

Interview with Jocelyn Coleman Walton and Gretchen Coleman Thomas by Jacob Barry for the Historic New England 100 Years—100 Communities Project, Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts, July 15, 2011.

JACOB BARRY: This is Jacob Barry interviewing Jocelyn Walton and Gretchen Coleman Thomas on July 15th, 2011, for Historic New England's 100 Year—100 Communities Project on the history of black tourism in New England. The interview is being conducted at their home in Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts. So could you just say your names, so that we have on the recording what you sound like, so that we can pick it out some?

GRETCHEN COLEMAN THOMAS: Gretchen Coleman Thomas.

JOCELYN COLEMAN WALTON: And I'm going to use my maiden name, too: Jocelyn Coleman Walton.

JB: Okay, thank you. And so where are you folks from, originally?

GT & JW: Boston.

JB: Boston. Where in Boston?

GT: Roxbury.

JB: Where in Roxbury? Did you only live in one home there?

GT & JW: Yes.

JB: Okay, and how did you first come to Oak Bluffs.

JW: Our grandmother [clears throat]—excuse me. Our grandmother worked here, and initially brought our father and our aunt here as teenagers. And then as we came along one by one, each of us was brought here for—at birth, or as soon after birth as possible. And in 1941, they bought the cottage which is two doors away, and then we came every single summer until it was time to make some real money, and go away to college. And spent the full summers here.

JB: Okay, and so what year did you start coming?

JW: I started in 1939.

GT: I came in '42—no, June of '43. I was born in December of '42.

JB: Yeah, so basically from birth.

JW: That's right.

JB: That's pretty impressive.

GT: I was six months old.

JB: Wow! So what did your—you said your grandmother worked here. What did she do?

JW: Well, before we were born—before we were teenagers—

GT: Granny actually came as a young girl. She was going to a finishing school in Boston with one of the Wampanoag Indians that lived in Gay Head. And she came down with them, because she befriended one of the Vanderhoops in Boston, at the finishing school. And they brought her down for a summer. And she fell in love with it and said, "I'm going to have a piece of this." And then she started bringing—as **Jocie** said, she started bringing us, as we were born, and we'd spend a whole summer.

JW: And she didn't work when she was taking care of us.

GT: In fact, the little house between Granny's house and this house was a barn when we were kids. And then as we got older, my grandfather and his brother, and my Dad, made it into a two-bedroom cottage that Granny rented every summer. And that afforded us the opportunity to be here.

JB: Oh, great. And what did your father do for a living?

GT: He was a social worker.

JB: Okay.

JW: But our grandfather and grandparents are the ones who bought the house.

JB: Yeah.

JW: And our grandfather was a presser by trade.

GT: And in the theater by love.

JW: He'd work in the garment district. But his passion was the theater.

GT: Theater.

JW: And he acted in plays, and directed plays, and produced plays throughout his life. There's more about him we can tell you.

JB: Yeah, tell me more about your grandfather!

GT: Well, he studied under Longfellow at Harvard. I wish I had brought the book; I started to bring it. I have so much on Daddy. He and his brother Warren Coleman, who used to own a house down by Our Market (a store in Oak Bluffs Harbor), they were in theater from a young age, directing. He directed and traveled around the world with *Anna Lucasta*. He had people in his—in his plays. Ruby Dee and Aussie Davis got married during the matinee, and the evening performance, and Daddy **Ralf** was their Best Man.

JB: Wow!

GT: Cicely Tyson worked with them, Rex Harrison. Oscar Lee Brown, Hilda Simms. Daddy did plays in Chicago, in Boston, in Providence, Rhode Island. He did summer plays; he had a summer theater group here on the Vineyard, and they used to have their cast parties on the lawn.

JB: Wow!

GT: So he was—we knew he had a nine to five job in the garment district, but he was well known—and in fact before he passed away, he was

named the Dean of Boston's Black Theater. He passed away in October of '76.

JB: Do you remember any specific titles of plays that he produced?

GT: Oh, yeah! *Anna Lucasta*, *You Can't Take it With You*, *Streetcar Named Desire*. *Weigh in the Balance*—that was written by his brother. Jocie has a poster [coughs]—the Boston community gave him (a tribute) —we knew he had cancer. And the Negro Repertory Theater, which he founded, came to the family and asked for a family representative to sit on that committee. Rather than have a celebration after his life, they wanted to celebrate his life, so we did the Tribute to Ralf Coleman in Boston, at one of his favorite theaters, New England Life Hall. I was on the committee, and I was the emcee. And as you can see, we did *Detective Story*, *Raisin in the Sun*, *Tambourines to Glory*, *Weigh in the Balance*, *You Can't Take it With You*, and *Anna Lucasta*, which was—I think *Anna Lucasta* was probably his most famous, don't you?

JW: Mm-hm, yeah.

GT: Because he traveled abroad, as well as Chicago, New York, with the cast of *Anna Lucasta*. He'd get one cast on the road, and then he'd train another cast. So they might have it going in three different cities at one particular time. We had it in October of '76—or '75.

JW: Yeah, it was '75.

GT: And he passed away in October of '76, yeah.

JW: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

JB: So with a nine to five job and all this time in the theater, how did he juggle all this?

GT: He did a great job! [Laughs]

JW: Yeah, he did a great job. I think part of your question is how did we get to have a home here?

JB: Mm-hm.

JW: Because Granny was just determined. There were five of us, five children, five grandchildren, and she didn't want us on the streets of Boston in the summer time. And so she did whatever she could to be able to bring us here. And she—my grandmother was—her mother was—

GT: Swedish.

JW: —Swedish, and her father was African American. And you can well imagine—she was born in 1896—the kind of experience she had growing up in Boston. And family was very important to her, because the whites called her nigger, and the blacks called her poor white trash, because of the mixed marriage. And [clears throat] she always got jobs where she could take the summer off, or she'd leave it and get another job when she got back. And if when she was hired, if they thought she was white, she worked as a salesperson in stores. If they recognized that she was African American, or mixed, then she would be on the elevators, or doing other kinds of jobs. But she always had something where the day school closed, she could put us in—the next day she could put us in her little old—she had a Woody—her little old Woody, and bring us down here, with the dogs and the plants, and the five of us in that car, for the whole summer!

GT: Now, she tells a story that my grandfather—when she wasn't working, my grandfather would come home every Friday and give her whatever money it took to run the house. And she said she would take a dollar

or a dollar fifty and put it in an envelope. And her mortgage was \$5.38, on the house.

JW: That's wonderful!

GT: And when she had her \$5.38 at the end of the month, she would go directly to the president of the bank and give her cash towards her mortgage.

