

**THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM**

**INTERVIEW WITH:** VICTOR JULES-LOUIS (VJL)  
**INTERVIEWER:** SHARON ZANE (SZ)  
**LOCATION:** THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART  
**DATE:** DECEMBER 11, 1998

**BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE 1**

SZ: This is an interview with Victor Jules-Louis for The Museum of Modern Art Oral History Project. It's the 11<sup>th</sup> of December, 1998 and we are at The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53<sup>rd</sup> Street in New York City. Well, here's what I'm going to ask you to start with because this is what I always ask. Tell me where and when you were born, and something about your family background and how you grew up. Just like that.

VJL: I was born in St. Lucia. The date, maybe?

SZ: Yes, the date.

VJL: August 1, 1930.

SZ: And. . . just tell me, did you grow up in St. Lucia?

VJL: Yes. I came to this country on the 10<sup>th</sup> of March, 1971.

SZ: So, you really spent a long part of your life in St. Lucia.

VJL: Yes.

SZ: So, tell me a little bit about what St. Lucia was like in the 1930s, early '40s, when you were a kid.

VJL: When I was a kid?

SZ: Yes, when you were a kid.

VJL: St. Lucia was beautiful, a beautiful island. Of course we went to school. . .

SZ: St. Lucia was an independent island when you grew up?

VJL: No, it was not. It was not.

SZ: It was English?

VJL: English, yes. And, of course, now it's independent.

SZ: But while you were growing up, the English were still there?

VJL: Yes, they were still.

SZ: Therefore your schooling was sort of English oriented?

VJL: Yes. I attended the Forester Methodist Combined School.

SZ: Which was. . .

VJL: I reached Sixth Standard, and 1946 was my last year of school.

SZ: So, you were sixteen.

VJL: Yes. 1946. Then, after school I stayed home for about three years, at my mother's house, and I joined the central police force. The central police force. I spent a few years there. And after I left the force, I joined the court. I was a bailiff of the court. After that, I was the assistant to the judge. From that I came to this country.

SZ: So, now, tell me, growing up. . . You were growing up in the 1930s and then the early '40s, while there was a worldwide depression. Did you feel that depression at all in St. Lucia?

VJL: I didn't feel it. No. I didn't feel it at all.

SZ: So your family always had enough money?

VJL: Yes. And my parents were believing in gardening. . . because we had three pieces of land. My father believed in gardening. My father. . . I've never seen my father do any work for anybody, [inaudible]. . . my mother, but gardening on our land. Gardening.

SZ: What did they grow?

VJL: Maybe you wouldn't know the . . .

SZ: I might. [Laughter].

VJL: . . .the names. Like dasheen, tania, sweet potatoes, cassava, yams. Oh, a lot. . . Bananas, plantains. There's another one similar to the plantain they call moco. That's good. Yes.

SZ: So, you always had food to eat because they grew it, right.

VJL: Yes.

SZ: Did they sell it, too? For money.

VJL: Yes. Oh, yes. And of course, those who don't have any, my father [was] always telling them, "Alright, I'm going up to the country to the garden, so send your children with a bag." So, instead of coming with a bag, they come with a donkey. And you cannot put one bag on a donkey, he carries two. He carries two bags. We load them up with food for them to give to their children. . . Oh, yes. And of course, everybody in the area, everybody, used to call my mother, "Mama", and my father, "Papa". Yes.

SZ: Because of that? So. . .

VJL: Yes. Very kind. Very kind.

SZ: Was St. Lucia fairly poor? I mean, were people on the island fairly poor, in general, at that time?

VJL: At that time, yes. Some of them were very, very. . .

SZ: But your father had all this land.

VJL: Yes, we had land.

SZ: Do you know how he had gotten the land?

VJL: Hmm?

SZ: Do you know how he had gotten the land?

VJL: He bought. He bought from. . . I know one man he bought from. . . the land we have presently. . . . Clark. We used to call him Pappy Clark. And when Clark was selling the land, he had my father to measure [the land]. My father was the one measuring the land for people. He was there, and my father used to measure the land, whatever the people want, how many acres they want and so forth.

SZ: Like a surveyor.

VJL: Yes, afterwards, they survey. After they bought a piece of land, then you survey.

SZ: So to be able to buy land and have land meant that you had to have some money. And he had. . .

VJL: The money. . . Well, during that time, money was small but you could see what you were doing with it. It wasn't a lot of money to buy land or anything. Because imagine when I came here to this country. . . When I came to work at The Museum of Modern Art, my salary was \$95.00 [laughing] a week. See?

SZ: But back in St. Lucia, would that have been a lot of money?

VJL: During that time, yes.

SZ: Right. So, you grew up on a farm. Was it a farm you lived on?

VJL: Yes.

SZ: Where on the island? Was it near the volcano?

VJL: No, the volcano is in Soufrière.

SZ: Yes. Soufrière. Right.

VJL: Yes. The volcano is in Soufrière, in Castries.

SZ: Castries is near the airport?

VJL: Right. The Vigie airport.

SZ: Yes, right [laughing]. Well, Castries is now a bit of a town, but was it then?  
[INTERRUPTION].

VJL: Yes, it was always a town.

SZ: Yes. So, tell me about the Forestière Methodist Combined School.

VJL: Well, it was like a real family, that were the teachers. All were Gajadhars, they were Indians, the Gajadhars.

SZ: Why is that?

VJL: I don't know. They wanted the Gajadhars to do the teaching. Oh, they were very good. Yes. And a lot of them got crazy too, you know. And dead.

SZ: Why? That's just. . .

VJL: Too much education. There was David, Harold, Luther, Eunice, Maud, Lucille, Louisa, all these were teachers.

SZ: And so, boys and girls went to this school together?

VJL: Yes.

SZ: Did you like school?

VJL: Hmm?

SZ: Did you like school?

VJL: Oh, yes, Oh well, when my mother said, "Today, well, you are not going to school", we would cry and say, "Oh yes, we're going". Oh, yes. We go.

SZ: Did you do well in school?

VJL: Yes.

SZ: Were you a good student?

VJL: Yes.

SZ: What subjects did you like?

VJL: Various subjects.

SZ: Did you play sports when you were young?

VJL: I used to play cricket.

SZ: Cricket. Very English.

VJL: Yes. I like cricket. . . . Cricket, I like that. At one time we had a team at the school. I was

Forestière Blues and the other side was Forestière Reds, and we did them.

SZ: Anything else you liked to do as a boy? What else did you enjoy?

VJL: Movies. Oh, yes. I used to go to movies every afternoon and night. I used to go to movies all the time.

SZ: What did it cost to go to the movies then?

VJL: It was sixty cents. Yes.

SZ: So that was not much?

VJL: No. But during those days, it was a lot. Because sixty cents, when you go to a supermarket with sixty cents, you come back with a big load of stuff, a big load. Sixty cents was a lot of money during those days.

SZ: Yes. But you had it, so you could do it.

VJL: Yes.

SZ: Did you work as a kid?

VJL: Pardon?

SZ: Did you work as a kid, to make money.

VJL: When I was sixteen. . .

SZ: You started.

VJL: I started to work.

SZ: Did you. . .

VJL: This work was like M & C, [Minvielle & Chastanet Company Ltd.]. I was a clerk there.

SZ: What was it called?

VJL: Instead of saying Minvielle & Chastanet Company Ltd., you say M & C, M & C Limited.

SZ: But before you were sixteen, Jules, when you were still in school. . . Did you have brothers and sisters?

VJL: Oh, yes, My mother had twelve children.

SZ: Wow.

VJL: I'm the ninth.

