



THE ALEXANDRIA ORAL HISTORY CENTER
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CITY OF ALEXANDRIA



Oral History Interview

with

Dr. Michael Casey

Interviewer: *Francesco DeSalvatore*

Narrator: *Dr. Michael Casey*

Location of Interview:

*Shelter Care Home School Educational Program, 220 South Whiting Street, Alexandria, VA
22304*

Date of Interview: *1/27/2023*

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Summary:

Dr. Michael Casey reflects on his family and childhood growing up in Alexandria, high school and college experiences, work with the American Red Cross, and career as an educator.

Notes:

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General	Childhood, Red Cross, Basketball, Integration, Racial tension, Education
People	George Henry Casey Sr, Addie Belle Bodin Casey, Clyde Casey, Darlene Joy Suarez, George Thompson, Mr. Hollis Williams, Joyce Sanchez, Grandma Gert
Places	Seminary, T.C. Williams High School, Oakland Baptist Church, Episcopal, Lyles Crouch Elementary School, University of Maryland Eastern Shore

Introduction

Michael Casey [00:00:00] My name is Dr. Michael Dennis Casey. My age is 70. Today's date is January 27, 2023. I was born 19 May 27, 1952.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:00:15] My name is Francesco and I'm here with Dr. Mike Casey. Today's January 27th, 2023. All right, so let's start from the beginning, Dr. Mike. Where and when? Where were you born?

Michael Casey [00:00:29] I was born at Alexandria City Hospital on Duke and South Washington Street in Alexandria, Virginia.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:00:38] Great. And where?

Michael Casey [00:00:40] May 27th, 1952.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:00:42] 52. Alright. And where did you grow up?

Growing up in Seminary

Michael Casey [00:00:46] I grew up in Alexandria, but I grew up in a part of Alexandria, it was called Seminary, which is about three miles or four miles out west of the city of Alexandria.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:01:00] Great. So, can you describe Seminary for us? What was the community like?

Michael Casey [00:01:05] Seminary is close knitted. It was a close knitted community approximately, maybe 7 to 800 or a thousand people live there. They lived on the side of King Street, as you're coming up, coming up King Street towards the cross, where cross between King and Braddock Road. To the left of that was most of where everyone lived, where T.C. Williams was now built, which were the folks were kind of uprooted there in like 1960, 64, 65 and the school was placed there. But that's where majority of the folks who lived in Alexandria lived on that side of the town. I lived on the other side of King Street, in between King Street and Braddock Road, and majority of folks lived also further up by the fort called Fort Ward. Some people lived on Fort Ward. That's the fort that was built for the Civil War and it's located at the highest peak in Alexandria for strategic purposes.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:02:17] Great. And so how did your family end up in in Seminary?

Michael Casey [00:02:22] Well, my on, my grandmother's side, the Adams, they were there for hundreds of years or so. And my father, I think my father's folks moved up. I'm thinking it might have been Bristol, I have to get back there. They moved up and they all before my father and in the Adams family, they helped, like I said, were established there for a long time and even helped build a fort at Fort Ward. And they also worked at Episcopal Church and also Episcopal High School. And a lot of the folks lived in that community are you know, they've been there for a long time, early 16, 1700s. You know, they used to call it mudtown because there's a lot of mud out there, but a lot of people lived out there and it was a nice knitted group.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:03:13] What were some of the stories you heard growing up about your grandparents being in Seminary and also at Fort Ward, your family in Fort Ward. Like, what were some of the stories that you heard?

Michael Casey [00:03:24] A lot of stories, as I'm just saying, my grandfather was one of the, grandfather and other relatives to Adams and the Casey. You also had some Terrells. You also had Carpenters and Wanzers and Magnites. They established the first church there, like in the 1800s, called Oakland Baptist Church, which is right directly across from T.C. Williams. My grandfather was one of the lead cooks up at Episcopal, and he basically would finish his chore up there, and any food was left over, he would come down to the community and give it to the folks because that's the way he was. The Adams they were there a long time. Clara Adams was married into the family and she helped establish the Oakland Baptist Church that has been going for oh, man, we're talking about 100 or 200 years now. So, my family is very prominent in that neighborhood. We lived on, like I said, on the other side of King Street, and we had a lot of cousins who lived there. But it's a small knit, mostly everybody in the Seminary was related to one another, and that's the beauty of it, okay, close knitted, nice folks, they raise you right and you respected the folks who lived there and I got all my first hand of learning how to be a young man by living in Seminary from the rite of passage. The rite of passage in Seminary was where Oakland Baptist Church is located. They had a tunnel underneath right by the church and from Oakland it was almost like a mile. You had to walk under that tunnel all the way down where T.C. was located, High School, they called it. Now it's called Alexandria City High School. You had to walk all the way underneath it at Grant. I mean, we're kind of crazy because we could have had a flood or something like that. That was called the rite of passage for all Seminary boys and mostly boys to become men, to walk that and come up out at the end and at the end it was a sandwich shop at the end, and that was called Chinquapin. So, we came, you know, once you did that, hey, you were considered a full-fledged Seminarian.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:05:45] And what's the history with that tradition? Like, where's it come from?

Michael Casey [00:05:49] Oh, just, it was just handed down. I mean I don't think most people would walk underneath of the ground, underground where water can come and take you out. I don't know. But that was just the way. Hey, you know, you ask most people from Alexandria, they'll shake their head and say, you're absolutely right. We all had to do that. 99% of the folks, they had to do that.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:06:13] Was it mostly boys or was it girls?

Michael Casey [00:06:15] Mostly boys. Sometimes you had girls do that, but mostly boys, the boys and young men. It was just a hand-me-down tradition stuff, you know. But you couldn't tell your parents because your parents would, you know, tan your hide a little bit, but they kind of give you a pass. You know, if you keep your mouth closed and you made it through there, you're all right. So, you know, that's I mean, that was my highlight of that.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:06:34] How old were you when you did that?

Michael Casey [00:06:35] Oh, man. I was like, five, six.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:06:37] You were five or six?

Michael Casey [00:06:38] Yeah, because that age, I was a, like, an explorer. At age like four I crossed the street and would go across the street- that's King Street. I got my behind tatted at they said for doing that, because you could get hit but I was an explorer. I always like to go on the other side and go through the woods because it was like a lot of woods on that side. You go through there and travel all through the woods, and houses were sparsely parted and woods, and they had wells and little animals and stuff, so I was intrigued. So, I did that man until I was age, until I moved down to Seminary always because I knew mostly just like if I were to take you on a tour, I wanted to find out my surroundings. What made-what is this all about? And by doing so, I found out that there was a school before T.C. Williams, before T.C. was ever built. There was a black school there that my parents and other parents Afro-Americans attended and I saw firsthand. I saw where the school, the foundation, they had an old piano half cracked, and it's been there for years and stuff. And I, you know, went in there, played the boogie woogie and all this other stuff and walked around and enjoyed myself.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:07:47] Where was this school?

Michael Casey [00:07:49] If you have seen T.C. Williams at the 50-yard line, wherever, T.C., it would be at the 50-yard line. Wherever T.C. was located, okay. Sorry about that.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:08:01] Okay. And so, what was the school called?

Michael Casey [00:08:04] I forget what the name of the school was. I could look that up for you. We did research, but it was a school that was taught by a lot of the kids because they could not attend regular school. But you have to realize back then, in downtown, they really didn't have a high school. Majority people had to go to Dunbar, walk all the way to Dunbar in Washington, D.C. in North West, okay to get their education and how long it would take. So, a lot of times you had to have local schools to educate some of the people here until a basic school like Parker Gray, Ward being formed, and I think that might have came in like the thirties or the forties and stuff. But beforehand there were no schools except for that school and going to walk to Washington, D.C. All the other schools were not, blacks weren't allowed to attend you had, you know, wasn't any type of integration. It was basically yeah; you learn on your own.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:08:58] That's great. So maybe take us on that, on your eight-year-old walking towards here, like, describe to us. Like, what did it look like? What were the trees, what were the grasses like?

Michael Casey [00:09:14] Man. Let me let me just say this.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:09:16] Describe Seminary.

Michael Casey [00:09:16] Let me just say this, okay? I'm starting from my house. We had to me, we had the best maybe five or six tall trees here. This is where in the old days we had a big house, like six bedrooms. Nice place to be. Our living room, dining room, kitchen area, there only was one bath there. And then upstairs, as you know, we didn't have a bathroom up there, so, you know, you had to use upper means there, okay. But I had a porch when you can walk in on and in the back of my

house, you had a porch in the front and there were rocking chairs there. You look over there and this is where I made my little hustle. So let me just say real quick, we had trash man, they're called maintenance technicians right now. They used to come and stop at my house like four or five or six trucks there, and they would sit back and just relax and under the trees and eat their lunch. But see, check this out, back in the day, they would have soda bottles and everything and they were worth two cents, so they would give me that. I would take that up and cash it. That's where I'd get my hustle money from. I also give them water and stuff. And from those trash engineers, they used to have like different things where white society would like say they didn't want, the black society would say we will take. And so, they would donate and give that to my mom and stuff like that, ironing boards and different things like that. Hey, it was a good trade off, okay. Then I would say, okay, I need to get out, get out of the house and do some adventure, to go on an adventure. My adventure was to walk down a hill, my relatives over to the left, my Grandma Gert was over here, Grandma, Aunt Sarah, two houses to the right and I would go cross as my folks would say, the wild side. The wild side because some people had water over there and some people didn't have running water over there. Some people had wells over there, okay. So, I would go cross the street, cut through. This is my way. I would cut through the Terrells because they had right there with T.C. Williams, they had the same address where T.C. Williams is located. So, I would cut through the Terrell's family, which had a cul de sac. It was down in a way, and I would go up the hill and when I walked up the hill, this is where I was at, where the school I was talking about. And this is where all the beautiful, it had trees. Oh, man, you had people that had some turkeys out there, chickens out there, you had apple trees, pear trees, people had grapes and everything on vines. We even had people that had honey, you know, doing honey. And I would go all the way round checking out all these people's places and stuff. And it was a treat for me because you really have to watch it because it's woods. You got to worry about ticks and stuff and all this other stuff. But the people were so nice out there that you were welcome in everybody's house, didn't lock the doors. Everybody knew each other. You had to respect. If you said something that you weren't, said something to somebody who were older, you had to, they could, you know, tighten you up, as they say, or discipline you. Then you had to go home and tell the folks that you did this and they would discipline you. Then you have to go back to that folk person to apologize for what you did. So, the reason for that and people have to realize this person could be the person that will protect you in case something happens. So, you have to be more respectful for everyone. So, they had what, walnut trees, like I said, pear, apple tree. You would go up and get things out of the tree. We would go around different place. It was like, oh, how can I say this? It was like a different activity every time you would go. Back then we were practicing because of the Russians and the missiles and all this good stuff, okay. We're talking about the early sixties. We would have when I walked over to that side of town, they had a big siren up on top of a telephone and every Saturday, that thing would go off, okay. And when it goes off, you had to go into civil defense action mode. Hide underneath the bed, hide there because if we were taking a nuclear attack, anything like that. So, you know, and that thing and I dread the fact that these folks were living so close that they I was on the other side. That thing would go out like a fire. Big, loud noisy stuff. Okay. And also, at that particular little place, that school, they taught rec, they had a recreation department. They had extended Boy Scouts, everything in this little place that they did. But I just liked the dirt roads. I like looking at animals, rabbits, go down to the creek, catching tadpoles, snakes, different things of this nature. So, this what I like, where I live, I mean, and also to build a you have a creek and to build a swing. Okay. We go out go to the, the Esso, not Exxon, Esso. That's what it was called. It was called Texaco Exxon. They were two people who looked to compete against each other. It's like Pepsi and Coca-Cola. I mean, you know, we'd go over and say, can we borrow a tire, said borrow no, we'll give it. So, they

