you don't have to be president of the United States. You don't have to be all of that. Be the best that you can be in your, in your own situation.

Diana Bryson: That's exactly what he did. So that seems like, from my understanding, something that he would definitely agree with. Okay, well if you don't have any other things that are jumping into your mind that you want to mention on this call, I'll probably go ahead and wrap it up and stop recording. Then we can finish our little converse side conversation, but did we get everything?

Dr. Bill McCloud: I think so. I think so. I'm just excited that you are there working towards ensuring that history is put in some type of a sharing mode for others to be able

to look back and see, and, and, and not forget what happened in South Petersburg and that history of that outstanding community.

Diana Bryson: Yes, sir. I'm, I'm happy to be here truly, my honor. Okay. I'm going to go ahead and just end the recording, but the phone won't hang up.