SZ: You're the ninth. So, almost the baby.

VJL: Right now, four of the boys are gone. So, eight of us remain, four boys and four girls.

SZ: What happened when the Second World War came? Do you remember anything about that?

VJL: No.

SZ: No. No. So, it didn't really affect you at all?

VJL: No, it didn't.

SZ: Did you have a radio?

VJL: Yes. We didn't have a T.V., but a radio, yes.

SZ: Did you listen to the radio?

VJL: Yes. Oh, yes.

SZ: Well, tell me a little bit about. . . You said, so, after school you joined the St. Lucia police force. Now was that a hard job to get? Did you have to. . .

VJL: No, I made the application. I went for an application at the police headquarters, I filled it out. Then they wrote me back to come for an entrance examination, which I did, and present my papers a few weeks later, I received a letter from them. I passed the exam. They told me when to come, which I did, and of course I was accepted. It was great. I was out-stationed most of the time.

SZ: What does that mean?

VJL: I was not in the city. I didn't stay in the city.

SZ: Right.

VJL: I was out-stationed, in another police station in the country. You heard about Dennery?

SZ: That's another place. . .

VJL: Yes. So, I was on the force. I was very good over there. One time I went to a refresher's course for three months. The people, they cried, big people, you know. They cried. They thought I was not coming back. They said they could never get another police man like me. And after the three months were up, I went back.

SZ: Back to Dennery, back to where you were?

VJL: Yes. There was a note on the board. . . I didn't know about the note. There was a note on the board, "Those who want to up to Dennery". [Inaudible.] "You want to go back?" I said, "Yes". He said, "There's a note on the board". I went downstairs, I looked, I went to the desk, I said, "I'm going." I told them I'm going. They said, "Alright, pack up. Tomorrow afternoon." So I went next day. I took the bus, went up. Now the following morning I was the orderly, orderly at the desk and the road is right there. I'm facing the road. Now we always have a clock. People passing on the road can see the clock and look at the time and so forth. So I was there writing and I saw a fellow pass and look at the clock. He said, "Jules?" I said, "Yes?" He said, "That's you?" I said, "Yes." He said, "You're back". I said, "Yes." He said, "That's not true!" And I said, "I'm telling you, look at me here." He came up and we greeted one another. He told me, "You know something, I'm going to tell the people that you are back." And you know, in the evening a procession of people came, especially to see me, to make sure that I was there, you know. Oh, yes. People had loved me so much. Of course, once we had a major strike in the valley. A major strike.

SZ: A strike by workers or a strike. . .

VJL: By workers. They overturned all the wagons and everything. So I was on duty by the factory. . .

SZ: What kind of factory?

VJL: Sugar factory. I was there. So around 10 o'clock or so, the jeep came to pick us up and bring two other guys, to replace us, the two of us. And of course, the chief of police was there – he was a white man from England during that time, you know – and bring back to the station. I'm sitting down behind the jeep, and of course, thousands of people surrounded the jeep. They said, "Nobody pass." You know what they call the cutlass, the machete. . .

SZ: Oh yes, right.

VJL: They hit the jeep. . .rrraap! They said, "Today, police don't rule. We rule, whatever we say, goes." All that time, they hadn't seen me in the back, my head down. Twenty minutes. . . we're still there. People talk, they have the cutlass in their hands. The machete is sharp. You know the chief is scared. At one time I just lifted up my head like this. . . A guy came, he said, "Juli, that's you?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Everybody, clear out. Jules is there. Clear out." So we went to the station, the chief called me and said, "How you did it?" I said, "The only thing I can tell you, sir. You see, I respect the people and they respect me. When I talk they listen." And you know when I left the police force I was on promotion. Yes, I was on promotion. My god. And about six years later, they had an NCO [Non-Commissioning-Officer] conference. I was passing through. . . During that time I was working in the court, I was a bailiff of the court. I was passing through. The NCO's were having intermission. One came down, "Jules, Jules, Jules, why you left the force, man? You shouldn't leave the force, man, the chief just [told] us that if you were still there, you would be an inspector by now." I said, "Sorry". Oh yes. No more, no more.

SZ: Well, why, Jules? Why did you leave?

VJL: You see, I was stationed with that CPL Small, then Anselm, then Lawrence. And we all were nice to each other. Then they sent CPL Fevrière. We couldn't agree. He couldn't agree. He couldn't agree with nobody. Recently he died. He couldn't agree with

nobody, no matter how good you are.

SZ: But he was your superior?

VJL: Yes. So I quit.

SZ: I'm interested to know. These were all chiefs of police?

VJL: He was not the chief of police. He was just a corporate level type.

SZ: Were they white or were they black?

VJL: Black.

SZ: Black. But the chief of police was white?

VJL: He was white, yes.

SZ: And then all the policemen were black?

VJL: Yes.

SZ: So, it was a personality thing, which is why you left?

VJL: I couldn't agree with him, he couldn't agree with me, so I said. . .

SZ: How many years were you a policeman?

VJL: I stayed there for eight years.

SZ: Eight.

VJL: Yes.

SZ: But you were still a young man when you left, right?

VJL: Yes. When I came here I was forty.

SZ: Now that seems young [laughing].

VJL: But now, no more young. I'm sixty-eight.

SZ: You sure don't look it. Did you enjoy being a policeman?

VJL: Yes.

SZ: You did? Were you ever afraid?

VJL: No, never.

SZ: No. Was there a lot of crime on St. Lucia at that time?

VJL: At that time, not many crimes. No.

SZ: What were some of the things that you would deal with then?

VJL: Me?

SZ: Yes. I mean, you said there was a strike and you had to be there for that. What other things did you do as a policeman, then?

VJL: Serving summonses, collecting statements, and all this. Taking fingerprints. We used to do all that.

SZ: Were there certain typical crimes in those years?

VJL: Yes, I may say some of them, yes.

SZ: Burglary or. . .

VJL: Burglaries, wounding [also larceny, praedial larceny]. People just did not want to chop their hands off and so forth. . .

SZ: But you just did not want to do it anymore.

VJL: No. And during the time I was working in the court – when I started to work with the judges – the very first day when court was over, a lawyer called me and said, “Mr. Jules, how about you become a lawyer? We, the lawyers, are giving a free course. And you go overseas for six months, get qualified and come back for the bar.” I bent down my head a little bit and I raised it up and said, “Thanks, but no thanks,” but I never tell him why.

SZ: Could you tell me why?

VJL: Yes. Because when I went home I tell my mother and tell my wife why I didn't accept it. To defend a client you have to lie, and I don't believe in that at all, at all, at all. Now, many a times, I'm defending this client against you. Now this is the office of land, this is his or hers. And I will say such much lies until you lose your land, you know. Your land will come to that person I'm defending. My heart couldn't beat it, no. Especially if you have little children. They are looking at you . . . No, I will not do it. I know the laws of St.

Lucia just like that. But the law library was right there in, by the courthouse, and the courthouse just across the hall, the law library is right there. I go there anytime. You know sometimes when I'm out, and I come home for lunch, three, four, five people sitting home waiting for advice.

SZ: From you.

VJL: Yes.

SZ: So you were like a lawyer.

VJL: I helped them. They tell me, "I went to the lawyer already and the lawyer tells me, "Blah, blah." Once they give me the nature of the case, I say, "No, the lawyer is wrong." I say, "If you go with that you lose your case." I tell them what to do; this, that, that, this. To make a long story short. Your yes, no, I don't remember. They went, and came back smiling, they won the case. So, you see, if I had listened to the lawyer. . . One time when I came, seven of them were home. I was hungry, I came home for lunch. Seven of them sitting there. . I said, "How come when you want advice you are coming to me? When you go to the lawyers, you are paying the lawyers." "No, no, no, Mr. Jules, I can give you the money." And my heart, you know, I said, "No." No. I helped them the best I could.