gave us a big tire and we took the tire down to Chinqapin and where the creek water would run through we tied the tire up on a tree and we swung it across the creek and but we had a limb that we can dive on it. So, I was one of the last, this is one of our last big event before yours truly, Mike Casey was going to boot Alexandria, we would swing by and we would jump on it, but we had water down there. But we also would like, the water bed, it would go dry sometime. So, if it's like that we need to put a mattress down because lord knows if this thing would break, someone's going to get hurt, and it did. So, we were swinging over there for like time and time. We had like 15, 20 guys jumped on it and all of a sudden I was the last person cause I like to jump and I jumped and it broke. And it broke. We all took a tumble and that was it. You know, we all got spanked because our parents said, you know, you could have killed yourself out there doing that. You know, we never thought about that. All we thought about was having fun. We had to make our own fun. And so that was my highlight, one of the highlights. And the other highlights was coming on my side of the road, Braddock Road, where we had Blessed Sacrament School, Catholic Church, where my father was actually a Baptist, but then he started working for the Catholic Church. He converted to a Catholic and he worked at Blessed Sacrament. He used to work as a professional. He used to as one time he was trying out for to become a professional baseball player for the Baltimore Black Sox. He was that good. He played baseball left-handed. That's what he was. Okay. He was best in Alexandria at that time, a pitcher. That's what he was going doing, barnstorming all around places. So, he was doing these different jobs to making ends meet. And eventually he was working in Fairlington which is across the street. Then he started working for Blessed Sacrament and he worked for Blessed Sacrament for about 45 years. So, he was like the handyman and everything, engineer yeah, you can call a janitor, but he's calling the tech, what is it called, tech engineer or tech engineer now. Okay. But, he would make sure all the buildings were taken care of. There was three of them. There was a church, there was a high school. Might have, actually it was four buildings. There's a church because they built it later when I was born, they had a high school and elementary in the back and also a nunnery where the nuns stayed at, located right there. So, all them in that section, now it's condominiums there. They sold it out and they moved down the street. Now, the highlight was behind that area because you had the church, the elementary school and the nunnery and the high school was over to the side. That big area in the back we had the area of a circus or a carnival will come every year and that was the highlight for Alexandria. Every Alexandria people will come up there. That means you had the rides, the ferris wheels, go carts, the bumper woods things, cotton candy, animals, all these different things and stuff. And this was the highlight, the tubs, as we call it, going this way and that way, the round up where you stand up on this thing and you knew all that, get sick all over, throw up all over everybody. That was the highlight. That was the highlight of having everybody from Alexandria coming out there. And that was their big event out there. So really, I really like that. That was my highlight. And after that, we just, you know, we played a lot of our stuff, sports out in our blacktop, but we played a lot of our sports was over on the other side where the dirt was. But this over there, it was kind of modern. You had swings, you had everything you could do. And that was one of the some of my highlights. Just going to church and work. And look, when I grew up I had to do one or two things because we've I'm not saying my family was Holy Roly, but since my grandfather and aunts and uncles were founders of the church, I had to go to church. You either go to church or you worked. So, when I wasn't in church, I had to go work with my father at Blessed Sacrament and, you know, I was getting both. I was learning what Catholic, being a Catholic was about and also, you know, learning what a Baptist is about, how those things it didn't, you know, later on I'd started learning about Christianity. I know the difference. But back then I was just like, wow, white folks are going to this church, black folks are going to this church, okay. And then eventually black folks are going to the to the Catholic Church because I had

some cousins to go there. So, it was kind of fun and learning different prices on things, which is important to me. I always like prices. I always like to go on and look at how much is candy cost. Candy that at one time was one cents for one piece of bubble gum. Okay, you what is it? What were the best pieces of candy you had? Mary Jane, Squirrel Nuts, Fireball, Jaw Breakers, Popeye's candy, Payday. Okay, fake the soda thing with the plastic only drink, fake cigarettes. You pull it out, its candy chewing gum, puff on it, puff comes out of it like that. Um, sugar daddies, um, sugar moms as well as some of the stuff was used for us. If you had a bad tooth, you know, you want to get a tooth pulled out, keep biting on that candy, pull it out and it will come out. So that's it. And then cough drops man, red and black. Why? Those were your go to when you attended church. You had to have it as your stash because you would sit there listening to the preacher preach, you know, you was passing your candy and stuff and all that. So, and then I got baptized at age six, okay, so and then had to sit in it, sit in church and you listen, you listen, you listen and you go back to church. And then the most gratifying thing is when you have Christmas and Easter. Okay, so, you know, they some people might one of the ladies say is what is it CE or EC. That's the only time you go to church. Christmas or Easter, okay. So, but those are the time when the little kids like myself would have to get up and say our parts and stuff for Christmas and Easter. You had to go do Easter dress up, say your part and you know, sing in the choir and then by the age of ten, I moved out. I moved downtown and kind of got away from the church a little bit. I was going back, but it was too far for me to go back before a person didn't have any kind of, you know, transportation. But I could walk to a local church down in Alexandria, which is Shiloh or Roberts Memorial that I could attend or some other church. And I attended that most occasions, but always stuck with my home church, which I'm a member, good member. All these it's still Oakland Baptist Church. I'm still a member there.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:21:27] That's great. That's great. So, I want to go back. So, the circus, what was the circus called?

Michael Casey [00:21:33] It was just a circus, not they had, you know, you, you really I'm just going to step up a little bit. Bailey's Crossroad was named after the circus. Barnaby and Switzer that was called Bailey's Crossroads, that basically was named after a circus, a circus name there. But the circus we had was just a family circus. Any circus that could come there on a circus day would go there. So, it could be any name of any sort, so long as they were making money off it. That's what the school was making money off of because they were on their facilities and therefore you had to pay the school. So, the school was getting, that was their moneymaker. Okay, so it was any kind of local matter of fact, we had the same here in Alexandria now, but it's no more. It used to be over at the Landmark, okay. Which is where the carnival used to come, but he used to be over at Blessed Sacrament. Back, way back, back in the day.

Businesses in Seminary

Francesco De Salvatore [00:22:20] Back in the day. Okay. And I want to talk a little bit. Can you maybe describe like the businesses in the institutions in Seminary for us. Can you like help us, you've mentioned them a little bit.

Michael Casey [00:22:32] Okay. Let me let me just say this. There weren't too many black, black businesses except for maybe a barber shop. But this was homemade barbershop where you go to get your hair clip or shoeshine, that's that pressed old cleaners where a black person would go, weren't too many blacks that own a business there, legally business there, as you want to say. And I don't

want to go into that, okay. What you have nowadays right here is called a lottery. Most black folks invented that. It was called numbers, okay. And I don't want to get into all that. That's cool. If you understand what I'm saying. That's a game of hope, okay. That's how the lottery got started. Black folks really invented that, and then they just took it to another level, okay. Other business, nothing that I can put my hand on. Most of those folks work for people, okay. They work. One person, I have to say, and I have to give kudos to one. It was Murphy's. They had their own, um, Larry Murphy, Murphy's. They had their own-let me see, what is it called? It's called the-they pick up junk and everything like that. They had their junk. Murphy's, that's who it was, Murphy's. Only people I know had a good business where they go out, get junk and stuff. They made their money there. I can look at most of the other people were people working for different business, working for the bus company, working for Safeway, working for Giant, working for 31 Flavors, working for Lindsey Cadillac now is Lexus and whatnot. Those, they work for these people. But to say for individual to own their own business? No, okay. And weren't too many businesses down in Alexandria that I knew of until I got down there, then some. Then I started looking as a young kid and I noticed some people who had their own business when I was in elementary school, when I went to Lyles Crouch. But out in Seminary? No, I didn't see that many people who had their own business. So, uh, you know, not to my knowledge.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:24:37] Got it. Okay. And were there white businesses in Seminary?

Michael Casey [00:24:43] Oh, everything was white business here. Safeway, you had Safeway, you had Co-Op. You had the little store on a corner that I told you about that you had to go. You had Tops store. You had Hop Shop where Lindsey Lexus is located. You had, um, Presto Cleaners. You had a Co-Op, which was a store. You had the movie theater. There was a theater that was owned. You had a hardware store there. You had Peeble's drugstore that was located, now it's called CVS. You had a bicycle shop, you had, um, a trophy store, a shop where you go get trophies and stuff like that. You had a bakery, you had all those things, but they were all white owned. You had Murphy's that you could go to. You had the gas stations that you go to. Exxon Texaco, Sinclair Um. They were owned, they were established. You had a sandwich shop down by T.C. Williams, but none of that was owned by blacks. They were, you know, visited by blacks who, you know, wanted to, you know, use their services stuff, but nothing owned. And like I said, the only one person that owned anything was a barbershop was he had his own little self-made barbershop, his name was Mr. Wilmer Henry. Okay. That's what we went to get our little 25 cent haircut until we dealt with it, until we found out that wanted to be a little bit more stylish, you went on downtown and got it, got- well, Mr. Wilmer, it was the bowl look. But guess what? He's the nicest man, gave us a haircut. Mr. Wilmer was my, I love him to death, okay. He really cut your hair and stuff. But you, as you know, if you want to get something a little sharper, you got to get a little close to the city. So, when I moved to the city, it was Huster's stuff and you know you like. And they could tell they, you know, you come in town with that.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:26:39] At the Seminary.

Michael Casey [00:26:46] I don't mean to laugh. I'm sorry, but. But I love now. But I loved him and he's a great man and he also worked at, um, Episcopal and also at the, out there at the Church also.

Father's family and background

Francesco De Salvatore [00:27:02] So you keep- talk about your dad who worked at Seminary. Can you maybe describe your dad a little bit? What do he do at Seminary?