JW: Mm-hm.

GT: So she bought the first lot. Then when she got that down, she bought the second lot. So all of this property Granny purchased.

JB: Wow!

GT: That was my aunt's house across the road.

JW: Mm-hm.

GT: And this—this property my Dad had a small house on. That property my brother got, which was the barn, and then the big house.

JB: Wow!

GT: And he even said to her one year, "Why do you keep renting the same house?" And she said, "We're not renting it; we own it." And he told her, "You can't buy anything without me." She said, "Well, I did."

JB: [Laughs]

GT: And this was back in the forties, early forties.

JW: And that's when she bought it, in 1941, mm-hm.

JB: Wow, a strong lady!

JW: Oh, she was!

GT: Yeah, she was.

JW: She had a vision. She really had a vision.

GT: She really did.

JW: And the thing is, too, that she was a very humble woman. And like after she bought the first couple of lots, the person who owned this lot said, “Ms. Coleman, I’m getting ready to sell that, and I know you want to keep your children, want the privacy here. And so I’ll offer it to you first.” And Granny’s favorite expression was, “A nickel down, and a nickel when you catch me. That’s how I’ll pay for it.” But she—she was true to her word, and she paid on time, and so she was able to eventually buy up these lots—not to be a landowner, but to have a place for her family.

JB: That’s great.

JW: That was her legacy to us. That is her legacy to us.

JB: That’s beautiful.

JW: Mm-hm.

JB: And how many other black families around here were there, when she was buying up all this land?

GT: Dorothy West lived right next door to us, the playwright. Adam Clayton Powell and his wife’s house was at the end of the road.

JW: When we first—

GT: Pretty much everybody up there, right?

JW: Well, the Bayne’s house was owned by whites at the time we lived here. But then the Tines’s lived down there, and—

GT: And the Smith’s, next door.

JW: —the Smith’s. And the Tannahill’s, and Maxwell—I mean, with the exception of the house in front of me, to the side of me, and then the Andrews lived there and the Edwards lived there.

GT: Right.

JW: But everybody else—they were all black families.

GT: Everybody else was black.

JB: Wow!

JW: And of course, we grew up with people who we saw—

GT: From all over the country.

JW: —every single summer, and they also were fortunate enough, most of them, to stay all summer. And now as adults, as grown-ups, we get to see them again.

JB: That's wonderful. So you said they came from all over the country. Can you talk about where they were coming from?

GT: Oh, Chicago, Washington D.C.

JW: New York.

GT: New York, New Jersey.

JW: Worcester.

GT: Connecticut.

JW: Yeah. But we also befriended natives.

GT: Right.

JW: There were two families in particular who lived here year-round, and they were African American and Indian mix. And one of them's father owned—have you been downtown, on Circuit Avenue?

JB: Yeah, yeah.

JW: Well, right between, there's a little alleyway—in fact there's a for sale sign that's no bigger than this placemat! But there was a shoe shine shop there.

GT: The Frye's.

JW: The Frye's owned a shoe shop, and we befriended—Vinnie Frye was one of our buddies, and then another family, the Randolph's, who lived off of New York Avenue. And it was, you know, and then the

beauty of what we experienced was growing up from little kids, and staying here through our teenage years, you know. And as children, and I just took a walk this morning with one of our houseguests, down the back way to get downtown—every morning we would get up and get dressed, and go to Bible School down at the Tabernacle.

GT: In the Tabernacle.

JW: And we had arts and crafts, and we had singing, and we had prayer service, and stories, and it was just the most—from nine to twelve.

GT: Yeah.

JW: And then at twelve o'clock we'd walk back home, the five of us, like stair steps [laughs], and have—

GT: Granny would have lunch ready.

JW: She'd have our lunch.

GT: And your bathing suit spread out on your bed, and your towel.

JB: [Laughs]

JW: We had to do our chores, and then we'd walk back down, and go down to the beach. And we went down—the Town Beach. You walked past the pay beach—I'm sure you've heard the stories about the Pay Beach, and the Inkwell?

JB: No, I haven't. No.

GT: They wouldn't let us, even if we had our money for the Pay Beach, they wouldn't let us in, because we were African Americans.

JB: Okay.

GT: So we'd go to the beach next store to it, and then jump off the jetties and swim over to the pay beach.

JW: Off the wharf, yeah.

JB: [Laughs]

GT: Off the wharf.

JW: Yeah, and in the water, just going, “Hello! Hello! We’re all in the same water!”

JB: [Laughs]

JW: But, and then it became the place to go. There was a raft there; there was a wharf there—a pier, a pier there. And so—and that’s where you grew, you know.

GT: That’s where we met everybody.

JW: Where you met everybody.

GT: And hung out on the beach all day.

JW: That’s right. And then we’d come back home, and—

GT: Have dinner, and clean up.

JW: And play.

GT: And change, and head out to a party—

JW: As teenagers.

GT: —or to the flying horses, or to get ice cream.

JW: Yeah.

GT: WE had a lot of freedom.

JW: The clams were fifty cents for a half pint, and now almost fourteen dollars. But fifty cents was fine, because for fifty cents an hour you could clean someone’s house, or you could babysit. And even as, when I got into college, you could tutor! I think in high school I started tutoring. And so the fifty cents would buy you clams, and that was all we needed, right?

GT: Uh-huh.

JS: And the flying horses.

GR: Uh-huh.

JB: So these classes at the Tabernacle—I mean, who was going? Was it just African Americans, or white kids?

JW: Oh no, it was mixed. It was definitely mixed.

GT: Very mixed, yeah.

JW: It was the church—the Methodist campground organization ran it. And it was open to everybody, you know. And you just knew once that bell pealed at nine o'clock, you better get your butt down there, you know, because you didn't want to be late! But it was just a wonderful experience.

JB: And did you decide to go to these classes?

GT: No, Granny!

JB: Granny sent you? [Laughs]

GT: But once we went, we loved it.

JW: Sure we did.

GT: It was great. I mean, you met other people, and we would make wind chimes, and we had gimp and we'd make things. I mean, it was arts and crafts, and as Jocie said, it was storytelling. I don't remember field trips.

JW: No, no.

GT: We didn't do field trips.

JW: No, we didn't.

GT: So we were pretty much, you know, in one location.

JW: Stationary.

GT: But there was lots to do!

JW: Mm-hm.

GT: And you met new people, and made new friends. And because Jocie was the oldest, and then we were every—well, she and my sister

Marcia were thirteen months apart, and then the rest of us were two years apart. So by the time Jocie was ten, you know, we were too young to hang out with her, so we had our own friends. Everybody had their own group of friends that they looked forward to seeing, every single summer! Everybody came back, every summer.