SZ: It reminds me of something I didn't ask you. Was your family very religious?

VJL: Yes. Oh, yes. My mother, my father always go to church.

SZ: And you went?

VJL: Oh, yes. I always went to church.

SZ: They would take all the kids with them?

VJL: Yes.

SZ: To the Methodist church?

VJL: No, Catholic.

SZ: Catholic. So you went to Methodist school but you were Catholic.

VJL: Yes. The school in the area was. . .

SZ: I see.

VJL: . . .a Methodist school.

SZ: So they were very religious Catholics?

VJL: Yes.

SZ: So did you grow up feeling religious yourself?

VJL: Yes. I go to church. Let me see, about three months ago, I went to church. "If it's OK with me", they said to me, "Could you do me a favor: carry the cross." I had never done that before. [Inaudible] And I did it.

SZ: It's a big honor, right.

VJL: Yes. I carried.

SZ: So, I see, then, thinking about things in terms of what's right and what's wrong. I can understand how you get that. Now, you mentioned a wife. When did you get married?

VJL: I got married on the 28<sup>th</sup> of December, 1960.

SZ: 1960. And you married a woman from St. Lucia?

VJL: Yes. I have four children with her; two boys, two girls. I had the two boys working here [at the Museum], remember?

SZ: I don't know. I would probably know them by sight. No, I didn't know that.

VJL: One was working, Lester was working in the restaurant.

SZ: Yes.

VJL: The lady who was in charge of Operations. . .

SZ: Oh, Susan Jackson?

VJL: She's the one, you know, I asked, and she then make the little job for him for me. And he's still there. . .

SZ: He's still there?

VJL: No. He stayed there and he worked, he worked. He was helping the chef very much. Sometimes they left everything on his account to do. When the new company, that is there now came, [they] threw everybody out. It was a good thing because the same chef got another job and he called my son and they started working together. My son is the head chef now in a hotel.

SZ: Which hotel?

VJL: I forget. They changed the name now. [It's] at 42<sup>nd</sup> and Third Avenue. When he graduated. . . While he was working as a chef, he went to school; he decided to go to school. And then he graduated – two of [my children] graduated with honors – my son and another one.

SZ: Wonderful. Does he cook for you?

VJL: No. [Laughter]. Once it was my wife's birthday, and he arranged for us to come down. We had a very nice time. Everybody went. We had a very, very nice time. The food was excellent, the drink was excellent. The wine. . . Then when we got home, he gave me a paper, a rolled [paper], he told me, "Here daddy." When I opened it, when I got home, I opened it: dinner for two, [laughter] anytime I want, dinner for two. He's well. Lester was. . . Lester. . . I think you know Lester.

SZ: I'm sure I do.

VJL: Yes. Because Susan Jackson told me, "Your son is an excellent cook. She's now eating hamburger". Because she didn't used to eat hamburgers. But since he's my son, that's it. Yes. Because he can do it good.

SZ: And then you had another kid who was at the Museum also, you said?

VJL: Yes. That one was working with housekeeping. I think he [inaudible] and then they fired him. He didn't want to stay in the job. He didn't want to stay but now he's holding two jobs.

SZ: Anyway, so. . .

VJL: [inaudible] tell that to his grandchild. . . his daughter.

SZ: Oh, the little two and a half-year old.

VJL: That little child is so sweet.

SZ: Yes. So nice. Anyway, back to your story. So you went from the police force to be a bailiff.

VJL: A bailiff.

SZ: Tell me what that means.

VJL: A bailiff? You serve summonses. On Fridays — because you are handling civil matters — you have to be in court. Every Friday, you have to be in court. You have to do seizing people's property and sell at auction. Sell and so forth, yes. All these things you have to do.

SZ: How did you feel about doing those things?

VJL: Hmm?

SZ: How did you feel about doing those things?

VJL: Well, I used to help them. Yes, I helped them. I have this thing to seize, so I tell the guy, "Look, you have your house, you've got your wife, your kids. Pay the money." He'd say, "Mr. Jules, how can I pay it? I'm not working. You might as well take the house." I'd say, "You have your children. You have your wife. What you have you have. Opportunity lost, you'll never regain". "To me that is true Mr. Jules, but. . ." I say, "I'll tell you

something, go to the bank, the cooperative bank and take a loan". He'd say, "Mr. Jules, who will sign for me?" I said, "Let me tell you, go to the cooperative bank. Ask for Mr. Theodore, he is the manager. Mention my name, and if you want — let's say you want a thousand dollars, ask for a thousand five hundred. If you owe a thousand you pay the thousand. And you hold that five hundred. Every month -- if you're not working - -- you pay the interest until you're finished." He said, "You think so?" I said, "Go ahead". He went. He came back to me and said, "You know, Mr. Jules, I got it." I said, "Well, alright you got it." People were believing in me. Oh, yes. I went to seize a man and that morning I went to sell that house. The man had his house already. I went to seize it and sell. Where is he? I can't find him. You know what I did? I had another guy bid on it for him. Yes. Bid on it for him. He bid and he got it. He got back his thing and he paid him money he was owing. And that was that.

SZ: So did you like that job?

VJL: I liked it, yes. Because, you know, I don't do any cruelty to people or anything. But the only thing. . . If this house is erected on somebody's land and the courts don't give you notice to quit, if the time expires the person will take you to court. The court then will give you a few months to stay there and meanwhile look for a place and move your house. If you don't and the time's up, the person will go back to his or her lawyer and make a writ of ejectment. When that writ came into my hands, I'd go to the person and I'd tell the person, "Well, on Saturday I'm coming to put down that house". Then I'd go to the plaintiff and tell him, "Now you have to provide carpenters" and so forth. And, of course, we reach there and tell the person, I'm sorry. That's all I could say.

SZ: How long did you, were you bailiff? How many years did you do that?

VJL: I stayed as a bailiff for thirteen years.

SZ: Thirteen years.

VJL: Thirteen years.

SZ: Was it well paid? Was it a good job in terms of money you got?

VJL: Yes, it was good. Your flat salary -- you're getting subsistence, and you're getting mileage for your vehicle. You're getting all that.

SZ: So it was nice.

VJL: Yes.

SZ: And you said after that, you went to work for a judge?

VJL: I was the judge's assistant.

SZ: Yes. And for how long did you do that?

VJL: That one, four years.

SZ: And did you like that?

VJL: Yes, it was nice, too, yes. That's why the lawyer offered me to be a lawyer -- the very day I start[ed] with the judge, something came up. And I was interpreting also for the other person and the person's lawyer stood up and said to the judge, "I don't think your interpreter is quite right. The word is so-and-so." I can't remember what it was. And then the registrar stood up and said, "I second Mr. Mason." The lawyer. The judge looked at them and said, "Mr. Registrar and Mr. Mason, I don't think you all are right. I think my interpreter is quite right." And he explained to them and they agreed. That's why they offered me to be a lawyer. But I didn't accept it. I was going to get a free. . . you know.

But because of lies. . .

SZ: It wasn't for you.

VJL: No.

SZ: Was the judge nice you worked for?

VJL: Yes. This was one of the best judges. He was from Guyana. His name, Joseph Littleton Wills. Yes. That man eats with nobody, he drinks with nobody. He don't go to parties because he's a judge.

SZ: He was honest.

VJL: Very, very, very honest.

SZ: Hold on, I just have to turn the tape over.