Michael Casey [00:27:11] Oh, yeah. My father was a hard worker. Okay. My father worked at Seminary for a bit until he decided to do some other work. He went to the military for a short stint, came out, did what he had to do during World War Two. He's buried at down at Quantico, where, along with my mother. My father, like I said, was a person who's sports-minded and he's a diehard Dallas Cowboys fan. I was down, I was growing up, I was brought up as a Washington Redskins fan, and I'm no longer a Washington Redskins fan, but he instilled in us to work. He didn't have that much education, but, you know, he wanted us to. He worked and he was a hard worker. He did what he could to provide for his family. One or two or three jobs, didn't make any difference. He was married to my mother for 68 years. Um, he got married to my mom in 1930 and they had their first child in 1940, 41, 44, 46, 49, 52 and 54. So seven child, we had a one another daughter in between, but she was stillborn. So, he had produced seven kids. Um, he had a number of brothers that went to different schools, even over to Washington, D.C. There was a school in Georgetown. I forget his name, but he was a hard worker. He, he, um, liked simple things. He wasn't a type of person to cause any problems with anybody. He worked very hard. Um, I more or less was more of a militant type student because I saw things that I didn't like, and but he had to endure because of the time. And so he had to do what he had to do. Take a lot of stuff that we normally wouldn't take, called a lot of things that normally we wouldn't take. But he had to make ends meet. So, he died at 89 years old. Yeah.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:29:22] And so do you have memories of him working at Seminary? Do you have any memories of Seminary?

Michael Casey [00:29:26] Yeah. Yeah, big time. I used to work a little. If I couldn't go to church, like I told you, when he was out working, he used to cut the grass, make sure everything, do the furnace, make the school right, clean the school, buffed the floors, do anything. I would learn how to do that. He would let me get, I tried and I'd get thrown around the dag gone floor because you trying to do this buffer thing, okay, and he would laugh. I remember I used to have to for the Catholics, which your you know they're- he would have to lay slats where you had to pray and stuff to kneel and stuff. So, he had to put that out, make sure the floors was right, make sure everything was okay. And I used these, we had to stack chairs and everything. And I remember one of them fell on me, messed my leg up real bad. But the most important thing was that he would pay me for hard day's work. We're talking about 60 and I would get like \$0.50. I mean, what is 0.50? But back then, hey, well, look, I work. I found out that there were two different kind of sodas. They were like the five-ounce sodas and the ten-ounce sodas, okay. And I learned how to buy the soda machine and things of this nature. But what I really learned out was to be on time, to be on time regardless, you can't be late. You have to do a great job, because if you do a great job, they'll keep you long. So, he was with them for 45 to 46 years. Okay, so that's a long time, okay. And his favorite person was Father Quinn, for, and they gave him a reward for his work, you know, being there for a long time. And, um, I like working with him because he took this little money I made, and plus, I had a chance to look at the school to see how their school versus my school and how superior their school versus my school. Their books was brand new, my books were old in most cases until I start going to, you know, another school being integrated, okay. That's the difference and different things. Oh, and he was strictly a disciplinarian. Don't play with him. My father was five foot seven and I'm 6-6', but he's

five seven. Like he would, he would as we say, I will tighten you up, okay? His famous line is every black folks line: I brought you in this world, I will take you out.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:31:37] That's real. All right. All right. How about your mom? Describe your mom to us. Also, what was your dad's name?

Michael Casey [00:31:43] My father's name was George Henry Casey Senior.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:31:47] Great.

Mother's family and background

Michael Casey [00:31:48] He had-how many brothers? I think it was like nine of them, okay. All right. And he was the last of, he was the last of the family to go and he wasn't the baby, but he was the last to go, and I really think that contributed to my mother and her cooking and everything, she's a Southern gal. She's born and raised in Lawrenceville, Virginia. And her father, they, that's where they were down in St Paul's. That's the reason why my mother met my father because Saint Paul comes underneath of Episcopal, okay. And Episcopal had what, that brought my mother's and her, brought my mother and her mother up from there to help and to give them a job at Episcopal also, and that's where my father met my mother, fell in love, and got married in 1930, like I said. And they had their first kid in 1940, okay. But my mom was good. My mother's education was she had about a seventh-grade education because back then she became like a midwife, worked with a family in Alexandria for going on maybe 50, almost 50 years. She was like that because she worked with this family. And those, that same family also got me out a lot of trouble and everything. It was a psychiatrist and a doctor. The Youngs, that's what they were called, she worked very hard. She was a no-nonsense young lady. She made sure that you clean your rooms, go to church, go to school, and don't, those were her rules and don't cause any trouble. Don't bring no embarrassment to the family whatsoever. She basically said to you, you have two options. Go to school or leave the house, okay. No in between. And she raised seven kids, seven good kids, and all of them became, um, a credit to society.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:33:46] And what was her name?

Michael Casey [00:33:47] Her name was Addie Belle Bodin Casey.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:33:51] Great.

Michael Casey [00:33:54] Lawrenceville, Virginia.

Favorite memories of his mother

Francesco De Salvatore [00:33:57] Great. Any favorite memories with your mom?

Michael Casey [00:34:03] All the time. Just being there. Just being around her. I love her cooking. And don't get me wrong, my wife's good but, Mom, you know my mother can cook. I mean, that's what I like. I liked her on Sunday mornings, getting us up, getting us prepared for church, cooking smothered chicken breast with gravy and stuffed chicken and dumplings, fried apples and all these other good things. Making cakes, making pies from hand, these homemade rolls and things. My aunt, which is Aunt Ada, my brother, my father's sister. They would be competitive among each

other to the last. I mean, they could cook. I think you got people in Alexandria who say they were good cooks. These are excellent cooks. My mother fed everybody. Once, my mother was like this: if you come to the house, you don't ask what you have for dinner. That's a no no. You either say yes or no. But no one will say no because my mother could cook everything. I mean, she was a cook, as I said, but my aunt was her rival. They were so close that my aunt's name, her name was Ada. That's A-d-a. My mother's name is Addie. So, it was when you're in the phone book, their names were Ada Casey, Addie Casey. So, they were getting phone calls and different people calling. Do you know what that's like? Okay, yeah, you know. No, this is not Ada. This is Addie. No, this is Addie. Well, anyway, they both could cook and greens and everything. But my mother was, she could sew, she could do everything. She provided; she did everything. And she always had a gift for me, even if I didn't deserve it on Christmas so that's what I remember. And always she was a supporter of me, even if I was doing something wrong, anything like this, even, you know, I was bad. So, I mean, when I say bad, I did a lot of things and my mother always would support me. And then when I do something wrong, she would support me to get, you know, get right, okay. Because she didn't want to have that that stigma, a bad name for the Casey name. And I cherish the memories of just thinking about her. Just, you know, reading stories, to when you're sick and you're ill and she takes care of you, telling you everything is going to be okay, even when you got hurt. I got hurt many times. Broken arm is I wasn't going to be around. And she fought like hell to send me back to the hospital. I got hit on, I got hit a couple of times, but this was real bad. And I think I mentioned this to you before, Francesco, where I was down on the corner of Franklin and Patrick Street, and I got thrown about 40 feet by a car, broke my arm in three places and when I went to Alexandra Hospital, they sent me home. My arm swelled up and my mother and called her boss and they came down and they put me immediately and sent me back to the hospital. I had to stay in the hospital for three months with a broken pin stuck through my arm and everything, and because I could have died behind that. And so, my mom was like, now you're not going to do that with my son, we don't. And it's good to always have some somebody in higher places that can help me out. Just think about the people who don't. So, yeah, I every time I pray for my mom and I pray for my dad, I pray to my dad every morning I get up and I say this to everyone. I don't care if you have an issue with your mom and your pop, say what you got to say to them now. Because, hey, when it comes time, that time you're not- sometimes you can't even say that you want to go ahead and clear your mind. Mom, I'm good with my mom because I did everything to the last, okay and saw her till the last time, the day before she you know, she closed her eyes. I was with my mother. Okay. And, you know, and I did everything I can to make life easier for her. I love my mom. You know, like I said, you know, I wasn't a favorite son, but, hey, I really don't care. You know, you always want to have your mother's love, Pop too. But I'm a mama's kind of guy.

Favorite memories of his father

Francesco De Salvatore [00:38:10] Yeah. Mm. I'm curious-what about your dad? What are some of your favorite memories of your dad?

Michael Casey [00:38:21] Oh, I'm. I'm, um. My father. My father was something else. My father was a baseball player, so he didn't like us playing any other sports. Baseball. He said all those other sports were sissy, play baseball and stuff. My father used to take us to different places, get pictures and stuff. He used to take us to football games, basketball, baseball. He really liked taking us there. He spent time with us, showing us how to be sport minded. And I was going to say something, but I'll leave that till later. But my father always looked out for us, provided a good house. I was a little taken aback, we had to move. I wanted to stay, it's in our father's name now. This house is kind of

falling apart but to me it wasn't and we should have kept it. It would have had a lot of money on it. But we wanted to move down to the south side of town, which we did, and we moved to the south side, down on Fayette Street and a beautiful home, air conditioned all that. But I like it at home. But you said, well, you get your own. So, you know, I could do it. And the house was paid for. Okay, easily, okay for when we moved. So, he took care of my mother. Oh, you know, like I said, 60 some years being married. Hey, what can I say? He was a good man. He was a good provider. Okay. Okay. You got to consider me being next to the baby. All the other ones had more time with Pop than really I. I'm talking about in that time where you can get out and really do things. Okay. Um.

Move to the South Side of Alexandria, experiences with integration at school

Francesco De Salvatore [00:40:01] So from Seminary, you moved where?

Michael Casey [00:40:04] Moved down to 623 South Fayette Street in October 1963. We moved from, but I have to back up a little bit because integration was coming in and I have to move back a little bit. I lived in Boston for a little stint when I was in the first grade. Then I moved back to Alexandria and I attended Lyles Crouch Elementary School. I attended that up until like the fourth grade, okay. I was going to the fourth grade, and all of a sudden, in the fourth grade, you have to realize this if you're in Alexandria, Seminary's about 3 to 4 miles from downtown Alexandria. Because integration was hasn't come about and it sort of came about in 1954 but it came to Alexandria in 1963. Not all schools in Alexandria integrated but my, the school that I could walk to in about 10 minutes was Minnie Howard Elementary School. I could not attend that. Now I'm talking about walk 10 minutes. I had to take a bus route all the way down to Lyles Crouch on the South Side, Gibbon Street and go to that school. First school, used to be two schools. Used to be an annex, you won't see it. That was on Pitt Street and Wilkes Street, okay, the corner. And the new, and I went to Lyles Crouch, the brand new, Lyles Crouch. And then in the fourth grade, a couple of my cousins, their names were Bradbey and Belts, who lived in Seminary were suing the school, Minnie Howard, to be allowed to go there. So, they actually got in first. But we actually integrated myself in 63, Minnie Howard Elementary School. So, we're only there for a hot minute a month like until October and we left there and moved down to 623 South Fayette Street.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:42:04] So wait- walk us through that. So, you- what was that like?

