

*The 1930s were a tough time for Americans caught in the grip of the Great Depression. Jobs were scarce, and money was tight. Life was even worse for African Americans, who had to deal with the added burden of racial prejudice. Unemployment was as high as 80 percent in neighborhoods such as Harlem in New York City, where Colin Powell grew up. People struggled to pay rent, buy food, and secure other necessities.*

## from Chapter 2 of *Colin Powell*

by Catherine Reef

1 Luther and Maud Powell, Colin’s parents, felt lucky to have jobs during these hard times. Luther worked as a shipping clerk while his wife earned money as a seamstress. The Powells had come to the United States from the West Indian nation of Jamaica, determined to build a better life. When their son, Colin Luther, was born on April 5, 1937, they vowed that he would receive a good education. He would get a steady job and escape the worries that so many people faced.

2 In 1940, the Powells moved to another New York City neighborhood, the Hunts Point area of the South Bronx. With their parents at work all day, Colin and his older sister, Marilyn, were among the first “latch-key kids,” Colin Powell recalled. Although the children came home from school to an empty apartment, they rarely felt lonely. The Powell children grew up near many relatives and friends—what Powell called a “floating family.”

3 “I lived in a big extended family,” Colin Powell said, “where everybody got together, especially on Thanksgiving and Christmas. These two holidays were a very important time for us. Aunts, uncles, and cousins would all be there. We would assemble either around the table or in front of the couch and have our picture taken.”

4 Today, those holiday photographs are among the family’s treasured possessions. “It brings back many fond memories to see those pictures over a 30-year time frame and see the changes from year to year,” Powell remarked.



5 In Hunts Point, there was always a cousin or playmate to help Colin pass the time. Colin and his best friend, Gene Norman, bought square hamburgers at the White Castle restaurant. They played stickball, a city street game, and raced their bicycles up and down Kelly Street, where the Powells lived.

6 “The favorite pastime of the kids on my block was what we called ‘making the walk,’” Powell said. “We would start at the corner of Kelly Street, walk up 163rd Street, around Southern Boulevard to Westchester, then back down Westchester to Kelly Street.” As an adult, Powell remembered that the walk “was an exciting thing to do because there were toy stores at every corner on Westchester, Southern Boulevard had three big movies, and all along the way

- 23 According to the passage, when Colin Powell was young, which was the **main** source of news about wars and other world events in his home?
- A television
  - B books and newspapers
  - C Web sites on the Internet
  - D word-of-mouth stories from neighbors
- 24 Which choice **best** describes Colin Powell's career as a student?
- A He did poorly until he developed an interest in geology.
  - B He was an honor student for whom learning always came easily.
  - C He was a late bloomer who struggled before discovering the ROTC.
  - D He did well early on but lost focus between high school and college.
- 25 Which distinction was a continuing source of pride for Maud Powell?
- A She was a college graduate.
  - B She was a high school graduate.
  - C She was one of the first women in the military.
  - D She was active in the struggle for civil rights.
- 26 The book from which this chapter is taken is **best** described as
- A a diary.
  - B a novel.
  - C a biography.
  - D an autobiography.