**END TAPE 1, SIDE 1**

**BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE 2**

VJL: And if a case is on. . . From the time two parties come in, the defendant and the plaintiff, he already knows who is guilty, you know. Oh yes, that judge. Everybody was afraid of him, and especially what he was wearing. [Laughing] This hair. Big. You know the false hair? White.

SZ: That's very English. Right.

VJL: Yes.

SZ: Big wig.

VJL: And his garment was black and red. People were afraid of this man. When he talked to you, you trembled, you know. One time [laughing] I was the interpreter, and a guy they called Sweet Shave -- you know, he's a babbler and he put on his sign "Sweet Shave". So, he was a jury. He was a juror.

SZ: He was a juror.

VJL: Yes, he was a juror. When court adjourned for lunch the judge cautioned him, "Be here at 1:30 sharp." 1:30, the man is not there. Roll call, he's not there. At one time he came in, the judge was summing up. He bent down, he went under his seat. The judge didn't pay attention to him. When the judge finished summing up, he said, "You, young man, approach the bench. Tell me something. If I'm the teacher and you're the school boy and you came late to school, after roll call, what would be your excuse?" He said, "I would tell the teacher, my food cooked late" And the judge took one look at the man and the man trembled. When I tell you, trembled. . .

SZ: Yes.

VJL: Yes. You know the judge would send him to jail. I don't know. . . God was with him that day; the judge didn't send him. [Laughter]. Gave him a warning. Sweet Shave trembled. And everybody started laughing, you know, when it was not a laughing matter at all. It was not a laughing matter.

SZ: So, as the judge's assistant, you would sit through all these cases? I mean you would stay in court and hear what was going on?

VJL: Me?

SZ: Yes.

VJL: Yes, because I was his interpreter. I was his interpreter.

SZ: Interpreter in what way?

VJL: If this one could not speak English, I would have to translate to the judge what he said, and what the judge said I have to translate to the person.

SZ: Because what's the other language that would be spoken?

VJL: Patois. French Patois.

SZ: Patois. Right. That's interesting, because the French were in St. Lucia before the English.

VJL: Yes.

SZ: Yes. And so the French Patois survives, even though. . .

VJL: Yes. Patois. Patois, they call it Creole.

SZ: Yes, Creole. [Laughter].

VJL: Parlez Creole. [laughter]

SZ: When did St. Lucia become independent? Do you know what year?

VJL: Oh, what year? I can't remember the year.

SZ: Were you still there?

VJL: Yes.

SZ: You were?

VJL: Let me see. Was I in St. Lucia?

SZ: Well, actually I'll look. . .

VJL: No. I think I was here.

SZ: You were here. I'll look it up. [1979].

VJL: I think I was here.

SZ: Did the St. Lucians like the English?

VJL: Hmm?

SZ: Did the St. Lucians like the English?

VJL: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Now, that's what you hear all the time, everywhere now, English.

SZ: Oh. . .

VJL: I was there recently. Oh, I enjoyed it. That was in July, part in July and part in August. I went to the sulphur springs. I took a sulphur bath, a mineral bath. It was hot. From there, I go into the sulphur and take another bath. That was great. I only stayed there

for two weeks. And within the two weeks you know how many times I went to the beach to take a sea bath? Eleven times. Yes. Every morning. Anytime you see 5:15, I'm out. 5:15 a.m., you know, I'm on the beach, going to the beach. It's just fifteen minutes walk.

SZ: So you enjoyed being this judge's assistant and all?

VJL: Yes.

SZ: So. . . You had lots of family in St. Lucia, then?

VJL: Yes. Oh, yes.

SZ: All your brothers and sisters were living in St. Lucia? Yes?

VJL: But now I have one brother in St. Croix, and one in Florida. My sister is in Barbados, and the others are in St. Lucia.

SZ: So, what I'm understanding from you is that you had this long working life there and you were doing well and you were happy. Is that right?

VJL: Uh huh.

SZ: So, let me ask you why you decided to leave.

VJL: Why? Well, what happened. . . I had a brother here, and he wanted me to come.

SZ: Here in New York?

VJL: Yes. Six years ago he died. Six years ago.

SZ: I'm sorry. Why had he left St. Lucia? Why did he decide to leave?

VJL: My brother?

SZ: Yes.

VJL: My brother left for a long, long time he left St. Lucia. He was in the army at home. There was a regiment. After that he went over to Aruba, to Lago Heights for a couple years and then he went to England. From Aruba he went to England and stayed there for a few years. From England he came straight here.

SZ: What did he do?

VJL: My brother? He was a diamond setter. Yes. He had a shop. Diamond setter.

SZ: So he ended up in New York.

VJL: Yes. So he died six years ago. February will be seven years that he passed away. Oh, that was a funeral. His son is a policeman here, and they asked him if he would like to have any policeman on duty. He said no, afterwards he said, yes. In church so many policeman. . . all the streets. . . After the funeral we don't stop at all, we continued going. . all the red lights, we passed all. . . because the police were leading the funeral. He was cremated.

SZ: He was older than you?

VJL: Yes. By four years.

SZ: But you were telling me about why you decided to leave St. Lucia and come to New

York. You said your brother had come before.

VJL: Yes, he was here, and he filed a petition for me to come up. Then Barbados sent me some papers to fill up. Because the petition he sent to Barbados to the Embassy in Barbados.

SZ: To Barbados.

VJL: Yes. Then Barbados wrote to me. So I filled out the papers, all that they wanted and so forth. They gave me an appointment.

SZ: But you wanted to leave?

VJL: Yes.

SZ: Why? Why?

VJL: Hmm?

SZ: Why?

VJL: [Laughter]. I mean to stay in one place all the time. . . move around. . .

SZ: But it's your home.

VJL: Yes, that's true.

SZ: And you had a good job.

VJL: Yes. It was nice.

SZ: Did you feel it would be better here, was that. . .

VJL: A little bit.

SZ: Had you been to New York before? Had you ever been to the States?

VJL: To New York before? No. I came on the 10<sup>th</sup> of March 1971, and I'm here since. But I've made several trips home already. Several trips.

SZ: But when you arrived, you had never been before?

VJL: No.

SZ: So what was your first impression of America?

VJL: Ahhh, I had never seen snow! When I was at the airport, I feel something, something fall[ing] down on me and I say, "What is that?" And I look. So my brother already told me he'd be upstairs, so. . . If I just look up, I'll see him. But I'm there looking up and I can't see the man at all. [Laughter]. He said, "Man, I saw you looking up, man. You couldn't see me?" I said, "No."

SZ: Did you come by yourself? Did you leave your. . . You had your wife and children. . .

VJL: I left them home. My wife was expecting. I left on March 10, 1971 and she gave birth May 4, '71. Exactly two years [later] I sent for all of them. Yes. Because they came in '73, March 11.

SZ: Oh, exactly. [Laughter]

VJL: March 11, 1973.

SZ: When you came to New York, where did you live?

VJL: When I arrived I was living with my brother in Astoria. I stayed in Astoria. Then I left and I went to live in the Bronx. In the Bronx, I stayed there for at least about two months because where I was renting I have no heat, no hot water sometimes. I went to Kenmore Hotel. I found a room. I stayed there until. . . When I sent for my wife then I went to Brooklyn and found an apartment. I found an apartment and, of course, and I did it nicely and so forth and then they came and we were there. And it's twenty-one years now since when I applied for Astoria. In two years I got it, so I moved to Astoria and I'm there up 'til now [laughing].

SZ: And you like it?

VJL: Yes. Astoria is nice.

SZ: And when you came how did you look for a job?