JB: That's pretty impressive. So can you describe like what the parties were like, when you were teenagers?

GT: [Laughs]

JW: They were all house parties.

GT: Yeah.

JW: And we grew up in the doo-wop age; you know, this was in the fifties. And you were always in love, and hoping someone would notice you, or hoping the person you were in love with—

JB: [Laughs]

JW: I mean, typical teenage kind of years. And I think even before the parties, though, we were allowed to go downtown. Granny would let us go downtown. And in those days, where Reliable Market is there was a drugstore.

GT: Soda jerk—Freddy was the soda jerk.

JW: Yeah, Rexall—Rexall Drug.

GT: Rexall Drug.

JW: And you could go in there, and if you bought a soda, you know, the old-fashioned kind of soda, milkshake soda kind of things, then he would let you play the juke box, and we learned how to dance.

GT: Right, we learned how to dance in the drugstore.

JW: Practice our dance steps, you know, and we would dance for the upcoming parties. And when that store closed and the lights went off

on Circuit Avenue, you had to head home. And if you were late, you were in trouble; you could get grounded. [Laughs]

GT: Nothing worse than being grounded in the summer.

JB: I'm sure.

JW: Especially here, yeah.

JB: Yeah, what time was that when Circuit shut down?

JW: Maybe it was ten o'clock—nine or ten o'clock.

GT: Nine or ten.

JW: Yeah, when the stores would close down. And it was just—it was a free, easy life, where—and the beauty was that Granny just—there was such a mutual trust. We knew what she expected of us.

GT: Mm-hm.

JW: Number one, we were Coleman's, and we were supposed to act accordingly. And number two, if we—we respected her so much, it was easy to obey, because she was just so gracious and giving and loving. And that's all she asked of us, you know, except for our chores and what have you. And then sometimes when we were—I can remember when we were young teenagers, we would—we would go downtown, and then we'd decide we wanted to go skinny-dipping. And we would go down to the pay beach, and of course we're sneaking away from the boys; we don't want the boys to know we're skinny-dipping.

JB: Yeah.

JW: And we'd go down on the beach, and we'd put Gretchen and her girlfriend Charlene in charge—

GT: We'd be the watchdogs.

JB: [Laughs]

JW: They were watching out to make sure, to let us know. And we would take off our clothes, and go in the—and of course, this is the place you're not supposed to be anyway, because this is the pay beach! And secondly, you're not supposed to be skinny-dipping! And one time I remember Charlene's brother came up, and said, "Don't you tell them we're here." We're like, "Oh my God!"

GT: [Laughs]

JW: And it was like racing crazy to put our clothes on! We just had—it was just fun.

JB: Yeah.

JW: Free, fun.

JB: That's great.

GT: And even as kids, walking downtown, you know, the Oak Bluffs harbor wasn't then what it is now. It was a little scrawny beach, and we would go downtown, and a little bit bored on our way. So if we'd see a rowboat tied up, we'd untie it and row around the Oak Bluffs harbor, and bring it back and retie it, and go on about our business!

JW: Right, right.

GT: But that was the limit of the trouble, if you want to call it trouble, that we would get into.

JW: Mm-hm. Mm-hm.

GT: Like Jocie said, we feared Granny more than anything—than police. Plus, everybody knew us. When they'd see five kids together, they knew we were the Coleman kids.

JW: [Laughs]

GT: And the last thing you want is for Granny to get a phone call, or a visit, because she knew the Chief of Police. I mean, she knew everybody!

JW: Mm-hm.

GT: And they knew who we were, even though we may not have known who they were.

JW: Mm-hm.

GT: So they were always watching. I remember as a teenager, my girlfriend Charlene and some other girls—the big thing when you became a teenager was to meet the boats on Friday night, to see if any guys got off the boat. Well, from here to Vineyard Haven was a long walk!

JB: Yeah.

GT: So, I would get out on the road and hitchhike, but my girlfriends would be hiding behind a tree or a bush. So a car would stop, thinking they were picking me up, and they'd all jump in the car, and there'd be six of us there taken to Vineyard Haven. One time this elderly gentleman—I jumped in the back seat. And he had a convertible, and he kept looking in the rearview mirror, and I'm saying, "Uh-oh!" And he's looking at me in the rearview mirror, and when I got out he said, "You're a Coleman, aren't you?" And I was like, "Oh, busted!" Because Granny had no idea we were hitchhiking, and probably would have killed us if she knew! And she said, "You're a Coleman, aren't you?" And I said, "Yes." He said, "Don't worry, I won't tell Luella!"

JB: [Laughs]

GT: [Laughs] But that's the kind of fun we had. Then there were other times when you know, I remember as a teenager getting together five or six people. We packed a big lunch, and we rode our bicycles up to Gay Head.

JW: That's right, mm-hm.

GT: By the time we got there, we couldn't make it back home! So we would call Granny, and she'd jump in the Woody and drive up to Gay Head and pick us all up, stack the bikes, and we'd be on each other's laps. But we couldn't make it back home! And she would come and get us!

JW: Mm-hm.

GT: It was just a carefree living.

JW: Mm-hm.

GT: We were here 'til Labor Day.

JW: Mm-hm.

GT: And dreaded going back home! The city was so strange to us, after being here, and walking barefoot, and having so much freedom. It felt more confined, going back to the city.

JB: I imagine.

JW: Mm-hm.

GT: Even though those days were nothing like it is now. I mean, it was no violence. We weren't afraid to walk anywhere. But it was going from all this freedom to a more structured environment that we just weren't ready for! [Laughs]

JB: Yeah, I'm sure, going back to school and stuff like that.

JW: Mm-hm.

JB: So how did, like, growing up with African American kids from New York and D.C., and Chicago and stuff like that—how did that affect your sense of what it meant to be African American? Did that change your perspective in any way?

JW: I don't think so. I think, though, that being here, with so many different kids from so many different places and experiences, that you had a stronger sense of self, a stronger sense of—of not being looked down upon. Growing up in Boston, we lived in an integrated neighborhood, of course, because that's how Roxbury was in those days. But in the schools, the teachers more or less let you know that you weren't—you were not as acceptable. And I mean, it was very subtle; some of the things that they did were very, very subtle. But when you came here, you felt like you belonged to a community, and you were fine! You had a—I think you had a better sense of self here than you did. And even—even the whites who lived here, I don't remember ever having negative experiences because of race.

GT: There as only one race riot, on Circuit Avenue.