Michael Casey [00:42:10] That was devastating because this is the first time-well, I already went to an all-white school when I was in Boston. But it was like devastating because I'm going to a school now. It was integrated, okay, whites and blacks, okay. I had new books, new stuff, new material and everything. And I said, okay, wow, okay, this is okay. But then all of a sudden my mother said, we're moving. Okay, you integrated here. So now we're moving and we're moving from Seminary down to 623 South Fayette Street. We move. Now you're talking about somebody was traumatized because I'm like, okay, I'm going to Minnie Howard. Now I'm not going to Minnie Howard. Now I'm going down to 623 South Fayette Street. Now I'm going into hostile territory. What I mean by hostile territory, we were the first blacks to move into a area, maybe about 800, well, maybe about two, 300 families, and we're the only blacks there to move. It was some was cool, some was accepting but some weren't, okay. The school that we had to integrate now was called Robert E. Lee Elementary School and that was devastating. It took me, I think a minute I refused to go. My brother and I decided to go to Lyles Crouch because I said, this is crazy because we were calling all kinds of n words and this stuff, they didn't want me to go there. So, they my parents found out I was at Lyles Crouch. They called and said, you better send this kid. You better send my son back here to Robert

E. Lee and Robert E. Lee didn't want us to go there. They wanted us to walk six blocks or eight blocks to go to Lyles Crouch. But it was a highway, the same highway, I spoken earlier that I got hit on, kids can't cross that street. You get killed. That's the highway, okay. My mom says, no, I'm not sending my child to Lyles Crouch where he can go one block up to your to school instead of going six or seven blocks down to Lyles Crouch. And so, the principal, the name for Robert E. Lee, was Mrs. Funkhouser. It's funny, I met her later on in the years and stuff when I became, it was funny. Anyway, and when I attended the school, there was another family called the Morton's. Ray Morton and Avery Morton. My brother was called, my brother is Charles Casey. And we had one other gentleman, his name was Carl Davis. He lived on Wilkes Street. Ray and Avery lived on Gibbons Street.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:44:40] Okay, so you moved to the south side of Alexandria in 1963. Okay. So, all this happening in 63- 64.

Michael Casey [00:44:50] Yeah. This the good stuff now.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:44:53] Right. The good stuff.

Michael Casey [00:44:53] Yeah, the good stuff.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:44:55] So tell us a little bit more. When you say we integrated.

Michael Casey [00:45:02] Integrated means.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:45:02] I know what that means, but what did it look like day to day. What did it look like for you to integrate?

Michael Casey [00:45:07] Okay. 4 blacks and 800 students, white. How would that look to you? Okay. All right. And be honest with you.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:45:17] So there's 4 blacks.

Michael Casey [00:45:19] 4, actually, 4 uh 5, but the other guy, I won't call him, he came a little late, but yeah, 4 that started. 4. So here's a typical thing that happened to me and this is the truth. Now, I'm not gonna call the teacher's name. So, I get in here into the classroom and only black in here. And of course, it's the back of the bus. I'm sitting back here and the teacher says, and I remember clear as day that's why I had issues. I had issue with the school. She said, oh, she said, okay, what do you guys want to study about today? And one particular guy, I won't, you know, you know, not talk money, but he said, I want to study about the pickaninny and the niggs, and you know, okay. And I'm like, what you say? You heard me. So of course, we and I had a walk after I walked into the bathroom it was about 30 guys in the bathroom going to jump me until my friend Ray Morton, who just called me today, just this morning and it's so funny. Ray Morton came in and he's like, built like a brick house. He says, what's going on, is these guys ain't nobody jumping, we'll take on everybody in here. That guy's my friend, that was my savior. And the person that said that, we had 4, which I don't- you know, took care of him. And the thing about this was, this didn't happen to happen. Because even a teacher would, you know, kind of condone and say, okay, well, let's go here, look at this so-and-so thing. Like I'm like, what? And my mind is like clicking like,

man, I'm in a hostile territory and I wonder what my brother's doing in a hostile territory. So, what happened is that we kind of fought after school after he said that, I did beat his butt. But it was so funny that my next-door neighbor, who was a white mailman, came out and told this guy, you know, told the guy, you're nothing but trash, you're always trash, leave this other person alone, I saw it, you started it. You know, take yourself off. Unbeknownst to me, that this individual that I fought with, his brother, his older brother, went on to kill a couple of people in Alexandria. He put him in, you can read about it, put him in a freezer and think it was a Roy Rogers right here on Duke Street where Kentucky Fried Chicken is located. His last name is Breeden. You can look it up, okay. So, you know, but anyway, this is the kind of people I was dealing with. These were people with rolled up arms back then with the cigarettes in here, jacked up pants with the jeans on, didn't like any blacks. They use that N-word freely and they knew how to get to me. So, my mom, and I told my mother and she was upset with me because she said, you got to deal with it. You can't let these people say this to you. I said Mom, but this guy called me the N-word a couple of times and she said, did you fight? I said yeah. She said did you win? I said yes, she said okay. But the point of it is she didn't want me to do any fighting. She had to go up and talk to that principal. And eventually the school started, the whole area started to fade. Most whites were moved out of the area. More blacks moved into the area. And now, okay, now, as we look at it now, it's different now because it's kind of reverse. A lot of folks moved out there because blacks moved in, stuff went down. A lot of folks moved down to Woodbridge, okay. They- was a bad mistake for them because back then traffic wasn't all that going and that was called Shirley Highway. Shirley, now it's called, Shirley Duke, whatever they call it. But a lot of people lived down there. Now, it was hard for them to go come all the way to D.C. to work in the government. But now it's different now because now people are moving back in. And if I have been down to my old neighborhood and it's a completely different kind of resort back to, you know, 50-50 okay. And those folks can walk near to the metro now so they can go out, you know, and then you build some more homes and things of this nature. So the neighborhood is going to change. But it, you know, it was a, it was an awakening, okay.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:49:27] What did it look like? So, you said the neighborhood faded. What did that look like in time?

Michael Casey [00:49:33] In time it was that more of the white people who lived there moved out. More blacks and other folks moved in. And then eventually in about 1965 or 70, it's like 80% of blacks lived there.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:49:46] So when did it feel like for you that the neighborhood was changing? Like what indicated that for you?

Michael Casey [00:49:56] About 1967.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:49:56] Okay. And so, what indicated that for you?

Michael Casey [00:50:00] Let me back up a little bit okay. My memory is that the reason why in 1963, we moved down here, remember that, because John F Kennedy got assassinated then, okay and back then it was all the Beatles coming over here and crazy stuff going on and, you know, the Panamanian, all that. And then as time moved on to like the 60s, 67 people start moving out. You've got to remember Martin Luther King was assassinated in 68, by that time it was like close to 60-70% blacks. When that time happened, blacks weren't even allowed to purchase gas, only to stick it into

their car, not into any gas, into a container. Even if you had to cut your grass, you couldn't cut your grass for at least two years because they thought you was going to take that and firebomb and burn some places and stuff up. So, by that time, that was the time where things were really changing. People were moved out; people were like getting the heck away from there. Even the school, I think they start back in the 70s, they had maybe 17. They decided to cancel out Robert E Lee and turn Robert E Lee around into the Recreation Department. That's what it is now.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:51:11] Yeah.

Michael Casey [00:51:12] So, yeah, I was, you know, that was a hard time then. You know, I was friendly with everybody. I mean, I had all kinds of friends. I was- my mother and father brought me up right and that's what I like about them. And they say, you judge somebody on you know, on their character and, you know, not the content of their skin and stuff like that. That's what I love about my mother and father, because they work for this particular vote. They just told me how things were and always instilled that. I look at people and I just judge them on the fact that, you know, I look at them analyzing us. That's what I do.

Adolescent experiences while living on the South side

Francesco De Salvatore [00:51:45] Mm hmm. Can you describe the area you grew up in, in the south side of Alexandria?

Michael Casey [00:51:53] Oh, man, that was-we had the best homes on the south side, I'm telling, you know. You got- when you're talking about parties and stuff. When I was coming up because I was in like I was in a gang, okay. But in our gang, we weren't supposed to say that, but I was in a gang. It was called Afro Gents. I started it along with my brother and two of my friends, they're gone now. That was James Bullock and Johnny Piggies. But it was my brother Charles, Johnny Piggies and James Bullock. They were both, they played basketball with me in high school, they was my best friends. They're gone now, they passed on. And we would like, have like, parties at different houses. This is how we made our money on the side, okay. Doing things, okay. I can't say everything but with this and we call those waistline parties. What is the waistline party? Well, whatever your waist is, that's how much you pay to get into the party. And your parents would get upset. Parties only lasted to a certain amount of time till your parents get out. Anything kind of strange came about, your party was called off, if you know, because back then. But you also had to get a blue light, paint a blue light, you know. Yeah, that's the thing, you know, that's what it was. So, it was kind of fun. It was neat. We had the better homes. But you had gang members that lived in The Berg. Their houses was smaller, so they lived in, some lived in uptown. Their houses was smaller. We would go and how- I could not imagine how we would get 60 people in some of those homes back then, but we did. And you made money from that \$0.65. You put 10 people, you made a little chicken change, but you solo stuff like that of things too. But hey, can't go into that, because we back like I say, back then it was fun time and we were like in gangs, but we never were like, you know, we were, we you know, did a little fights and little stuff like about never no crazy stuff what I did later on. But it was crazy stuff. Like, you know, you gotten a little mixed up with somebody after that was all over with okay. Not like nowadays you take something somebody now they just cancel Christmas, okay. You know, they just, you know, they sell it with guns and stuff like that. You know, we didn't do anything like that. I liked our area because we had parties and stuff and we made the money and we had the best and we always prided ourselves on having the best-looking girls. That's what we said. But all over the town they had best looking girls, so we had a lot of parties, you know,

Fayette Street, Payne Street, you know, Wilkes Street, even down on Royal Street, a couple of uptown. If some of our guys was with us, then they moved on there. Reason why we're a gang because we want to make sure we moved to a area where we go like because back then it was kind of tough. Everybody was beefing, okay. You had the projects, I ain't live in the projects, you had the projects uptown. You had, that was a project uptown which Houston, you had a project called John Roberson, okay. You also had The Berg that was a project, you had the new jets, okay. The projects along there, we ain't live in no projects, okay. And I'm not knocking them because I had cousins lived in projects and I would go visit them, you know, and they didn't like people who didn't live in the project come to the project. So, you know, it was like that. Everybody had their little turf and stuff, but all in all, Alexandria was a good city.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:55:04] So you just described some names. Like what were the gangs in the sixties?