VJL: Well, my brother had arranged. . . Yes, he told me he had arranged with a man — I didn't know the man — but that morning he tell me, "Get dressed, let's go." We went, he brought me to a place there. I think I could remember the number of the building. 30-30 26<sup>th</sup> Street. And what's there? They were making parts for sewing machines, Singer sewing machines. I stayed there for three weeks. And everything gone down. They lay off everybody. They only kept two people. In the evening he tells me, "I don't know how to tell you because you're so much of a good worker. You're always on time. I don't know how to tell you that." I say, "It's OK." Things are going down and so forth so he had to lay off. "So, you see since the morning I've called those guys but I couldn't call you because, you know. . ." I said, "It's OK, It's fine." So he let me go. So I stayed for about three weeks or a month doing nothing. Then my sister-in-law said, "Why don't

you go to Queens Plaza to the employment office?" I said, "Really? I don't know Queens Plaza, I just came." [Laughter]. So she wrote it down on a piece of paper and said, "When you come back, you do it [the] reverse." I said, "OK." I took the bus. So I start looking at the board. The guy says, "What can I do for you?" I said, "I'm looking for a job". He says, "Are you interested in security?" I say, "I don't mind." He says, "Are you sure?" I say, "Yeah." He says, "OK." He says, "Wait a minute, where are you from?" I say, "St. Lucia." He says, "What did you do in St. Lucia?" I told him -- I had all my papers with me -- where I was a policeman, where I was a bailiff of the court, where I was assistant to the judge in a court. He says, "Wait a minute." He picks up his phone, he calls [T]he Museum [of Modern Art], "Are you interested in guards still? Oh yes, I have a man from St. Lucia. He was a cop, he was a bailiff of the court, he was a judge's assistant." They said, "These are the people I want. Send him over." He gave me a paper and he told me, "That's 11 West 53<sup>rd</sup> Street." [Laughter] He says, "Monday morning". Monday morning I had to go Personnel. That was on the second floor.

SZ: Of the old building?

VJL: The Personnel director was Miss Cornell. I can remember that good! We went up. I tell her who I am and everything, so, you know, and she asked me a few questions. Then she tells me, "O.K. Go down to the Security office. You'll see Mr. [Fitzroy] Williams. I went to see Mr. Williams. He told me, "Where are you from?" I say, "St. Lucia." He says, "Yes?" He looked at me when I say St. Lucia. I say he looked at me with a smile. He said, "What did you do in St. Lucia?" I say, "I was a policeman. I was a bailiff of the court. I was a judge's assistant." He told me, "I was a policeman, too." I said, "Really?" "Yes, I'm from Trinidad." I said, "Really. Oh, wow!" He said, "I don't think you need this little job, a policeman wants this little job?" I said, "I'll take it." He said, "Are you sure?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Alright. When do you want to start?" I said, "Now." He said, "No. You come in three days. On Wednesday. I'll tell you, if there's any promotions, I'll have you in mind." In ten months, he called me down, and tells me, "You remember when you first came I told you if there was any promotion I will have you in mind?" I said,

“Yeah.” He says, “I’m ready. I need a supervisor.” What to say?

SZ: And you became a supervisor?

VJL: No. I preferred to stay where I was.

SZ: And you did?

VJL: Yes, as a guard.

SZ: And why did you prefer that?

VJL: I don’t know. Aggravation with [inaudible] because I’m seeing what they give when supervisors talk to them and so forth, you know. . .

SZ: You didn’t want to do that to other people?

VJL: No. No.

SZ: Jules, this is a good place for us to stop and start next time. We’ll stop for today and you’ll come back again, yes?

VJL: Yes. I don’t mind.

SZ: And we’ll start talking about being at the Museum.

VJL: All right.

SZ: OK. Good. This was great. This was really terrific. Thank you.

**END TAPE 1, SIDE 2**

**THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM**

**INTERVIEW WITH: VICTOR JULES-LOUIS (VGL)**

**INTERVIEWER: SHARON ZANE (SZ)**

**LOCATION: THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART**

**DATE: DECEMBER 21, 1998**

**BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE 1**

SZ: So, let me just say that this is an interview with Victor Jules-Louis.

VJL: Jules-Louis, yes.

SZ: Before we continue on our way with talking about the Museum, you just told me off tape that there was one thing that you neglected to tell me last.

VJL: Yes, when. . . Ready?

SZ: I am. Go ahead.

VJL: When we decided to have our own governor — before it was a governor from England — when we decided to have our own governor, it was Dr. Frederick Clark. Now, that man. . . My mother is the one who raised him. Yes. Right. My mother is the one who raised him. When he became governor, I was working in the court at the time. So after about a month or so I told the guys in the court, “I think I’m going up to the governor’s house to visit.” They say to me, “You?” I say, “Yes, sure. Why not?” They tell me, “You can not go there.” I say, “No?” O.K., I didn’t tell them anything. I picked up the phone and I call him up and said I’m coming to visit. I sat down in the court. I didn’t tell them

anything because I know he was sending his car to pick me up. So at one time the guys called me, they said, "Jules, Jules, the governor's car is downstairs. The sergeant is asking for you." I said, "Really?" I looked through the window, I saw him, he took me right to the governor's house. We sat down. We had a drink. I congratulated him on everything. Before that, my mother went to governor's house. Policemen were on duty. Oh, a lot of policemen, armed policeman, you know? And my mother said, "I would like to see the governor". They said, "Madame, you can't see the governor." She said, "Why not?" They said, "No." "Alright, just tell. . . Go upstairs and tell him, Mistress Jules is here." Five seconds. They were astonished to see the welcome she got with open arms. Oh, yes. My mother is the one who raised him. Now, the Prime Minister married to the same governor's daughter. My sister is the one who raised the children, the governor's children. And, of course, when they got married, the Prime Minister told my sister, "I want you to raise my children just the same way you raised my wife." And she did.

SZ: And she did?

VJL: Yes. She did. Up to now, anytime she's going to a medical exam the doctor doesn't take her money. Every Christmas, like Christmas season, I'm sure my sister got a lot of gifts already from them. Yes. When my mother turned a hundred years [old], the Prime Minister, his wife, everybody was there.

SZ: Your mother reached the age of a hundred?

VJL: One hundred and two. Yes. Everybody was there. I went up . . . on vacation. Everybody. My wife, my children, everybody was there. The church was full. Oh yes, we had a lovely time. The Prime Minister gave a very nice speech about the family.

SZ: That's nice.

VJL: Yes.

SZ: Well, so, you know, that makes me think. . . You have this very. . . You have family and a real life down there and yet you live here. Is that hard? Are you ever sorry that you moved away?

VJL: No. My brother, the one in St. Croix, always tells me, "Let's go back home" and run for election. [Laughter]. He liked politics a lot. Yes. And of course, if we decided to go and run for election, we'd win. We will. Once I went on vacation, I brought my son. First time I brought him.

SZ: Your son, the chef?

VJL: Yes. And that morning, we went to the beach. I took him to the beach. We had a good bath, and were coming back. It was close to twelve o'clock, we haven't reached home. It's just a fifteen minute walk. Cars coming this way, cars coming that way; everybody. . . "Jules, Jules, Jules." He said, "You know something, mommy, I think if my father runs for election, he won't have to compete. He will win. So many people. . . So many people know him. Cars coming this way, cars coming that way. All cars stop."

SZ: You don't have a taste for that, though?

VJL: Pardon?

SZ: You don't have a taste for politics?

VJL: No.

SZ: No. Because? Why not?

VJL: I told the people, you know, a lot of them, I tell them two things I don't like politics and religion.

SZ: So, let's go back to when you first came to the Museum. You were telling me last time. So, Mr. [Fitzroy] Williams was the supervisor.