JW: Yeah, and that was—we were teenagers then.

GT: Yeah, I might have been thirteen or fourteen.

JW: And I really have blocked on that, so maybe you remember it better than I do.

GT: Yeah, I remember that. We were all at Vinnie Frye's father's shoe shop, and we'd sit outside. Of course, he wouldn't let us inside. But then a couple of cars of white kids came up the street with sticks and bats, and all hell broke out!

JB: Oh, my goodness!

GT: That was the one and only time that we ever had any kind of—no, then we had one at, when Bill had—my brother had a restaurant across the street from the state beach, the Oak Bluffs Town Beach.

JW: And the Inkwell.

GT: Yeah, from the Inkwell.

JW: From the Seaview—have you seen the Seaview condos, across the street from the Inkwell?

GT: It was over where you were.

JW: You weren't far from there, yeah.

JB: Yeah, yeah.

GT: There used to be a hotel and a snack bar when we were kids, and we could run over there and get a hotdog or hamburger. But then my brother and his wife at the time had the restaurant on the first floor. And I remember coming down early on a Friday afternoon. I was grown then; then our children started coming here, once we grew up, and spent the summer. And I went over to my brothers' restaurant, like three or four in the afternoon, to help them prepare for the evening crowd. And we were in the kitchen, cutting up stuff, and getting ready, and these two white fellows came to the screen door. And it was locked, and they kept shaking it, and, "Let us in! Let us in!" I said, "No, you have to go around the front, and come through the front door." "Well, all you are is the niggers in the kitchen!" They didn't know my brother owned the restaurant, or at least was leasing it. So they went to cut the screen, and my brother went over there with a knife, and said, "You'll lose your hand." And they called me a black bitch, and I mean, it got very ugly, to the point where it actually got into a fist fight. And one of the guys jumped me; one of

the guys jumped my brother. And I remember one of the guys had long hair, and at that time at the back door of the restaurant there was a high concrete platform. And I remember when he grabbed me, I took his hair, and I'm banging his head on the concrete.

JW: Whoa!

GT: Meanwhile, he ripped my shirt off. Somebody called the police; the police came. They arrested them, and they said to them, "You're going to jail. You came here and messed with the wrong family. The Coleman's don't bother anyone."

JW: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

GT: Of course, I needed to come home, because I was shirtless!

JB: Yeah!

GT: Walked in the door. Granny about had a fit! "What if the newspapers had taken a picture?"

JB: [Laughs]

GT: I mean, never mind we had a fight.

JW: Yeah.

GT: And she always taught us to stick up for ourselves, and to—you know, Granny was feisty.

JW: Yeah.

JB: Yeah, seems like it.

GT: If somebody picked on you, you get them! You know, don't let them—in fact, we would get in trouble if somebody beat up one of our siblings, and we didn't jump in at beat that person up!

JW: I'm thinking that the other—when we were teenagers and they had the problem, it was because of the coin—there was a coin diving situation. Down at the Oak Bluffs Wharf, the guys used to go in the

water as people would walk down the wharf to get on the boat, and they would say, “How about a coin? How about a coin?” And so the people would throw over the coins, throw over coins, and the guys would go down and get them, and put them in their mouth until they—until they finished. And that’s how a lot of the young men on this island, black guys, were able to stay here.

GT: It paid their room and board.

JW: Because they were able to make enough money, pay room and board, and stay on the Island, if they didn’t have families here. And then it seemed that some white guys came along, and they wanted to get in on it, and there was a big territorial kind of—

GT: It was turf.

JW: —you know, turf fight. And that kind of spilled over in to Ocean Park, and it was kind of messy. I don’t know if anyone told you to talk to Richard Washington, who has wonderful stories? And has them from—he has as good a memory as Gretchen’s, and he tells stories from the guys’ point of view, and the things that—and he’s now, he lives here I guess six months.

GT: Six months out of the year.

JW: Yeah, six months out of the year, like we do. So, yeah.

JB: And was he—is he like your age?

JW: Oh, yeah. We grew up together.

JB: You grew up with them?

JW: Mm-hm.

GT: We can give you his number.

JB: Oh yeah, that would be great! So, can you tell me a little bit more about the trip to Oak Bluffs from Boston?

GT: [Laughs] Well, it depended on the times. I do remember when the train used to run to Wood's Hole.

JW: Mm-hm.

GT: And Granny would put us all on—we'd all be on the train with Granny, from North Station, or South Station, right to Wood's Hole. And we'd walk on the boat. And that was before she had Woody.

JW: Before she had a car.

GT: And when she got the car, we'd all pile in the car.

JW: We need to say that sometimes in addition to plants, and five kids—

GT: And a dog.

JW: —and a dog, there could be anything from a door on the roof.

GT: A new chair.

JW: A new chair.

GT: Chaise lounge.

JW: Pots and—whatever she could fit in that car. And then—this may not be appropriate to be told, but because Granny did not have money, you know, and you had to pay for each child over a certain age, we would hide under a blanket, in the car, with the dog! [Laughs]

GT: While she's pulling on the boat.

JW: While she's pulling on—and, “You kids be quiet now. You know what we have to do now.” [Laughter] And we would come over. And as I said before, you did it because Granny was doing it for us.

GT: Mm-hm.

JW: WE knew that. Granny lived to one hundred.

GT: Here on this island.

JW: And she passed away here on this island, at Windemere. And she's buried here, and our grandfather and our father's also buried here.

JB: That's impressive. Would you stop anywhere along the trip?

JW: Oh, no!

GT: Oh, no!

JW: Because you were high-tailing it for the boat!

GT: You had to make that boat.

JW: You had to make that boat! And so, no.

GT: Huh-uh.

JW: And if we didn't have—if we had anything, it was peanut butter and jelly sandwiches in the car. We didn't have money, so when they talk about it being an elite place, for elite people?

GT: Huh-uh.

JW: Many of the people that we grew up with—most of them that we grew up with came from very humble means.

GT: Mm-hm.

JW: But their parents had a vision, and had a desire to be here, and they found a way to do that.

JB: Yeah.

JW: I can remember, I was telling someone about the funny part would not so much be coming to the Island, and the stress of making that trip. Because that was stressful, because the last, what, twenty miles is one—a single lane.

GT: One road.

JW: And one road, and you always got behind someone. And Granny didn't curse, or anything like that, but she sure got mad when she was behind somebody really slow! She could say anything at the time. But when we were leaving here to get back to Boston, loaded down again with everything and five kids, we would get to the bridge at

Vineyard Haven, that separates Oak Bluffs from Vineyard Haven, and Granny would start beeping her horn to let them know: we're on our way! Hold the boat!