Michael Casey [00:55:13] What we would call- okay. Now let me see, you had the Green Lads, okay. Green Lads wasn't too far from us, okay. We had, we were called the Afro Gents, and I'm quite sure you had some team up, call up to probably the Uptowns, okay, that was it. That was great. Anybody from uptown, you was in that gang, okay. Then you also says probably a gang in Del Rey, I forget the name, but you had some older group of gangs, okay and I have to go back and research it, my brothers, than we have. But I'm talking about gangs that I was in, okay and how many people we had and majority of people you had in Remember the Titans, they were in our gang, okay. From the South side, you had nothing but athletes in it. You had to be able to be physical, okay. So, but the thing of it is, though, we did some good things, did some bad things. I mean, hey, it is what it is growing up, okay. So, but I know the Green Lads that was one of our arch rivals. They was on the south side and I know they had some other gangs on the north side. The reason why you had to have a gang, because back then you couldn't go to certain parties and stuff or you would get jumped.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:56:21] Yeah, yeah.

Michael Casey [00:56:22] Okay. We ain't get jumped, okay. I mean, you know, we had some pretty good and they had some bad people. We had some people we wouldn't mess with; they had some people we would mess with. So, and plus you got to look it like this- when those gangs was coming up that caused an effect for sports. They had to have day games now, not night games, okay. You couldn't go to- like the games were being played at GW, even TC games, they had to be played in the daytime because at night fights would break out. During the daytime, that's when the police could actually see the games, okay.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:56:55] So this is in the 60s?

Michael Casey [00:56:56] Yeah, the 60s.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:56:57] We're still in the 60s?

Michael Casey [00:56:59] 60s and 70s, right. 60 gang. Yeah. You go for a football game? Daytime, okay. I mean it used to be night, but no, they got to, you know, there's like you know, racial tension going on in the city and stuff like that that was later on. Wood Gibson had happened. But during my time, that was like in this actually like 68-70, that that happened with Gibson.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:57:24] Wait. That was your time, right?

Michael Casey [00:57:26] Yeah. Yeah. That happened like close to 60 or..

Francesco De Salvatore [00:57:29] So when were you were in high school?

Michael Casey [00:57:30] I was in high school from 1967 to 71. Yeah. Okay. I went to- Minnie Howard turned over to become a 8th grade center. Then I went as a freshman to T.C. in the 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th.

Racial tension in Alexandria in the late 1960s and early 1970s

Francesco De Salvatore [00:57:45] So let's talk about the racial tension. We've already talked a little bit about it, right, you being the first black family, one of the first in that area, integrating Robert E Lee. So, let's fast forward looking at the late 60s here, going up to Gibson and we'll talk about. So, like what's happened in Alexandria and specifically what's happening to you, you're in it, what's going on?

Michael Casey [00:58:06] A lot of racial tension was going on because of the Civil Rights movements. Um, people were, you know, busing, going to Mississippi to, you know, and dealing with hostile people like a racist person for George Wallace, another person that used to come here and cause havoc was another gentleman, I forgot his name. I think he might have got assassinated and ah, shot in Bradley. I'm not sure it was another. We have to look that up. But it was a person that got shot here and Bradley got assassinated. He was a person that caused a lot of problems. It was just racist tension, man. It was like-

Francesco De Salvatore [00:58:46] So someone named Bradley?.

Michael Casey [00:58:47] No, in the Bradley Shopping Center, that's Bradley. He was assassinated. I think he was assassinated in Bradley.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:58:51] He was-who?

Michael Casey [00:58:52] He was a racist individual. Maxwell, something like that. I don't know what his name, but I know it was he got shot, okay. So, you- got someone got shot there, okay. My memory. Yeah, in Alexandria, okay. A lot of tensions where we had to straighten things out. Little things that you took for granted, like we were starting to, Blacks was starting to feel black and I'm proud, say it loud. We're letting our afro grow and things like this. Black is beautiful. A lot of people who had these little black guys holding their little lanterns at their, they had to get rid of those. Those things were like gone or you stop the I don't. You know how it is, they have a when they have a little lantern with the black guy with red lips sitting out there, people had to get rid of those because those you know and also the way people talk to folks and stuff and a lot of times people cops would call on people, blacks, just if you had three blacks together, you know, they thought you was trying to do something, okay. And so, the police was like really hard on us, okay. The police was located like I told you at Orinoco and was it Pitt Street or something like that, Orinoco, yeah, between Orinoco and Pitt. They had the police station in the black neighborhood that's called The Berg. Why you have that? Hey. Okay, so and cops will stop you periodically and stuff like that. Same

old stuff. It wasn't a kid that I didn't know in Alexandria, between you and I at a certain age wasn't stopped by a policeman, okay. If you're white, you won't get stopped. But you were black? Yeah, you got stopped. Just to be talked to or, you know, if something was going on. And that was kind of like to dissolve. Also, you couldn't go into certain stores and stuff like that, at counters like Murphy's, Lord and Taylor. Back then, some of the females couldn't try on any dresses and stuff like that. If you tried it on, that was yours, okay. You couldn't-it wasn't like how you could try it on, say I don't want it. You couldn't return things of this nature. So, it was very hard on blacks. You only had one movie theater, okay. That was the Carver, okay. Movie, now it changed into King's Palace. You pay the certain little money to go to. You had 4 or 5 different movies. You had-what was it, one located in The Berg that was for whites, you had one called The Reid, The Virginian, The Century out here for all whites, then when integration came in they jacked the movie price up, blacks couldn't actually sit in there. They had to sit in the like the up in the rafters and stuff like that, couldn't be sitting there until later on things got to change. So yeah, things change, okay. You couldn't even try on stuff in JC Penney's, okay, this nature, okay. And you know, yeah, blacks are sitting on the back of the bus just like it was until things started to change. Start to move, okay. Sometimes Afro Americans didn't know that they had rights here. Many didn't have civil rights voting in some places until 1965, okay. Even in Virginia, a white person could not be married to a black person. That's Loving, and that happened in 1960, what? '66, 64- 65? They had to go over to D.C. to get married or something like that, okay. So, it was a lot of stuff going on, a lot of tension going on. And you got to look at it you're living in in Alexandria, the oldest, racist state is Virginia, even though we're the oldest state it's the most historical state, okay. It's still the most racist state at that time. I mean, you know, you look yeah, you had a street named after we had to get changed. You had Jefferson Davis Highway. Okay, you got streets out here, Beauregard, you got Pickett Street, Pickett's Charge, you've got schools named after people who were slave masters and whatnot, okay. Then the kids had to go there, okay. You had to learn certain history. Being that you were in a black school first, you got bad books. Some of the books were- stuff was two or three years behind time. And, you know, you get them and that's the way they want to keep you, two or three years behind time. Then when you found out when you got into school. You know, here's the funny thing. When you were in school, you had corporal punishment. Why was that? Well, corporal punishment played a part in a black neighborhood, which was worried. A lot of people say it was right on time. You wouldn't have this stuff right now. Yeah, a lot of stuff we got right now because the teachers back then, yes, they would discipline you. They would call your mother to come up to discipline you. They will make sure to get okay from their mother to discipline you. You will not talk back to a particular teacher, okay. So, everything was cool until the integration came in. So here come integration. This is when it gets really tricky. Now, you got white students in front of black teachers and black teachers in front of white teachers. And some students may come up with the N-word and stuff like that. What do you think's gonna happen? So, they say, no more corporal punishment. You can't put your hands and we're going to talk to these kids. A lot of kid's teachers said we ain't going to those schools were getting the heck on out of here. I don't mean to sound like that, but that's what did. So, they move, okay. So now you got here all schools now that you have like, Saint Vincent, George Washington High School, started off all white, now became predominantly black. Going to George Washington. T.C. Williams was like 35 to 40%, T.C. Williams at that time. And that's why they, when 1971, when I left, they moved into the 6 to 2 plan that meant one high school, other two feeding high schools. Reason why that because whites were moving out. They were moving out of the city going, moving. So, they made it. So right now, we're going to get to something later. You're going to ask me; what do you think changes would you like to see in a high school and all this stuff. Well, I'd like to see the three high schools back, but and I

was very adamant about that until I spoke to somebody who kind of enlightened me and she wasn't even from Alexandria, and that's the important part. You know, you got to think outside the box. So, she said to me, that would never happen. We want to keep High School here in Alexandria. If we did that, what do you think would happen? You would have 1 school that predominantly certain people would go to and make that school stronger and whatnot and these other schools would not get what they're supposed to get. If you read between the lines, I kind of like, oh, okay, so this is all over again. We had this particular issue. I'd still like to be High School. I liked the camaraderie, I like the going against each other and stuff like that, but I respect what that person said. But I still like 3 high school. But you know, I digress.

Francesco De Salvatore [01:05:49] You're talking about the police, like what was your what was your interaction during your time in high school, during the racial tension? What was your interaction with the police?

Michael Casey [01:05:57] Well, me, I got in trouble with the high school and, you know, I won't really get into it. I got into some trouble, major trouble, because of gang related stuff. But before that, yeah, stopped by the police, they beat up a couple people, they did something. My first friend of mine's father was killed by a policeman. That's why I had a nasty taste and he wasn't even, he didn't do anything.

Francesco De Salvatore [01:06:16] What was his name?

Michael Casey [01:06:17] His name was Chavis. His name was Mr. Chavis. The son's name is Lawrence Chavis. His father in the Berg, father wasn't doing anything. You know, they killed him, shot him. I mean, this was the first person that I knew about that the police had killed when I was in elementary school. And then later on, I found out one of my friends who was a white gentleman who lived, who went to school with, his name was, uh, Charlie, Charlie Pettit, was killed by a policeman. They said he was armed or whatnot. But when I went to school with Charlie, he never brought anything. People changed a little bit, but you know, I think police and you should take another approach to a police and stuff like that. To make the policeman more, how can we say more, more friendly is to have them spend time in the community, talk to the leaders in the community, talk to the students and the kids in the community, and I know some of the kids in rough neighborhoods going to say, well, I'm not going to do that because they think they might be snitches, it's not the point. The point is if you talk to a policeman, that policeman and get the goodness of that policeman and you get that bond with them, then you can stop a lot of things that might happen. Right now, we have a part where they don't want to talk to the policemen. In some cases, a policeman is our enemy. You ask a student right now, and I deal with a lot of kids, why don't you become a policeman? No, I said, why not? No, I'm not. Call you crazy, I said why not? That's a good paying job. And I always tell them, I say, you don't have to be a policeman here in Alexandria. You can be a policeman someplace else, you know, give back to the community. No. You know, and I'm like, you know, then you read about a lot of stuff that's happening and whatnot going on. And, you know, policemen have a very tough job and funny we talk about this because one of my favorite policemen was my pastor. He's the chief of police here in Alexandria. Captain Donald Hayes. That's right. He was my pastor, he's retired, at Oakland Baptist Church. Now he's the chief of police here. So, I used to always mess with him a lot and say, you're the only person I know can arrest somebody, shoot somebody and preside over them. But he's good, man, he's nice. He's one of the best people you could talk to and he basically talks and he started a lot of programs

here, would like work with a lot of untouchables, some of the kids here. Another guy's name is Chucky and also the vice mayor. He's a Republican, but he's still a good man. His name is Cleveland. Bill Cleveland, he works with youth and try to put them on the right track and I commend both of these guys for working with the youth.