VJL: Yes, he was the one running Security. And he did for a long time, until Mr. [Edward] Saxe came. He changed [things] a bit.

SZ: You mean Ed Saxe?

VJL: Yes. I think Mr. Roberts. . . Yes. He put Mr. [Donald J.] Roberts as Director of Security. He stayed there for a while and then was gone. After Roberts, let's see. After Roberts was Mr. Frank Derance then Mr. [Donald] McLeod, And after Mr. Don McLeod, came Mr. [Ron] Simoncini. But when I first came here, the Director of the Museum was Mr. [John B.] Hightower. And, of course, I think, within two weeks they tell me he was gone. And we stayed for a while without a Director until Mr. [Richard E.] Oldenburg came. Yes. Very nice man, yes. After Mr. Oldenburg came Mr. [Glenn D.] Lowry. [Pause]. Well, every time I walk into the Museum I cannot complain. Everything is just perfect with me. I stayed as a key man for twenty-three years.

SZ: What does that mean, Jules?

VJL: I was the one with the keys to open everything. I had keys for all offices.

SZ: Is that what you. . . when you came. . .

VJL: No, when I first came I was on the floor.

SZ: And where were you, on which floor? Were you in the lobby or in a gallery?

VJL: Sometimes the galleries, sometimes the lobby. Alfonso was the key man before, and he retired. He retired and Mr. Williams offered to me to take it over, and I said, O.K., and I did it for twenty-three years. All keys to be made, I used to go to Eighth Avenue and 56<sup>th</sup> at Simon. I returned, and had to fit them to the cylinders to see if they work. If it [doesn't] work, [or is] the wrong cut, I have to go back the same time. I tell them, "I'm going back the same time," because they have to re-cut them until I get everything to work. I find it so strange when I [was] first handling the keys. The fourth floor. . . Some people sometimes, they have keys and they drop them. They'll bring it to the Security Office to Mr. Williams. He calls me and says, "Jules, some people brought some keys here. You think you can recognize them?" I said, "Yes." I said, "Oh this, this is for the fourth floor, fourth floor glass door where Mr. [William S.] Lieberman works." He says, "You sure?" I said, "Yes. That one is Grand Master 2. That's for so-and-so. That one is for so-and-so." He tells me, "Let's go, let me see." I take that one put it in the glass cylinder door where Mr. Lieberman works. Open. Close. The other one. . . He says, "How do you know that?" I said, "Well, I don't know. I just know the keys. I'm handling the keys everyday. I know the keys." [Laughing] It was fine with me. And everybody, everybody that wants a door open, or they need a key, they call me, "Jules, do you know what key opens so-and-so?" I say, "Yes, it's key number so-and-so." And that's it.

SZ: It was easy for you to learn that.

VJL: Yes. I'm handling those keys everyday. I know.

SZ: So what would you do? You'd get here at what time in the morning?

VJL: In the morning. . . I woke up [at] 3:00 in the morning. They didn't ask me to work at that time. At that time, I was supposed to work from 8:00. But when it's 5:30, between 5:30 and 5:40, I'm already here. You know, I've never, never been late for work, not even a quarter of a second. Everyday day I'm here one and a half-hours to two hours before

the time. Before the time. Never been late. And for the period of twenty-six years and three months, I don't think I called in sick eight times. I was always on my two feet. Yes. And I trained my children to be the same way, the same way. Lester [Louis] loved his job just like I did. Dawn, the same. Christine same. Kevin is a little. . . [Laughter]

SZ: Which one is he?

VJL: Kevin.

SZ: What does he do?

VJL: He's not so particular. But now I see where he is pulling all his weight. He's holding two jobs now.

SZ: So you'd get here [to the Museum] really early, and then, when you started to work, what would you do? Tell me what a typical day would be like to you.

VJL: Everyday, to me, everyday was the same. I'm supposed to start at 8:00 but when it's 6:15 I'm on. Oh yes, on my own, I'm on. I start at 6:15, I go to all the galleries, check everything out, put on the lights, open the office doors for the cleaners. When they finish cleaning, I lock it up and go on to the next one and so forth. I had the fourth floor, the fifth floor, the sixth floor, everyday. I did a lot of work.

SZ: So, it was fourth floor, fifth floor, and sixth floor -- the offices and the galleries, also.

VJL: Yes.

SZ: Well, the Museum, of course, when you came, looked a lot different than it did when you left.

VJL: Yes. I did very, very well. And everyone was satisfied. From the time I've been working as the key man, for so long, do you know? I had keys for every office. Nobody ever complained they lost anything. It's like I was telling some of them, when they said, "Jules, you see so-and-so?" I say, "No." They say, "Why not? Things are all over and so forth." If I come to your office, I know I open it for the cleaners, I saw this, it's there. . . They don't put it there for me, so I don't read it. Never did. The one they want me to read they'll send copies to the Security Office. Yes. That's the way we were brought up. It's just like when we were going to school. Go to school and my mother is always warning the children. I remember once, my brother George. . . We were going to school and he said, "Look at this." It was a dollar. He pick[s] it up, he puts it in his pocket. We reach home after school, he tells Mommy, "Look what I found in the street." She said, "What? In the street? What have I tell you all? When you see things, leave it in the same place." She gave him one beating and say, "Go, take the dollar and bring it back to the same place where you found it." Yes. You have to do it. Yes, my mother and father, they were strict.

SZ: So, now tell me a couple of funny stories or something interesting that happened to you while you were here. Were you here for any interesting things that happened security-wise? Well, you were here when [Picasso's] *Guernica* got sent away.

VJL: No, I wasn't there. When they sprayed the *Guernica*, I remember that.

SZ: When they sprayed it. Tell me that story.

VJL: I don't know much about that. I know that there was this fight, and by the time I reach upstairs on the third floor, they were gone with him. And I think [Picasso's] *Girl Before a Mirror* was sprayed also. Yes, I remember that. [Pause]. There's something I don't know if I should say. . . You see, during the time I was a key man, I remember it was a holiday — I can't remember what holiday it was — I entered the galleries, I started on the second floor gallery. And the lights — you had to go all the way into the middle, you

open a closet there to put the lights on. It wasn't like now as is. At that time the Brancusi, the Brancusi sculptures [were] in Gallery Four. As soon as I entered the gallery, the door closed behind me, and I found myself in the air. Yes. I found myself in the air. Every step I took I'm feeling heavier and heavier, and heavier, and heavier, and heavier, and heavier. I tried, and heavier, and heavier. When I reached the closet – there was closet you have to open to put. . . the switches are in there. I tried to but I couldn't. Oh, how I tried but I couldn't make another step. I stood up there and I said, "Wait a minute? I'm here already?" I tried and I couldn't. I turned back. Every step I took I'm feeling myself lighter and lighter and lighter and lighter, until I get out. Yes. After that I lose my way. Yes. I lose my way in the gallery, second floor. Coming back, you know. I said, "But how come I lose my way?" I stood up, I went this way, no; I went that way, no. After fifteen minutes, I'm still there looking for my way, and I can't find it. You see Picasso's monument, the small one, the monument, the sculpture. My mind tells me, go back to the sculpture. I went back to the sculpture. I stood up, I turned around like this and I was in there all the time. It was right there all the time. I couldn't see it. Everyday I pass when I go by the Brancusis. Even where it is now, I feel myself in the air. I don't know why. Everyday. Two years before I retired, I say, now let me try something I heard people talking about that. When I entered the gallery, I recited the Psalm 23.

SZ: Which is?

VJL: Psalm 23. The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. And from the time I start reciting it, I never feel anything. No, I never feel anything.