GT: We're on our way! Hold the boat!

JW: [Laughs] And they would do that.

GT: They would do that!

JW: In those days. I mean, now it's hard to even get there in a timely manner, because there's so much traffic. But in those days, they would do that.

JB: SO the ferry wasn't coming into Oak Bluffs during those days?

JW: It was. It had to be, yeah. But there's a certain point at which it stops.

GT: It stops October, and it doesn't pick up again until probably mid-June.

JW: And I'm thinking that it must—I'm trying to think of why we were going to Vineyard Haven to get the boat.

GT: Well plus, it didn't run after like six o'clock.

JB: Oh, okay.

JW: Yeah, so maybe we were late going over.

GT: Yeah, yeah.

JB: And so where did you end up going to college?

JW: I went to Morgan State.

GT: I went to Northeastern, in Boston.

JB: And then after college, started coming back here?

JW: It's an interesting timeframe. There's a timeframe from when you're first raising your children, when you first get married and raise your children—because I moved to Maryland; I stayed in Maryland and didn't go back to Boston. And my husband didn't like coming here. Although we got married here, but he didn't like coming here. So I

would bring my children here for a couple of weeks. And because people came at different times, you weren't spending the whole summer, you got to miss a lot of your friends, you know. So you just felt lucky. But Gretchen stayed in the Boston area.

GT: I came right until I moved to California in '78. I came; my kids were here all summer, and I would come every weekend, and of course, vacations.

JW: Mm-hm.

GT: Their father and I, until we separated. And then when I moved to California, my kids still came in the summer. They—they weren't going to miss it.

JW: Mm-hm.

JB: Can you talk some more about bringing your families here, when you were doing that?

GT: I brought my—my oldest son was born in January, so he started coming in June. In fact, when I had my younger son, when my oldest was three, I came here that weekend, left my three-year-old to go home and deliver his brother. Came out of the hospital after delivering Troy, I came straight from the hospital here. And in fact I have a picture of me with Troy, five days old, on the front lawn of the house. And I remember taking him—back then you had the big, square, ugly car bed, and a net. And would put him—five days old, put him in that car bed, take him to the beach. And all my girlfriends would watch him while I swam or water-skied to get my weight down.

JW: Mm-hm.

GT: So I spent the whole summer, the year that Troy was born. And then after—I guess ‘til he was about three or four, I was here in the summers. And then as he got older, Granny would keep him in the summer, and I would work and come back and forth.

JW: And I would come up for two weeks every single summer, and bring the children. And of course, to this day, I mean, my kids are younger than Gretchen’s, but at forty and thirty-nine, this place is where their heart is. I mean, it’s just the place to come.

GT: They still come, and now they’re bringing their children.

JW: That’s right. So our grandchildren are now coming, and love this place.

GT: For Granny’s hundredth birthday, we had five generations here.

JB: Wow!

GT: We gave her a one hundredth birthday party at the nursing home, and we had five generations.

JB: That’s great.

GT: Yeah.

JB: Just to go back a little ways, I wanted to ask you about—so, your grandmother was here all the time. Your grandfather and your father, were they—?

GT: My grandfather came every weekend, and then usually he’d have a two-week vacation here. In fact, when we got older we went them—I remember we sent Granny to Boston during Daddy’s two-week vacation. That was when we pulled out the paper plates for the first time!

JW: Mm-hm!

GT: Because Granny would never let you use paper plates for dinner. I mean, she was very prim and proper—white gloves, the whole nine yards.

JB: Oh, wow!

GT: And a hat; always wore a hat. So one year, Jocie, Marcia and I were here with our children. And we sent Granny home to Boston, and let Daddy take her to the theater, and do whatever they wanted to do, and we ran the house. Boy, that was fun! [Laughs]

JW: It was a ball! But we keep saying Daddy—we're talking about my grandfather.

GT: My grandfather. He never let us call him Grandpa.

JW: He was in his forties when I came along, and so he decided that we would call him Daddy Ralf. His first name was Ralf. And so we called my father Daddy Richie. And my father and mother divorced—

GT: When we were young.

JW: --when we were very young. And although Granny is my father's mother, I think she kind of felt guilty that they were divorced, and so that's kind of—she felt like she had a responsibility to us, to the five of us. So we didn't see much of my father; he moved out of the area. But as Gretchen said, my grandfather, Daddy Ralf, came on the weekends. And there's a story—we'll tell a story about that, too. And my mother also came on the weekends, because she stayed in Boston to work, as a single parent.

JB: Okay, yeah right.

JW: When my—I hope we'll have time so I can show you the original house.

JB: I'd love to see it, yeah.

JW: Okay, and you'll see there's a little room that my brother—they call it the rug rats room. And we—that's where we stayed. The five of us stayed in this little room. And when my grandfather was there, we had to be very, very quiet, until he had his breakfast. Granny would send up oranges.

GT: To this day, I don't eat oranges. [Laughter]

JW: She'd send up quartered oranges for us to have, until Daddy Ralf had his—because it was important to her that he have a quiet time while he was there, and that no waves be made. So the five of us knew to be on our P's and Q's while Daddy was there. And when he left, we had a ball! We could come and go, and do what we—but even as little children, we could just be kids, you know.

JB: Yeah.

JW: Not that Daddy was an ogre, but he worked hard, and he was tired, and he wanted some—

GT: He didn't want to come home to five grandchildren.

JW: To five grandchildren, right. [Low voice] "Can we have some peace and quiet?" [Laughs]

JB: So what were—well, you've already talked about where you hung out. So how did you become involved with the Cottagers?

JW: Oh, a dear friend who we grew up with, Carol, asked me to—asked me if I was interested in joining a few years ago. Duncan and I—Duncan fully retired just, it's been about six years now, and we started coming here. This is our legal address; we started coming here for like six months, six or seven months. And I told Carol that once I got settled, that I would think about it. And it's a very—I'm sure you've

talked to Harriet, who is one of the founders of the organization. It's a philanthropic organization.

JB: Yeah.

JW: And we gave—we gave over twelve thousand dollars in scholarship and donations to different organizations throughout the Island last summer. And for that reason, I felt it was, you know, a worthwhile organization. Plus we knew most of the founders: Maggie Alston, and Emily Robertson, and Ms. (Thelma) Garland-Smith, you know.

GT: Mm-hm.

JW: So I became involved with them. I've only been there—it'll be, this is my second year, and I'm the financial treasurer for the summer. That's how I know twelve thousand dollars was raised and dispersed. So, it's really a very worthwhile organization, in that it is so philanthropic.