Riots in Alexandria

Francesco De Salvatore [01:09:10] Yeah, that's great. And so, when you, do you have any memories of Gibson, were you around when the...

Michael Casey [01:09:18] Gibson, I knew Gibson personally, we grew up together, Gibson. Gibson. Um, Gibson was brought, I think he lived at The Berg at one time, then he moved to Del Rey. His father was in charge of King Cab, okay, the cab company. Gibson and I was in grade school at Lyles Crouch. We went to school together. An issue that happened over in Del Rey was to the fact that apparently an overzealous person thought that somebody was stealing something in there. And so, people went back and forth, and this guy decided to shoot Gibson and he shot him and there was a whole riot over there in Del Rey and..

Francesco De Salvatore [01:10:01] Were you here during the riot?

Michael Casey [01:10:01] Yeah, heck yeah. But I wasn't in that riot because it was in Del Rey or whatnot. It was like a riot because this guy shot him unprovoked. He shot him for no reason at all, okay, and that same place if you go over there it's by the Volkswagen place, it looks like a little church. That was a 7-Eleven, they turned into a church now. So, yeah.

Francesco De Salvatore [01:10:22] What are your memories of the riot?

Michael Casey [01:10:25] Over in Del Ray burning up stuff, doing stuff. You know they was teed off. I can understand it while they was you know then and you know just as many blacks never got justice, okay. You know, it's the old saying, you know, you look in jail, you say justice, who's in it? Just us. Okay. And so, you know, and if you did something wrong, you was in trouble. You know, the bottom line is to stop you and put you on papers. That's the main thing. That's why I said it was not too many blacks that haven't been stopped or police stop them, to get you on, you know, put you on paper. That's to me. You wouldn't do that in another kind of neighborhood. But then once you start learning your rights and stuff, it wouldn't bother you. You know, you just tell them point blank, you can't do this, violate my civil rights.

Francesco De Salvatore [01:11:07] So what'd you do after? So, you finish high school, where do we go now?

High school memories

Michael Casey [01:11:12] Okay, well, let's talk about me in high school. You're just blowing past me, huh

Francesco De Salvatore [01:11:16] Oh, no, I'm sorry.

Michael Casey [01:11:18] Okay, that's okay, that's okay. Okay, what happened with me in high school? So, in high school my brothers were better than me. My younger brother, as you know, he

wound up coming after me and playing on the Remember the Titans team. But I wasn't, at one time, I wasn't that good because I was doing all kinds stuff as the gang and stuff. So, I had to think about what school I was going to go, either go to school to go to Vietnam. So, I had two teachers who were important. Their names were Weber and the other person was named Mr. Hollis Williams, okay. They were my Black History teacher and also my biology teacher. Mr. Hollis Williams also worked at Parker Gray, he came over to T.C. Williams, and I was acting like a knucklehead, and he said to me, I've seen you, why don't you just stop doing those crazy things and just stick with one sport and do basketball? Go get yourself some, do basketball. He said your brothers all of them are good, they talk about them and say, why don't you do that? So, I did that and it was almost like, I don't like to say that Rocky stuff, but I did everything, shaved stuff off, worked harder and became one of the baddest basketball players at T.C. Williams High School. I took them to the regional finals, leading scorer, leading rebounder, leading blocked shots. We lost in overtime against our rival GW. Upon that, I got close to maybe 100 to 150 scholarships, that's why I was kind of like glossing over, that's the way, that was my way to get into college. So, I decided to go to the small school because, you know, you got to take the exam and all this other stuff. But that school right there, I wasn't going to go there until at the end of my senior year, George Thompson and I don't know if you know George Thompson, George Thompson was the coach at Georgetown, okay, and he also played with the Boston Celtics. He came out of Providence, you know, and big time Georgetown, first Afro-American coach at Georgetown and before that he was at Saint Anthony. But he had a rival named Coach Wooten who played for DeMatha. They traveled, beating the city and stuff. They had the best high school. So, our two teams were like 1, 2, 3, maybe 4 or 5 in the state. These two teams up here were like number 4, 5 and 6 cause the team down south, Maggie Walker was the best and George was the best. We had also had our two teams were the best in northern Virginia, that was G.W. and T.C. Williams. So, he came over to Hammond High School one day where we was just kicking around. He said he had his two guys, Maryland Wilson and Donald Wilson, and he said, hey, you know, you guys from Alexandria, you know, plus, he also stole one of our players named Skeets. He was in like 5th grade, but he was 6-9'. So, he took him and he started playing with Georgetown, so we never forgave him for that. So, George Thompson said, okay, look, man, I know you guys from Alexandria are kind of weak and stuff. I'm getting my boys ready because they're going to North Carolina and one of them was going to some other place Maryland Wilson and Donald and I want to be able to play you guys, we won't beat you that bad and stuff because would you like to play, we can do this. We looked at him like, yeah, sure, why not? You know, but he told us about the whole thing with George Thompson, about taking a basketball. He said let me see what you can do with it, you can play, dribble, and all this stuff and you could go between your legs. He said now give it to me, take the air out of it, what can you do with it? Can't do anything with it. So, what he was trying to tell you is that, you know, use basketball, don't let basketball use you, but make sure you got something to fall back on, okay. Like your education, because once that's taken if you can't play sports, what can you do? So, we played him. We beat them by 30, gave them about 35 points and dunked all over his two dynamic players and stuff. So, I had more paper coming in and 1 or 2 guys really impressed me was from University of Maryland Eastern Shore, small school and the school was renowned for putting as a small school, putting more football players in the NFL than any other big school around. Some of these players you probably heard of, Art Schell, for example American coach, Johnny Sample, Emerson Boozer, these are way before your time. They played with Johnny Namis, they won the Super Bowl, the AFC, the first Super Bowl they ever won. They were they were from Maryland State College. A couple other players from Baltimore, like four players from Baltimore on that Super Bowl team was from Maryland State College. Our school became University of Maryland Eastern Shore instead of Maryland State and I

was the first freshman there. So, now you can go ahead and ask me the other question now so I'm going to college now instead of going to Vietnam.

Francesco De Salvatore [01:16:03] What were some of your memorable basketball games, like moments of high school basketball?

Michael Casey [01:16:09] High school or college?

Role of sports, high school and college basketball memories

Francesco De Salvatore [01:16:13] Well you want to talk about high school?

Michael Casey [01:16:13] You can talk about either one. My memorable high school game, I didn't like, I lost. My memorable game was against one of the tallest teams in Virginia history, and they beat us the first time because we were a little shaky, but we played them in the tournament and beat them by 40. His name was Ray Jenkins. Their center was 6-10', 6-11', 6-10', 6-9', 6-6' and 5-11' guard. They were taller than the highest pro basketball team in Virginia and we beat them. We beat them by about like 40 points out at Hayfield High School. They're called Woodson High School. Ray Jenkins was their coach, he never let me let me live that down, okay. My other highlight was playing against GW, who beat us four times, but the last time we played them was for the title to go to State and we lost to them in overtime and I fouled out of that game and I regretted it, but it was a wonderful game playing against some of the best guys in Alexandria. That was memorable and also, you know, scoring a lot on a lot of people and stuff like that. That was good you know, O'Connell and stuff.

Francesco De Salvatore [01:17:19] Like who shaped your interest in sports?

Michael Casey [01:17:23] My brother. My brother shaped my interest in short, my brother because he was a basketball player, his name was Clyde Casey. Had an older brother that was pretty good, but my brother Clyde was one of the best in Alexandria. He played for Parker Gray, Parker Gray decided they wanted another player in front of him, so he left Parker Gray and played with Luther Jackson, which is off of Gallows Road. They were Parker Gray's arch rival instead of Arlington. So then my brothers, they took me out. I was a bum man; I was like trash. I couldn't chew bubblegum and walk down the court at the same time and I start dunking as a sophomore. I grew from 5-7' to 6-5' and in one year, one spurt, and I was Langley. I learned, they taught me how to dance and stuff, and then they sent me down, sent me over to Luzon to play against the pros over there. Sent me down to Fort Belvoir to play against the pro basketball players down there. Went uptown playing against some of the baddest basketball players, getting my teeth knocked out, beat up and everything and from averaging like, I'm telling you averaging something like maybe 2 or 3 points a game wound up averaging like 20, 24 and I won the player of the month award from the Boat Club in Alexandria because I was averaging like 25-point game. Yeah, that, I mean, I just like went past and my game and I don't want to say this, but the players were good, they were all, but my game was a little bit advanced and most people can think and that's probably why they as we say, they kind of slept on me because they're thinking now this guy can't do that. You wind up having 25 or 30 points in a half or whatnot, so. Didn't make All-Met, but hey, every time I run into a person that says, I'm All-Met, I say you haven't met me. So, you know. So, leaving there, going to a great college now, really great college, their school wasn't all that tough until I showed up and a couple other players showed up. My first year moving to University of Maryland Eastern Shore I played, which I shouldn't have, as

the varsity as a freshman because I was that bad. My record was I think we were 26, 26 or 27-7, okay. Now, that year I only lost 1 game, I'm talking about home game. One game, home game. So, you kind of remember that. The next year was 28-5. That year we became the small school, national small school in the country, and we played out in Kansas City where the Kansas City Chiefs are located and had an opportunity for Otis Taylor to take me out personally to the big Miles Stadium that was just built back in the seventies, okay. And I always liked Kansas City then and I always will, and he introduced us to steaks, ribs because they had a lot of ribs out in that neck of the woods, we was happy and we also was introduced to another friend of mine named Nate Archibald because he played with the Kansas City Kings then. But we lost that game to Lord Be Free, wound up being my roommate up in Brooklyn a little later on. But we lost then to Guilford College. We should have won it, but we lost by 2 points. We lost to them and so we kind of like we were conference champs that year. The following year, my junior year, we became the beast of the east. We were the first historical black college to be ranked in the top 20. We were the nation leading scoring team, division 1, division 2. We averaged like 96 or 97 points per game. 4 of my players went into the pros, it was rapid. Our record was 27-2, both games we lost by 2 points. We were ranked in the top 20 over University of Maryland. That's right, with what's that guy's name, they call the great tennis player, whatever his name is. Well, anyway, you could look him up, he's a great tennis player, okay. John Lucas, that's his name. John Lucas. All these other players, we would crush them, okay. My years at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore, I only lost 1 home game and that was by a desperation shot, okay. That year we won the MEAC tournament, conference tournament, conference champs. Then we were invited to the NIT, we're the first black team as I stated, historical black team. That's why you have all these teams playing right now, these other schools, we opened it up for them. We went to the NIT, won the first game against Manhattan. We lost to Jacksonville by 2 points and that was the end of our Cinderella tour, but we were the beast of the East. We should have won, but controversially, we felt like they didn't want us to win. How would it look like if a small college team beating all these number 1 teams like that, which we were doing. So that was my great year at University of Maryland Eastern Shore, Hall of Fame at University of Maryland Eastern Shore, Hall of Fame at T.C. Williams High School. So, yeah, you could tell I like basketball. And, you know, and I graduated with a B.S. degree in Business Administration. I wasn't going to graduate with no PE, don't get me wrong, but, you know, in some schools, most of the athletes who do the PE it's called basket weaving. Their coaches let them do that. I wanted a business degree because I wanted to use my mind in case I made it to the pros. I wanted to go ahead and be able to be my own agent. And of course, I didn't get into the pros, but I did play in South America for a year in Venezuela and came back out of there and decided..

