

**FAMILY LATE SKATE IN ANACOSTIA PARK  
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

**WASHINGTON, DC**

**Oral History Interview**

**with  
LIONELL SIMPSON  
by  
DAN KERR**

**ANACOSTIA PARK  
July 27, 2019**

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ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

NARRATOR: Lionell Simpson  
DATE: July 27, 2019  
INTERVIEWER: Dan Kerr  
PLACE: Anacostia Park

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**Dan Kerr** 00:05

Tonight is July 27, 2019. We are at Late Skate at Anacostia Park. Do I have permission to record this interview?

**Lionell Simpson** 00:18

Yes, I enjoy doing this. I've been doing this ever since I was four years old. You know the park is is nice and quiet. I like doing this. This is my my hobby, my relaxation. I have been in stage shows, you know, I enjoy doing them. And I have won a couple of medals and gold medals. I missed one because I was out of town. So now I'm here doing this. I just like doing this you know.

**Dan Kerr** 00:59

Could you tell me your name?

**Lionell Simpson** 01:02

Lionell Simpson.

**Dan Kerr** 01:03

Okay. Do you have a stage name?

**Lionell Simpson** 01:05

No. So I'm just, I just do this because it's fun. It's fun I'm into and this is something I enjoy doing. In my spare time. You know, it's just relaxation. And I come down here. I enjoyed the music. I enjoy skating. I enjoyed the people the company. Yeah, I just I just enjoy the park. You know, like I said, it's quiet. You can come down here, you can chill, you can chill out. You skate around. Nobody bothers you. You know. This park had been here for a long, long, very long time. This is the first skating rink I started at when I was four years old. My stepmother

she started out skating here. That's what made me want to get into the skating thing, because she became a rink guard too. So that's what made me become a rink guard. So, it is very fundamental like I see it so, you know, I enjoy doing it. Yes, I enjoy doing the shows. I have a couple of gold medals at home that I won. I didn't do the last show because I was out of town. I'm, like, Betty Dodds was the host of the show before she passed away. I just want to mention that I love experiencing new things.

**Dan Kerr** 02:36

So what did you like about skating as a kid?

**Lionell Simpson** 02:44

Like I said, is relaxation, you know, it relaxes your stress or takes the stress off. You know, you can come down here, you can skate, nobody bothers you. And I was like, like I said, I just like doing it.

**Dan Kerr** 03:00

When did you start performing in the competitions?

**Lionell Simpson** 03:09

Back when they first first had when they first started out, my first skating show was The Evening with [inaudible]. I did that one. Um, then I did a couple of more. But I wasn't a volunteer rink guard like I am now. So I was just skating because I didn't have the badge or nothing like that. So I just started doing it. You know, because like I said, I just seen it was fun.

**Lionell Simpson** 03:37

It was it takes. I mean, you gotta do like tricks and stuff like that, like just skate around. Like, I don't do backflips like that. Like, I just go to blaze and jump over people's heads and stuff like that. I mean, it's real fundamental. I like I said, I enjoy it. I really do. I really enjoy it. And I love it. I love It, I really love it. It makes me feel happy. You know, because I come down here I can get my stress, relaxation, you know, like I said, it's just fun.

**Dan Kerr** 03:38

What does it take to win a gold medal?

**Dan Kerr** 03:44

Does it takes a lot of training?

**Lionell Simpson** 04:14

Yes, yes. I started from rollerblades on up to four wheels. I started when I was little, you know. And now that I just like I just enjoy doing it. Because this is what I do.

**Dan Kerr** 04:29

So you've been here since you were four. How is it the place similar or different from when you were four?

**Lionell Simpson** 04:36

I mean, to me, nothing, nothing has changed about it, you know, it's still the same, you know, only difference is they is they got new new people, and you know, so like I said, I like the people. I'm comfortable with them, and I'm comfortable coming down here, you know, and they're real friendly, you know. I just, I just enjoy them. I enjoy him so much. That's what makes me want to come down.

**Dan Kerr** 05:02

You said your mother in law was ...

**Lionell Simpson** 05:03

My stepmother. Yes. before she passed away she used to come down and do skating shows too. And that's what made me want to start going. Because I seen her joy.

**Dan Kerr** 05:11

What was her name?

**Lionell Simpson** 05:15

Showa.

**Dan Kerr** 05:17

She was also...

**Lionell Simpson** 05:18

She was a volunteer rink guard too. Yes. That's what made me get into the rink.

**Dan Kerr** 05:23

Did they have live music?

**Lionell Simpson** 05:25

Yes, yes. "Brother" [inaudible], here come down to play loud music like Saturdays and Sundays and stuff like that. Yeah. So that's why I just enjoy going, you know?

**Dan Kerr** 05:37

Did you also come out here with the family?

**Lionell Simpson** 05:39

Yeah, no, I didn't come out. I just came down here to do this. Because this is this is what I love.

**Dan Kerr** 05:50

Who were some of your favorite skaters?

**Lionell Simpson** 05:53

Well, one of them is Larry "Shocka Hammer" Galloway. But he passed. The second one is Mr. Harvey. He was here. Jermaine Henson. Who else? It's a whole lot of them. You know, I just like I said, I enjoy skating around in a band with around them, you know, it's just fundamental.

**Dan Kerr** 06:20

Did you partner with them?

**Lionell Simpson** 06:23

Sometimes we do trios going around the skating rink and stuff like that we want win trophies and stuff like that, you know, it's fundamental. There's really nothing more than I could really say on it because like I said, I liked I enjoyed the fun, you know, I like I enjoy the company. I come down here to people, they love it. They'd like to see me skate. So that's why I like doing it. Because the people I do it for the people. I just like going there.

**Dan Kerr** 07:00

Where would you like to see this place in 10 years?

**Lionell Simpson** 07:04

To be honest? I don't know. I don't know. I mean, I would still like to see it be here. But if they decide to do something with it, then that would be that would be

great too. Like change, change the floor. Put a better sound system down here, like, changes all the things, you know, like, I mean, like, just change all the old stuff and bring in bring in better people. You know, I'm saying that's what I enjoy coming down. Enjoy the skaters. I would like to see more performers, you know, more performers than we had this year than last year, you know, I will I would love to see that because like I said, I enjoy doing this. This is my life. This is what relaxes me. You know. I just I just love it.

**Dan Kerr** 08:14

Do you have any last thoughts you'd like to leave us with?

**Lionell Simpson** 08:18

No, there's really nothing more to say because it the skating rink is nice. You know, like I said you come down and enjoy yourself and it's fundamental.

**Dan Kerr** 08:32

Thank you.

**Lionell Simpson** 08:32

Thank you.