SZ: How do you explain that?

VJL: I don't know!

SZ: You don't know.

VJL: I don't know. But I figured I just couldn't open the closet, make another step to open the closet, to put the switches on. I just couldn't. Oh, how I tried, I just couldn't make the other step.

SZ: Well, when you look at that sculpture, do you like it?

VJL: Hmm?

SZ: Well, when you look at that sculpture, do you like it?

VJL: Yes. Yes. Because the . . . I think it was my last day, I took some pictures of the sculpture. Yes. And that big building at that hour, you know, I'm alone inside. I wasn't scared. I'm not afraid of anything. No. I can not see any evil things. I can't see them. I know it's there, but I can't see them.

SZ: Interesting.

VJL: I remember when I was in the police force, we went out, three of us policeman, we went out to dance. At two o'clock in the morning we were coming back. That's in the country, you know. At one time, someone said, "Jules, Jules, step on the side, step on the side." I stepped on the side. I didn't ask him why because it's not right to ask the question right away. When we were at the police station, the other police policeman said to me, "If you had stepped one more step you would have bounced on a donkey." I said, "A donkey?" He said, "Yes. One more step." I couldn't see it. It was evil. I can't see those things.

SZ: Just tell me some more about working here. Did you get to like the art?

VJL: The art? Yes. Yes.

SZ: You did?

VJL: Yes.

SZ: Any shows, exhibitions that you particularly remember or liked?

VJL: I liked all the shows. I always liked them. I always liked them.

SZ: You always went to see them?

VJL: Hmm?

SZ: You would always go to see them?

VJL: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. If even though there's something. . . They can't do nothing to me. The sculpture can do nothing to me.

SZ: That's right.

VJL: [Laughter]

SZ: Well, so what about the big Picasso show [*Pablo Picasso: A Retrospective*, May, 16-September 30, 1980, MoMA Exh.#1290], that was such a big thing.

VJL: The big, big Picasso show.

SZ: Yes.

VJL: Oh, I was there. That was in 1980?

SZ: Yes.

VJL: Oh, that was great. Everything in the garden, the second, third. . . the ground floor, the second, third, fourth floor. Everything was Picasso. You were there at the time?

SZ: Yes.

VJL: Everything was Picasso. That was great. We worked so hard. Every morning when it's five o'clock, the line was all the way by the Hilton [Hotel on 6<sup>th</sup> and 53<sup>rd</sup> Street]. . . going around. . . Everyday was the same, you know. That was a crowd. The big Picasso show. And a lot of people didn't see it still. Although they extend[ed] it for about two more weeks. But still everybody didn't see it.

SZ: And they sold tickets.

VJL: Hmm?

SZ: There were tickets. You had to have a ticket to get in.

VJL: You have to have a ticket. Yes, because I think they had given me six tickets. Yes, they gave me six tickets. [Pause].

SZ: Have any other favorite shows? Any other shows you really liked?

VJL: Let's see. The Miró was great [*Joan Miró*, October 13, 1993-January 11, 1994, MoMA Exh.#1666]. Miró, Picasso. Lots of the shows bring a lot of people. What are the shows again? Let's see. . . I think I can remember all the shows. . .

SZ: Well, let's see. Early on, some of the big ones. . . There was the Cézanne *show* [*Cézanne: The Late Work*, October 7, 1977-Jan 2, 1978, MoMA Exh.# 1188].

VJL: Oh, yes, Cézanne.

SZ: That was the first really big one, I think.

VJL: Yes. Cézanne. I remember that was good. Yes.

SZ: Then there was Picasso. Then there was the re-opening [in May 1984].

VJL: With Cézanne?

SZ: No. When they reopened. After they did the expansion and built this building, you know. There was just a lot of modern stuff. It was Kynaston's [McShine] show. I can't remember what it was called right now [Note: it was called *International Survey of Painting and Sculpture*, May 17-August 19, 1984, MoMA Exh.# 1377]. Then there was Matisse [*The Drawings of Henri Matisse*, February 28-May 14, 1985, MoMA Exh.# 1390].

VJL: The Matisse. The Matisse. When I say Miró, it's Matisse I wanted to say first. [Laughing]. Matisse. Matisse. Matisse. Cézanne, Picasso, Matisse, Miró, Quite a lot of nice shows, you know. Quite a lot of nice shows.

SZ: Jules, what about some of the people, you know, who worked here, whom you worked with, or, you know, got to see. You said, for instance, you remembered Mr. Lieberman's door. You remember Mr. Lieberman?

VJL: Oh, yes. He seldom comes here. But whenever he comes, I see him. Yes, he remembers me too.

SZ: And Bill [William S.] Rubin?

VJL: Yes, Mr. Rubin. Yes, Mr. Rubin. Oh, that's one thing. . . Some people say, "Oh..." and so and so. I like him. Anytime he passes me, he'll give me a little wink. Once I was in the lobby. . . I remember that well. I was in the lobby. The girls were in the checkroom. Mr. Rubin was coming in. He had a bag. I rush to open the door for him and to try to help him. You know what the girls said to me? "Oh boy, you're going to help?" I said, "Yes." It didn't have to be him. It could be anybody who's lame, you help. I always liked Mr. Rubin. I always liked him. Yes.

SZ: Who else? I just thinking about other people?

VJL: Well. Someone else. . . A lot of people have come and go[ne].

SZ: Riva Castleman.

VJL: Yes. Riva Castleman

SZ: Actually I was thinking. . . If you were key man then you had to deal a lot with, let's say, [the Department of] Public Information when they had film crews come in and things like that. You had to get galleries open for them.

VJL: Yes, open the galleries. Sometimes I would be with them. I worked together with them.

SZ: So, you felt this was a good place to work?

VJL: The Museum? Yes.

SZ: Because. . .

VJL: I just loved it. It's a very nice place. Nice place to work. That's one of the nicest

museums too, you know. People are nice, the staff.

SZ: What happened, Jules, when there was the expansion, remember, and things were being. . . When they were changing the Museum and things were knocked down. . .

VJL: Oh, yes. When they were enlarging the Museum? And also the tower. Yes, I remember all that. Oh, the tower. I worked so hard. Everyday I had to check this, check that. It was nice. It was the first time I was issued a radio. They used to call me up. Dorothy [Martinez]. Everybody used to call me and tell me what is what and so forth, you know.

SZ: You hadn't had a radio before then?

VJL: No. There were only four radios, at that time, only, I think, about four radios, we had at that time. Yes.

SZ: Does everybody have a radio now?

VJL: Yes, everybody. They want everybody with a radio.

SZ: Makes it easier?

VJL: Yes, because if there's anything happening you can get a supervisor easier. It's easier, yes. A supervisor or anybody. You can call the Security Office and so forth. If you call, and sometimes some of the radios get defected, and so forth, and you can't get the person you want, you call the Security Office or you get to a phone and call the Security Office to send a supervisor to that post and so forth, or whatever.

SZ: Who are some of the other Security people you've worked with?

VJL: Well, I worked with a lot of them. A lot of them have died already. [John] Douglas died.

[Joe] Davis. [Elvin] Hill. A lot of them. And I liked to work with [Lawrence] Sarandrea.

SZ: Who's that?

VJL: Sarandrea. That's a supervisor. He died. Larry Sarandrea. [Pause] Everybody was the same with me because, you know, I love everybody. Never-the-less, whether they love me or not, I love them. Oh, yes. That's why you see some people asking me, "Man, you don't look your age. You look like you're 40 or 43. What's your secret?" I tell them, "Believing in love." Yes. I love everybody in the world, whether I know the person or not. Every animal, every bird, everything. I love everything. Not because that man hates me, he thinks I'll give you hate for hate no. I'll give him love.