Life after college and playing basketball abroad

Francesco De Salvatore [01:23:21] Who did you play for in Venezuela?

Michael Casey [01:23:23] Hotel Carabobo, okay.

Francesco De Salvatore [01:23:26] What was that like?

Michael Casey [01:23:28] It was-you hold on to your hat every day because they believe in basketball and they carry guns and everything, and they believe in the believer. They believe in if you lose, you might lose something else. So, it was tough there. Then, you know, came back and, you know, start working for American Red Cross.

Francesco De Salvatore [01:23:45] Why did you come back?

Working for the American Red Cross

Michael Casey [01:23:46] Well, I wanted to try out with a pro team in the United States. I was tired, man. And then all of a sudden, you know, you keep trying out, you keep going out for these leagues and stuff like that. And you kind of like, hey, you get to no's, you've got to get a job, okay. Nobody's paying you. I mean, you're hustling, okay. And, you know, yeah, if I tried a little harder, you know, my handling was little bit better, I could have been there. But, hey, I was looking like hey it's time for me to get a job, so I had to get a job. Got a job working for, like I said, for American Red Cross for about 11 years, doing fundraising, marketing, flying all over the country. I lived in Plattsburgh, New York, Syracuse, New York, Mount Holly, New Jersey. And what happens to those when you have a disaster, when people are running away from Florida, Mississippi, Alabama? Dr. Casey is going down there. When a doctor, at this time, at a disaster, especially setting up school, fundraising for United Way and trying to get these people back to normalcy and whatnot. So, we go on for three months at a time. So that was bad for me, try to get, try to go back to school to get a master's because every time I start to get my master's or work on it, there's a hurricane, there's a flood, there's everything, there's a flood in Puerto Rico. You know, I hate saying it, Puerto Rico would flood up like anyway. I would say so, but I can't say that about Puerto Rico. Plus, not everything flows like but don't put that. But that's what it was. It was flooding, places and you'll be surprised the way people lived. Trailer homes and stuff. Tornadoes throw them around; water gets up and it get rid of it. People not living in these houses and stuff and I like history, but then I got a broad history when I went to different places like Mississippi and Alabama and Florida, North Carolina, I'm talking about not your typical city. I'm talking about out where, you know, hey, it is what it is.

Francesco De Salvatore [01:25:40] So you worked for the Red Cross 11 years, you say. And were you married, you have kids, what's going on?

Marriage, children and the beginnings of career in education

Michael Casey [01:25:47] Well, I was married at the time. My first wife, she attended Hampton Institute. Matter of fact, she and my brother, they were Miss Freshmen, I didn't know that at the time. I mean, it's a small world and I met her later on in life, after when I was working with American Red Cross. I was introduced to her by Medgar Evers. He was the Civil Rights leader that was killed. His daughter was Reena Evers, and she introduced me to my former wife. They were working at, oh, woodies and whatnot and she said, I need you, I'm just making it really short, I need to introduce you to this lady. So, we were married for going on eight years and you know how things happen and whatnot, traveling all over the place and stuff. And so, I had a divorce and didn't remarried until, like, a couple of years later. I stayed single for a while and, you know, and then I met the love of my life from New York. She's from, her name is Darlene Joy Suarez. She's Charlie Rangel's goddaughter. She's also Allen Payton Powell's goddaughter, all to double. She's also Mr. Leakes goddaughter, also who's in Congress right at the time. She's born in Queens, also her father was a alderman. A street is named after him, Eddie- Edwin Suarez Way in New York. She speaks four languages. She works for the United States Postal Services. She came out of a prestigious school, did some work for American youth, did some time for American University, but she came out of a prestigious high school called Chapin High School in New York, famous school, a lot of prominent people came out of there, Sigourney Weaver came out of that high school. All girls' school, John F. Kennedy's wife attended, Trump's daughters attended, Wayne attended, the

governor for Christie, outside of New Jersey attended, like I did say, Sigourney Weaver also, Trump, Hilton, a young lady who married the prince in one of the countries over there. She came out of there. So, it's a prestigious school, all girls. So, it puts out a lot of famous people who came out of that school. So, yeah, I've been married to her, we celebrated our 25th wedding anniversary December 31st. She's away right now with our other grandchildren over in Europe, in the Netherlands and she'll be back February the 1st, and I also have a son named Michael. I also have a daughter; her name is Nicole. I call her Nicole Casey, but she goes by Nicole Washington, that's my daughter, and my wife also had a daughter called Jasmine, okay. Previous marriage, we both have, but we all consider those our kids and everything. So big family, big grandkids, a lot of grandkids now, whatnot. Can't name them all, but I just, you know, like doing what we're doing. Just moving this segue, when I was with American Red Cross, I couldn't have the opportunity to go back to school. As I stated, I would be ready to go, you know, start school. And then, like I said, a hurricane would start. So, all that happened and when I got a divorce, I was like out for a while. I wouldn't do anything and I'd start leaving Red Cross. So, one, this young lady, I said, man, I'm tired of Red Cross. I mean, it was just crazy, okay, and so I started working in the school system. Got my feet kind of wet a little bit and I said to myself, man, this is kind of nice. So, I started just like a person who works with the kids or anything and then one of the principals said, hey, you do great with the kids and stuff, and I told my mother about this. She says, don't go into teaching. She said, if you go into teaching, they're going to do everything that you did, what you did. She said, please don't. So, she said, hey, this is an opportunity for you to go to back to school, get your masters, get paid for it, special education. I said oh yeah, where? George Mason University. I said, You sure? She said, Yeah, I'm going to give you an opportunity. What's your name? So, boom, I took it, got my master's, start working as a teacher, Special Ed at Hammond Middle School. I did that for like, going on maybe like 15 years or so. Then it dawned on me before that, I said wait a minute I'm doing this, I need more money because I just switched. I mean, if there's a hope, teachers weren't paying that much, okay. So, the only way for you to move up and use your brain. I kept going back and saying well, man, I need to I need to go back and get something else. So, I started on my doctorate, okay. Doctor in Education Supervision. Funny thing about that, when you're in, it depends on or who likes you whatnot in school they give certain breaks, so I'm not, you know, squawking. So, by that time I'm working on my doctorate but in the meantime I wanted to become Assistant Principal and they were saying, well, you need this. I said, well, I'm already in my, I'm like in here, but they said, no you got to have this. So, I had to go back and get a close to another master's from University of Virginia. So, I got my license for, administrative license from University of Virginia and I finished up my doctorate and I left Alexandria City Public Schools and I went to Washington, D.C. at one of the most toughest high school in the district, Anacostia High School. And I went over there as Assistant Principal, I was there for about 3 years and I went to Marymount Washington because of politics and whatnot, moving around. And then all of a sudden I said to myself, wow, you know, I did what I did, I got my experience, let me go back to Alexandria. So when I came over here there wasn't anything open over here, you know, except for the detention center next door that I knew the teacher. I knew the principal, because the principal was the Principal at Anacostia, he was over there. So, I start running the ORDOC program, ORDOC is a program where you handle people who are not legally here and you teach them and try to teach them English and everything before they get deported back to their country. So, I did that for like 4, 5, maybe 6 months that, then all of a sudden I said, well, I'm about to go for principalship again. So, this opened up and this was kind of unique because it was part of my dissertation. My dissertation was securing, mentoring and development, caring about saving every youth, that's the acronym of my name, Michael D. Casey. So, and I looked at this program and this program was like affiliated with the detention center, and I

looked at the school system and I said, okay, well, look, man, I can do principalship here and be a 1 man show with the folks I got here because the students I have here, they're equal to, 1 student is equal to like 15 students. They're in here and as we say for various reasons and stuff, which I can't, we talked about earlier, different reasons why they're in here, okay.

Francesco De Salvatore [01:33:25] Really quick, tell us where we are.

Work at the Shelter Care Home School Educational program

Michael Casey [01:33:26] Okay. We're at the Shelter Care Home School Educational program. This is the education for part from Alexandria City Public Schools. Upstairs is the shelter care program which is separate, separate entity. They house students who have been placed in here by the court for 90 days or more, or the students who they receive from the detention center or they receive from 2 other counties, they receive them from Arlington County, Falls Church and also Annandale in some cases, and they come in and we work with those students and make sure we teach them. We use, do the same school as regular school, follow ACPS guidelines, okay. The curriculum and their curriculum is our curriculum because it's Virginia curriculum and we work with them, keep in contact with their teachers and everything, work with them, get their grades, get attendance, get them in some kind of normalcy, get them back on track to when they leave here they're ready to go return to school and become a model student. Now, some do and some don't. Some come back, some go to the detention center. Some go to alternative schools that went in here like CBS, CFC, Satellite and some go to other school. So, it's an opening experience. We have something like maybe 10 to 14 students that we deal with, you know, and like I, you know, each one of them have their own personality. But the thing of it is, is you treat them, you treat them like, you treat them like they're your family and they respect you for that and they will do everything they can in their power-well first to try to get out of here, but they will also do the work for you if you work with them and you show them that it's not just education, it's also how you deal with people on a daily basis. A lot of it is not education that got them in here, it's their behavior and how they were approached by people and how they felt like unwanted, tossed away, no good to society. If they feel no good to society, why do you think they're going to be working in school? Why do you think they do those things they do? And not only, you know, you try to work with them, with their parents or, you know, in other schools and you counsel them which I do, and I just don't give up on them, okay. I look at them like I look at myself and I know how I was at school. So, a lot of stuff that they do I've already invented most of that stuff and they like me because I'm a straight talker and I don't pull any punches to them. Their personal business is their personal business, okay. When they get out of here, I want them to make sure that they're doing something okay, positive to society and also to give back if they can, okay. And in some cases, I have some of them come back and speak to the class, too, okay. Because sometimes, you know, kids don't like to really hear me, and students, teachers don't like to hear me talk. They like to hear, talk to their peers because a peer sometimes can get them because there's new things, new language, new stuff that's out. But it's always that old thing that's not old, it's jail. That remains the same, okay. So, I like the kids, I like the setting, and I like what I do and I probably have 2 more years less to go because it would be like 33 years in education. I never thought that I would be this long in it.