JB: Yeah, and Gretchen, are you involved with the Cottagers?

GT: No, hm-mm.

JB: Okay.

GT: I just became a year-round resident in December. And I'm on the Personnel Board for the town of Oak Bluffs—I keep saying Oakland.

JB: [Laughs]

GT: I lived there.

JB: Yeah!

GT: I'm on the Personnel Board here in Oak Bluffs, and I have my own wedding and special event business here.

JB: Oh, nice. Yeah, I've heard that it's a pretty big business around here.

JW: It's number—what did you say, it's number two?

GT: Number two wedding spot in the country. Vegas is number one, and the Vineyard's number two. They do thirty three weddings a weekend here, from April to October.

JB: Wow, every single weekend.

GT: Whether it's a beach, a tent, someone's home, back yard, gazebo—you name it.

JB: Wow, that's pretty amazing. So, when did you become a six-month a year resident?

JW: Duncan remembers better than I. I think it's—

GT: Five years ago.

JW: I think it's five years ago. This is '11, to '06. I think it was about five years ago.

JB: And what did you do professionally?

JW: I was a math educator and administrator, and wrote math textbooks.

JB: Okay. And how about you, Gretchen?

GT: I was in broadcasting for thirty-five years.

JB: Doing what?

GT: Human resources, for ABC, CBS, and FOX.

JW: Oh, Fox!

GT: That was in the good days! [Laughs] I wouldn't work for them now!

JB: So during the civil rights movement of the fifties and sixties, were you involved in that in any way?

JW: In college. In college, with the sit-ins.

GT: In Boston I was, yeah.

JB: And what did you do.

GT: Not here. I was part of an organization of concerned black citizens in Boston who were trying to keep—keep the level of anxiety down. We

worked with the television stations to report the good side of what was going on in the civil rights movement. I think I'm a product of the civil rights movement, absolutely, because when I got my first job in broadcasting, I was the first African American hired at the television station.

JB: Yeah.

GT: And then part of the hiring process, trying to hire, you know, to have a diverse workforce. And then created the Minority Scholarship Fund for WCVB, Channel 5, to get more minorities in the business. Because it was a white-dominated industry, especially white male-dominated industry. The white females that worked in broadcasting were predominantly assistants. So I was very active in trying to get more African Americans, going out to the colleges, speaking to students. Going even to the high schools, to try to let them know—when I went to high school, I was told you could be a nurse, a teacher, or a secretary.

JW: Mm-hm.

GT: Those were my three choices.

JW: Mm-hm.

GT: Didn't like either one of them.

JB: [Laughs]

GT: Then just by luck, and by—as a result of the civil rights movement, I had the opportunity to get into broadcasting. Once I got in, I had to really work hard, and fight hard, to move up the corporate ladder, but I did, both in Massachusetts and in California, and then back to Massachusetts again with CBS. But as far as the civil rights movement was concerned, I remember being down here and meeting

Martin Luther King. Granny—I was here for a weekend, and Granny said she was going to a cocktail party, and did I want to go? On a Sunday afternoon, which was very popular here—a lot of cocktail parties. As a teenager, I made a lot of money babysitting, because there were cocktail parties like from one to four, and then the families would come home, have dinner, and go back out to the night parties. So at any given time, I'd have three or four families of kids that I was babysitting for.

JB: Yeah.

GT: But we went to this particular cocktail party on a Sunday afternoon, and the houseguests were Martin Luther King and Coretta Scott King.

JB: Wow!

GT: And I was just in awe! In fact, when maybe in the eighties—no, before I moved to California. No, after I came back from California; I was working for WBZ, CBS, the NAACP asked me to be the guest speaker for the annual Martin Luther King Banquet.

JW: Here on the Island.

GT: And I was quite intimidated, because I'm thinking, "These are my mother's peers. What could I possibly say that would hold their interest?" So basically I formed my speech around having met him, my observations, and what he, as a civil rights leader, did for my generation and for the broadcast industry, of which I was a product of the civil rights movement.

JB: So did you get to talk to him when you met him?

GT: I sure did!

JB: [Laughs]

JW: Mm-hm.

GT: I was mesmerized. I was mesmerized. I talked to him, and then of course people were in line to talk to him, but I happened to catch him at a time when he was just sitting quietly. And I pulled over my chair, and sat next to him and talked. And then I had the opportunity to talk to Coretta Scott King, whom I thought was just the epitome of a lady, gracefulness. I just thought she was fascinating!

JB: Yeah.

GT: He was, too. But meeting her really, as a young African American woman, really excited me.

JB: Yeah, I imagine.

GT: It did. She was just so gracious, and so poised, and so calm. There was just a calmness about her. And having, knowing what she lived through, and how her husband's life was on the line every time he walked out the door, that calmness really—it confused me, in a way. But then again, I understood it. Because if he's going to be out there, doing what he was doing, she had to—being home, raising children. If she wasn't calm, she'd be a basket case, you know? And she'd be raising crazy kids. But I really—to me, that was the epitome of any experience, I think, other than working for the Kennedy's. You know, meeting them was just terrific. And here, at a party with no security; people are coming and going. It was a lawn party, and made up of a myriad of people, and backgrounds. And it was a wonderful opportunity!

JB: Yeah. You worked for the Kennedy's, too?

GT: I did!

JW: [Laughs]

GT: I did.

JB: Did you know them from the Island?

GT: No, my uncle happened to be part of the committee to elect Ted Kennedy. And he got me a job, and I worked for Ted Kennedy for seven years. I was supposed to go to Washington, which is another story we won't go into. But worked for both his campaigns, and his Boston office. And it was an experience of a lifetime.

JB: Yeah, I can imagine.

GT: We ended up, the first campaign we ended up having a big party at Hyannisport, where we played touch football with Jack and Bobby, and Ted, and Joan, and the only one that didn't play was Jackie. She was very—very withdrawn, and probably thinking, “What are all these peons doing on our lawn?”

JB: [Laughs]

GT: Because he invited the whole staff down for a victory party and celebration. Second campaign wasn't as exciting, because he had been in a plane crash, and he was in the hospital. So I worked very closely with Joan. I would go around to different speaking engagements with Joan. And it was very exciting, yeah.

JB: I imagine! That's great.

GT: Very exciting.

JB: Were you involved with the civil rights movement at all, in Boston?

JW: Only as much as a student in college. We were part of the sit-ins for—at Morgan there was a hat company, and some little smaller stores. In fact, when I first went to Morgan in 1957, as a freshman, eighteen years old, and having never been to the south, I was very lonely after my—let's see, Granny, and Daddy Ralf and my mother

drove me down to college. And then when they finally said goodbye, I was by myself.