SZ: Jules, tell me about retiring. You had to retire because you were of the age to retire?

VJL: Yes. On the contrary, had I known it was so good, I would have gone two years before, because I had the age.

SZ: So, you are not sorry you retired?

VJL: No.

SZ: No. Do you miss being here at all?

VJL: No, because I know I'm home, I'm free. If I want to come here, I just come. I got my ID card. No, I don't think I forgot my ID.

SZ: Oh, you do have it.

VJL: Yes. [Laughing]. My permanent ID.

SZ: And it lets you come and go?

VJL: Yes. Each time they change it, they change mine. It's very nice.

SZ: Jules, do you think the people they hire today for Security, are they the same? Do they know the same things?

VJL: I don't think so. Like when I went on vacation, or I didn't come for a day, someone would tell me, "Jules, I did your work, yesterday". I say, "No. You did some of the work." Because what I do in the morning, nobody do it. When I left. . . When I was leaving I tell Mr. Williams, "The only person I can recommend for that job is Charles." The one that is there now. It's Charles, because he's the only one who knows what I do in the morning." I remember Mr. Williams asked me to train him, which I did. I go around and I ask the people, the staff whether they are getting good service. They tell me, yes. Anne Morra always wants her office to be locked. When I go on vacation I tell her. And I tell the person, the guard, "Make sure," (I take him to the place), "Make sure that door is always locked." Then when I ask Anne, she says, "Yes. He did a very good job." I said, "Good." That's one thing, when I teach somebody something, I'm not teaching the person halfway. Exactly the way I'm doing it, I show you the same way I'm doing it.

SZ: So, did you get promotions along the way while you were key man or did you just?

VJL: What happened was. . . When I first came here for the job, Mr. Williams told me, "If there's a promotion, I'll have you in mind." Exactly ten months later, they called me down. He used to call me lieutenant. He said, "Lieutenant, sit down. You remember when you came for the job, I told you if there's a promotion, I'll have you in mind?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Well, today is the day. We need a supervisor. And I want you to be the supervisor." What to say. I bend down my head. He said, "You can take a little time. Think about it. And you'll tell me." Never tell him a word. Ten months in the job, I never tell him a word. I know I can handle that very good. I was a cop. Outstationed. If

you stay in the city, you don't know nothing but pounding the beat. . . But if you're outstationed, you know everything. I told you then once they had an NCO conference, where I was stationed. The NCO went. The other guy was on leave. I was the only one in the police station. The Chief of Police, call me on the telephone and asked if I want somebody to stay with me. I said, "No, I can handle everything."

SZ: I've got to turn the tape over.

## **END TAPE 2, SIDE 1**

## **BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE 2**

SZ: OK.

VJL: He asked me if I want somebody to stay with me, like a rural constable or somebody. I said, "No, I can handle everything." He said, "Sure?" I said, "Yes." Now that day when the corporal came back, I don't know what time he was coming back, and he has to do the yearly return, everything that happened throughout the year. He has to [inaudible] his papers, and so forth and do everything. And the next morning he has to send it down to the Commissioner of Police. I stayed there, I had my lunch. I wrote the papers. [Inaudible]. It was a long table. I took all the books. . . the crime register. . . everything. I started working. Everybody passing on the street, "Hey, Juli. . ." "O.K., I'll see you later." When I finished everything, I looked through the books, leaf by leaf, to see if everything was correct. I saw everything was correct. I took the papers. I put them in the corner of a drawer, his drawer. He came in the night, tired, came up, said, "Hi, Juli". I say "Yes, sir." "Any rings?" I mean is there anybody ringing?" I said, "No, sir." And he, "Anything happened?" "No, sir." "Good boy." He said, "I'm so tired." I said, "If you are so tired, you can have a drink." He said, "Well, how?" Give him the bottle. He took one. He said, "You can have one too." I took a little bit. He said, "Now, I have to work on these papers I have to write." I said, "What do you have to do?" he said, "The yearly returns,

everything that happens for the year, throughout the year." I took all the books. I let him take all the books. . . . [Inaudible]. He started looking through the books. He said, "Who did this?" I said, "I did." "How you know these things." I said, "By watching you." He said, "Good boy." He said, "You know what, the only thing I have to do is to sign it." He sign it. The next morning, he sent it down. Oh, that guy love me for that.

SZ: But what does this have to do with your not taking the promotion here?

VJL: Hmm?

SZ: But what does that have to do with your not taking the promotion here?

VJL: In the police force?

SZ: Well, here.

VJL: You see, cause I'm seeing how the guys. . .

SZ: Oh, I see.

VJL: . . .are doing it, the supervisors are doing, and so forth. The aggravation, I didn't like.

SZ: So, you were never sorry you didn't do that?

VJL: No. Not sorry, no.

SZ: Did you like some of the supervisors here better than others?

VJL: I like everybody.

SZ: You liked them all?

VJL: Yeah. You know, some people would ask me when Fred Coxen was here. . . Some people would ask me, "Jules, but why you don't take the supervisor job?" Fred Coxen said, "Don't take it, never take it, Jules." Because he's smart. [Laughing] Oh, Mr. Coxen.

SZ: You liked him?

VJL: Yes, oh yes. Ely Moizman. Remember Ely? He was a Security supervisor. Ely. Do you know Ely gave me a little penknife. He tell me, "Jules, I'll give it to you. That was belonging to my grandfather." He gave it to me. "But please don't cut nobody with it." Because Ely would see a roach, and he wouldn't kill it, you know. He kills nothing. You know, I still have that penknife. Oh, yes. When I'm eating apples, that's the penknife I want. Everything I do, I like that penknife. Yes. The all time penknife, it's got a lot of spring. It's a little thing like this, small. It's nice. Mike Hardin. He was one of the supervisors I work with.

SZ: Did you always feel that the Museum was secure? And safe?

VJL: The museum was secure?

SZ: Yes.

VJL: When I was here? Oh, yes. Yes.

SZ: No thefts?

VJL: No. No.

SZ: So, now who is the key man now? Charles?

VJL: Charles. Charles is the key man now. He works well.

SZ: Good. Thank you. I can't think of any other questions. So, if you can think of anything else to tell me. . .

VJL: Hmm. What will I say?

SZ: Hmm?

VJL: I say, what will I say?

SZ: I don't know. [Laughter] It was good. Thanks. Long time, huh?

VJL: What will I say? Let's see. Why don't you tell me something.

SZ: Well it's a long time to work one place. It's a long time to be in the same place. Twenty-six years.

VJL: Yes, Twenty-six years and three months. A lot of people tell me, no, they can't work so long in one place. This was nice. Nice place to work. Some people tell me, "Why you stay?" I [would] say, "Now, let's see, well, I work here, let's say, six years, then I left this job and go somewhere else. Within three months, because I'm new to the place, if they have to get rid of somebody, it's me. So I better stay where I am."

SZ: Right.

VJL: And thanks God, I stayed until I got my retirement. Yes.

SZ: Which is enough? I mean, it's a good retirement?

VJL: Yes. Yes.

SZ: Thank you.

VJL: I don't think, I don't think I will work no more.

SZ: No?

VJL: No.

SZ: What if they asked you to come back here? Would you come back?

VJL: To work? No. [Laughing]. I would say, if they really need some help, really need some help, and I'm available and they ask me, I may. But for me to come and say, I need a job. . . no.

SZ: Well, Merry Christmas.

VJL: Same to you.

**END TAPE 2, SIDE 2**

**END INTERVIEW**