Francesco De Salvatore [01:36:49] Amazing.

Michael Casey [01:36:50] Yeah.

Francesco De Salvatore [01:36:50] That's such a long time. Do you have any favorite memories with students working here? What are some of your fondest memories?

Memories of students

Michael Casey [01:36:59] My fondest memory is a student who doesn't come back, okay. My other fondest memories is when they come and they actually give me a hug and say that I made a difference in their life. And my return is saying you made a difference in my life also. That's the most rewarding. You know, the fulfilling thing is to make sure they're here, they're safe and when they leave it, they become safe, okay. That's the important part. And the only thing that really gets you is that I've taught so maybe thousands and thousands and thousands and thousands and thousands of students. It's hard for me to remember a student when I walk out here because the famous line after 30 years, do you remember me? And my famous line is, do you owe me money? So that's the icebreaker. And I say, look at me and I say, yeah, sure, I do remember you. If I touched you, I'm glad it's you. And I hope I made a difference in your life, as I said, because you definitely made a difference in my life.

Francesco De Salvatore [01:37:53] That's great. As we close out, is there anything that we haven't talked about, that you want to include, and it doesn't have to be on this either. Is it anything that you want to make sure we get on tape?

Life lessons

Michael Casey [01:38:10] Someone's most important lesson in life?

Francesco De Salvatore [01:38:13] Yeah, those are usually my closing. So if you want. .

Michael Casey [01:38:19] No, you close me out.

Francesco De Salvatore [01:38:21] But is there anything else from your life you want to talk about before?

Michael Casey [01:38:25] Yeah. I'm a somewhat of a history buff, and I'm planning on going back to school, uh, to get my Ph.D. in history. I find it intriguing to sit with other folks and learn. You learn something new every day. You can't think you're a pan and know every daggum thing. I learn by my students, they teach me things, automation and technology is really moving forward. I'd like to learn a little bit more about that, but history is, you know, I want to learn more. You can never learn too much of history and not just history, you know abroad in Virginia here, I want to learn, you know, throughout the states and throughout, you know, not only here but maybe abroad also. But mainly I like to know about the states and stuff and, you know, different things. Students now, they do not learn about history and we got all these other different states who, um, this is my pet peeve. You're going to have this trouble and dissension and I hope I'm saying the word right, issues with all folks in life. You know, we're supposed to be like one regardless of color, but if you're teaching different history, you're going to come to different conclusions. And if you're teaching the right history, if everyone's teaching that, you come to a better conclusion, which means like if you're teaching some stuff that you say, we're not going to count that and I'm teaching this that we're going to count that, that's an issue for me. I believe in teaching history like it's supposed to be taught. If you teach history to where it is, the history will not repeat itself. And even when you get to that so

that you don't repeat it, you could look at that. But the way people are doing nowadays, they want to teach what they want to teach is history and cut other things out. I have a issue with that.

Francesco De Salvatore [01:40:24] No, thank you for sharing that. That's great. I mean, I think as we close out, like I'm curious, you wanted to talk about, I guess what were the was important lessons from your life, what were the most important lessons you've learned from your life?

Michael Casey [01:40:42] The most important lesson in life is to: number 1 be honest with yourself. You cannot help anyone unless you are honest with yourself, if you're not right with yourself. The 2nd most important thing is to treat everybody like how you want to be treated. Try to make a better, better, better world. Try to be a fader. Fader means that I'm sitting right here now talking to a young man about things that I went through, and he's learned some things from me and I've learned some things from him in the meantime and my time, when I'm passed on, he'll be sitting in his seat and it'll be another person across him and he'll be sharing that information to that particular person. It could be a student or whatnot, okay, alright. So, I believe in passing things on, passing things down and I also believe in trying to trying to leave this planet a better place than what it was when I grew up. Making a dent in society, a good dent. That's what I believe in.

Francesco De Salvatore [01:41:46] And if you could hold on to any memory from your life, and it could be memories.

Michael Casey [01:41:51] Seminary.

Francesco De Salvatore [01:41:53] Seminary?

Michael Casey [01:41:54] I love Seminary. I mean, there is nothing like waking up in the morning, smelling the spring air and getting out the smell of your mom's cooking the way they cook, then you run out the door and go any place you want to, and you could do anything that you want, okay and feel good about it. See all these folks, you know, screaming at you, you know. Michael, what are you doing over here, what's happening over here? And you're walking around observing, I'm exploring. Look, no, look, nope, no problems. Nobody, you know, messing with you and stuff. That's what I like. I like the freedom of that. I like the freedom of being able to go to somebody's house, knock on the door and they welcome you in. Door's not locked, your door's not locked. Can't do that nowadays, okay. Can't do that. And also, you know, going on little hayrides, okay. Different things like that in the country. I mean, that's country, you know, looking at turkeys and stuff.

Francesco De Salvatore [01:42:50] I know. That's amazing.

Michael Casey [01:42:51] You know, you look at the turkey, like and having my uncle come out and telling me, quit throwing rocks at my turkey, boy, you know, I'm a call your father. Hey, I stop, right like then, okay. You know, and then, you know, see and apologize and then moving on and just walk around and just I love this so much that I couldn't wait to get home to do that. I slept better because I traveled all over the place and when I finished doing what I had to do, I was hot and tired and conked on out, okay. Funny thing when I was going, this is true, when I was going to run away from home. This is the God's truth. I would, you know, it always be at night and as far as I would get is to call, I call it my Grandma Gert's house- Grandma Gert's she's an Adams, and I would get to her house and I would look at TV, and she'd say what are you getting ready to do? I

said, I'm running away. She says, you're going to run away? I said, yeah, I'm going to run away. She said, I'll hide you and won't nobody find you, so go in there, here's some milk, some cookies, sit in there and eat, the movie come on and I fall asleep and all of a sudden my mother come in. There you are. How did she find me? I don't know Mike how she found you, maybe you were snoring or something like that but it's time for you to go home and after all these years, I always thought she didn't tell on me or anything like this. But the funny part of it is, though, she looked after me and she made sure back then to call my folks and say, hey, Mike's right here. Come on down here and pick him up and whatnot and don't do anything. He was just and those were memories. I love Grandma Gert. I mean, that was, that was one in my heart, and I love my grandmother, too, that I remember, but Grandma Gert was Grandma Gert. She could cook food, like I don't know what too. But yeah, Seminary, most important part. I like Southside but Seminary was the innocent part of my life. Moving to the city was becoming the city because the girls didn't want to talk to you unless you had a bicycle. I didn't have a bicycle. Seminary I didn't have to have a bicycle. First thing they say to you, you're looking nice, do you have a bike? No.

Francesco De Salvatore [01:45:01] No.

Michael Casey [01:45:02] So Mother had to get me a bike little later. But that was the funny part. But no, absolutely. I like, I like Seminary. I like South Side. That made me look at things different, okay. I became like, harder. Up there was, you know, softer, it was like everybody knew everybody. When you enter the city is different. Sports was different. Harder, okay. Because, you know, you're competing against people who could really play. I'm not saying up there couldn't play, but when I moved to the city it was a little different, but that's fine.

Francesco De Salvatore [01:45:33] That's great. Well, Dr. Mike, is there anything else before we close?

Michael Casey [01:45:38] No, no, I'm sorry. No, nothing, if I can scan through. We talked about everything in here. How would you like to remember? How would your legacy want to be left behind? That I was a nice person, I gave back. Also, I want to let you know that I'm on several different committees here in Alexandria. One of my favorite committee is the Scholarship Fund of Alexandria. I've been a chairman for the last 5 years, we've raised over millions of dollars, 2 or 3 or 4 million dollars a year. We do scholarship for our students. I'm also part of Kappa Alpha PSI Fraternity Inc., located in the Richmond Highway. They do great work. They do STEM activity with the local elementary school here called Patrick Henry. They also do Guide Right. They also do fundraising for students to get scholarships, also at George Mason, are good to win. That's a great organization. I'm also a mason, 33rd degree mason out of the Washington, D.C. area. We do fundraising with students. We work in communities for other folks. I'm also a life member of the Urban League, National Urban League, life member of Kappa Alpha PSI organization, also life member of the NAACP, life member. I believe in community and giving back to the community. I'm also a member of the DPC, Department of Progressive Club, Departmental Progressive Club, okay, DPC. I believe in giving back to the community. I like to put my money and everything to work. I'm also a philanthropist, I have a couple of scholarships of my own. I have the Michael LeBron, one of the Michael LeBron scholarships, those are my nephews. One was a basketball player, star at T.C. Williams High School. The other one was a military individual and they both passed on at an early age. One was 31 and the other was 46. I do a scholarship fund for them every year, and also I do scholarships for everybody else also. So, I like to give back to say, plus I donate

to a lot of different charities and things of this nature, and I don't just talk the talk and walk the walk, I try to do the best I can. But, also I want to say a special shout out to my cousin, she's instrumental in me being where I'm at also, her name is Joyce Sanchez, she's also a Casey, she lives in Wood Place. If it wasn't for her, I really probably wouldn't go choose this field of the education field. I give my hats and everything off, but I also want to thank Mr. Dawkins, a fine gentleman. We call him old folks. If it wasn't for him, I probably wouldn't be doing these things with community service. He is instrumental in opening up the basketball area for a lot of youths, especially running adult basketball, like pro leagues in Alexandria and I have to say to him, when he was doing these things, we didn't have this crime, anything like, crime was down when we had him. Dawkins is an influential person in my life, such as his brother, who is Judge Dawkins and also his other brother. Brother Dawkins is my fraternity brother, for the Alpha Kappa Alpha Psi who also used to write a couple music and play with the Blackbirds from Howard University and a great musician and he brings a lot of talent here to Alexandria, and he's taught a lot of people who are now playing, making money in Alexandria, different places like this. So my hat's off to that family. And like I said, and especially Dawkins, who always let you know that don't forget where you come from, share what you have. Be a good person, help other people who are less fortunate than you are and I owe a lot to him and God bless Dawkins family and everybody else who helped me through life. Amen.

Francesco De Salvatore [01:50:01] That's great. And thank you Dr. Mike, you're amazing. Thank you so much for this.

Michael Casey [01:50:07] And you too, you too. I really appreciate that. I know we just we get to talk. You know how we are. We touch the surface, okay, but I just want to say thank you for giving me an opportunity to share some things with you and also Dr. Moon. Dr. Moon, God bless her and her family. Dr. Moon is also instrumental in things for me. Also, she did a lot of the groundwork regarding doing the research on my parents and my grandparents and everything in Seminary. My hat's off to her. She's so dynamic, my hat's off to her. She is fantastic. God bless her and her family.