JB: Yeah!

JW: And I decided to walk up to this little soda place, this little ice cream place, and get a frappe. That's what we call an ice cream—a milkshake. And I asked for a frappe, and they said, "What is that?" So I got a milkshake, and a black woman waited on me. And I was just oblivious to what was going on, because I started to drink it, and she said, "Oh no, you can't drink that in here." And I'm like, "What? I don't believe it." I mean, I had just never—we had never—you could go anywhere you wanted in Boston. And you might find that they served you slower, or they didn't give you the best seat. It was kind of a subtle segregation, I always felt about the Boston area, but you could eat here. And so a couple of years later—so I took my milkshake outside, and I drank it. But I was—I realized I was in a very different world.

And a few years later, the sit-ins began throughout all the colleges, especially in the south. And we—I mean, hundreds and hundreds of students went in and sat in at the same milkshake place. We stood in line at the movie theater, and they wouldn't let us buy tickets. And we had one student from Virginia (Barbara Swann) who could have passed for white if she had chosen. And she and a Greek student—Basil Cataforis; I'll never forget him. He was in a lot of my classes as a math major. The two of them went and bought tickets, and all the Black kids were standing there, watching them buy the tickets. And they went into the theater. And so then the Black kids lined up to buy tickets, and they said, "Oh, no, you can't buy tickets.

You can't come into this theater." And they said, "But you just let Barbara in." Like, oh my God! They went crazy! And someone—there was a guy, Ronnie Merriweather, who was on the track team, and he took pictures of Barbara and Basil going into the movie, and ran back to the campus to have it—to have the pictures, you know, processed. And of course, after I graduated, those stores opened up. The interesting thing is, I went back for my fiftieth college reunion in May, and that whole footprint, that whole area where those stores were, is now a part of Morgan.

JB: Wow.

JW: And they're building buildings on that property. And it was just kind of like, you know, it had come full circle. Interesting.

JB: Yeah, yeah. So how did—you said, like, the pay beach in Oak Bluffs was segregated. How did that get integrated, do you know?

GT: It never was integrated, I think, as long it was a pay beach.

JW: Right.

GT: Once they took down the turnstiles and it wasn't a pay beach anymore, I think our kids were the first group of Black kids to go over on that side. We certainly never did.

JW: No. And unfortunately there's a lot of conversation about the Inkwell, and the Pay Beach, from two different perspectives. One is, and I'll start with the most recent one—if you notice, I don't know if you saw—here's the Inkwell, and there's a jetty out here. And then here's the pay beach, what we used to call the pay beach. And this has about three times as much sand as the Inkwell does. When we were kids, there was a pier out here, is where you could jump off, and there was no jetty.

JB: Okay.

JW: And so as the sands came into land, as the waves brought sand it, in was equal. The sand was equal all along here. And—although there was a fence here; there was a barbed-wire—not barbed wire! There was a fence here. And as Gretchen said, we used to jump off of the pier—

GT: And swim over (to the Pay Beach side).

JW: —and swim over, and kind of wave from there. The interesting thing is my aunt, who's now eighty-seven, eighty-eight years old, tells the same story, that they used to swim over the pay beach side.

JB: Wow!

JW: Now, so one of the arguments is that all of the sand is now on the pay beach side, the old pay beach side, and there's very little on the Inkwell. Now, they did cart some in from Sengekontacket Pond, because last year it was so bad, there were so many stones you could hardly really walk on the beach. The other story is about the naming of the Inkwell. And my father has told me that they called it the Inkwell. And they named it themselves. You know, it's not like it was derogatory, that some white person put that name on the beach, although there have been stories about people saying that they did that. And we've never had a problem calling it the Inkwell.

GT: Hm-mm.

JW: But I talked to some older women who came here in the—I guess they came here in the sixties and seventies, and if you go down on the Inkwell—if you down the beach—we walked the beach today. There are very few blacks, because we don't tend to go to the beach early.

JB: [Laughs]

JW: We just don't. And so they would take—this black family would take their children to the beach in the morning, because they lived close to the beach. And it was all white, and they just called it the Town Beach. And a babysitter that they had later on in the afternoon said, "I'd like to go to the beach. Is it okay?" And they said, "Well, what beach are you going to?" She said, "I'm going to the Inkwell." She said, "Where is the Inkwell? We never heard of the Inkwell." "Oh, it's right down here." They walked down there, and of course in the afternoon, that's when we're all there. All the Blacks are out there. It's a lot more integrated than it used to be.

GT: Yeah.

JW: So, much more integrated. Which is nice—which is wonderful, you know? But we didn't have access to the Edgartown Beach—

GT: Because we didn't have cars.

JW: —to the State Beach, because we didn't have cars.

JB: I see.

JW: So you can walk down there; in twenty minutes you're at the Town Beach. You didn't have money to go into the pay beach, and if you had money, as Gretchen was saying, they wouldn't let you in.

GT: They wouldn't let us in anyway.

JW: But Granny certainly wasn't going to fork over twenty-five cents, because it was a nickel at one point, and then it was a quarter, you know, for us to go to the beach everyday, when there's a free beach right next door!

JB: Exactly, yeah. So you weren't involved with like the Polar Bears, or anything like that?

JW: No.

GT: No, they swim too early!

JW: [Laughs]

GT: Hm-mm.

JB: I agree, that's pretty—that's pretty early.

JW: But that's a wonderful group of people.

GT: It really is.

JW: They have a lovely, warm sense about them.

GT: One of the founders of it was our kindergarten teacher.

JW: Oh, Miss Smith?

GT: Gertrude Smith.

JW: Yes, yeah.

GT: And she swam right up until she was about ninety-something.

JW: Mm-hm, that's right.

JB: Wow!

GT: She just passed away a couple of years ago.

JW: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

GT: And she was our kindergarten teacher in Roxbury.

JB: So you're living on the street with Dorothy West and Adam Clayton Powell. Did you know them personally?

JW: Yeah.

GT: Very well.

JW: Adam, not so much.

GT: Adam, yeah. I remember being down there and hearing his voice, but I don't remember him.

JW: Mm-hm, but we knew his wife Belle very well.

GT: Yeah, Belle Powell.

JW: And Dorothy, because our houses are so close, you heard her before you saw her.

GT: She was like roosters! [Laughs]

JW: You heard her before you saw her.

GT: Yeah, bright and early in the morning. She'd feed the pigeons, and then shoo them off. [Sighs] She was a character.

JW: She was a character. And we remember her Mom, who was a very sweet lady.

GT: Yeah, Rachel.

JW: Rachel West. [Sneezing in background] God bless! God bless you, love.

JB: Can you tell me more about Dorothy West?

JW: She was very bird-like. Wouldn't you say she was? She walked around, you know, very—

GT: She talked a lot.

JW: She talked, and she walked as fast!

GT: If you ever went out and talked to, she talked forever, and she talked very, very fast.

JW: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

GT: And she'd talk all around it, and then she'd say, "And the point is—"

JB: [Laughs]

GT: And finally get on to the point, and it's like: ugh! She and Granny didn't get along that well.

JW: No, they did not get along. I don't know why.

GT: They didn't get along at all.

JW: In fact, I don't know if you've ever read her last book, *The Wedding*, that she wrote at eighty-five years old.

JB: No, I haven't.

JW: But it tells the story of a matriarch who was very, very strong, and very snobbish. And her daughter is getting married, and about this oval, and the guy who lives across the oval. I swear that! And the family name in the book is Coles—too close!

JB: [Laughs]

JW: I swear that my grandmother is the matriarch in this book, because I think—

GT: Plus the matriarch was white!

JW: Plus the matriarch was—or mixed; she'd try to pass. And Dorothy always had a—she would always talk about color. Dorothy was very dark—

GT: Very, very dark.

JW: —and she would always talk about color.

GT: Yeah.

JW: And knowing, you know, the way Granny—she didn't have a nickel in her pocket, but she walked like she had—

GT: Very prim and proper.

JW: —like she was a queen, you know. And she always wore a hat, and it was cocked to the side. And she just held her head—you know. I think because of her growing up the way she did, in terms of being a mixed child, and being shunned by both races, that she realized it was important to be insular, and to be all about your family. And to walk proudly, you know, and carry yourself very high. So, she—

GT: That bothered Dorothy.

JW: That bothered Dorothy, I think. I agree. They did not get along.

GT: No, they didn't get along at all.

JB: That's too bad. So how did—how has Oak Bluffs changed since, you know, when you were younger to now? What are the biggest differences?

JW: The number of people that—there used to be a time when you walked down the street, if you saw a Black—

GT: You knew everybody.

JW: —you knew who they were, whose child they were, what family they were in. So that has certainly changed. The crowds, you know.

GT: The crowds come—I think the crowds coming now are coming for a party environment, whereas we came because this was home.

JB: I see, yeah.

GT: You know, we looked more as this being home. In fact, the Fourth of July, when I was walking up Circuit Avenue—Fourth of July is Black students—Black college student weekend, here. Hundreds of them! And I was walking up Circuit Avenue with my son, and this car came up the hill with the music blaring: thump, thump, thump! We don't have that!

JW: Mm-hm.

GT: And my son even said, "Hey man, you know, turn down the music. We don't do that here." And the guy turned it up louder.

JW: Oh!

GT: So it's a different breed, I think, of people that are coming. People used to come for the beauty and the serenity of the island. Now they're coming: "Oh, yeah, we can go down there, and we can party on the beach. And we can party all night here!" To me it's a whole different mentality. And I think the crowds got bigger once the Clinton's started coming.

JW: Oh, absolutely!

GT: That changed everything.

JB: Really?

GT: Oh, absolutely!

JW: People had never heard of Martha's Vineyard. The funny thing is, Duncan and I stopped one time in Mystic, Connecticut, to have some dinner. And we had a boat to make, and so we said, "Gee." And we went up to the waitress, and we asked her [laughs]—we asked her, "How far is it from here to Wood's Hole, to get the boat to Martha's Vineyard?" This is in Mystic, Connecticut. And she says, "Where's Martha's Vineyard?" So, [laughs] you know, people had never heard of the Island until the Clinton's started coming, and then it became the place to come, the place to be.

GT: Because the President came.

JW: Because the President came. They wanted to be able to eat in the same restaurant where they ate.

GT: Right.

JW: And of course, that's continued now, with Obama.

GT: Right.

JW: But the thing is, you learn: you go downtown at a certain hour. You know, you go down early in the morning, before the crowds get there. And we happened—those of us who are here after the season is over, we love the shoulder season, because—

GT: Love it the day after Labor Day!

JW: --the day after Labor Day, or the day before the 31st of May, I mean, it's wonderful, you know. But we understand that this is how the Island makes its livelihood.

GT: Mm-hm.

JW: You know, they have to have the tourists. So, you just don't go downtown.

JB: Yeah! [Laughs] Makes sense. Just go to the beach.

JW: Mm-hm.

JB: So we're running short on time. So is there anything else that you think I should have asked you about? Is there anything that I'm missing?

JW: That's always a good question. I can't think of anything. Can you?

GT: No.

JB: Well, what's the most important thing that you think people should understand about the community here on Martha's Vineyard? Or, an important thing?

GT: I would say that it's a very cohesive community. People are here because, number one, they want to be here. There's such a support system on this island. And we learned that quickly, both when Granny got sick, and when my father got sick.

JW: Mm-hm.

GT: People came out of the woodwork.

JW: Mm-hm.

GT: There are people on this island who live here year-round, who, if they're sick or dying, there is such a support, that one person tells—I mean, it's like one phone call, and everybody's there. And the person has what they need, without even having to reach out and ask.

JB: Yeah.

GT: There's a sense of pride, being here. You know, when you see all the summer people coming and going, and the day tourists, and what have you—we're fortunate to be able to live here!

JW: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

GT: Fortunate to be able to have a home here. And now that I'm a year-round resident, I take a bigger pride. I mean, I always took pride in the Island, because this was—this was our second home!

JW: Mm-hm.

GT: And we certainly couldn't wait—and we went to school right across the street from our home in Roxbury, at least middle school. And I remember sitting in the fifth grade class, waiting for promotion day. And I could see Granny putting stuff in the car!

JB: [Laughs]

GT: And it's like, "Oh, could we just hurry up?" I mean, sheer excitement!

JW: Mm-hm.

GT: To be coming here, because of the freedom.

JW: Mm-hm.

GT: I mean, it's nothing to get in your car and go somewhere, and feel safe, you know. There's no traffic—if you notice, there's not one traffic light on this island!

JB: I know!

JW: Except on the bridge.

GT: There's a blinker. There's a blinker. There's a blinker up at Vineyard Haven-Edgartown Road and Barnes.

JW: Yeah, and there's a light on the bridge for when you have to stop.

GT: Yeah, that's to open the bridge! That would be anywhere.

JW: Yeah.

GT: But there are no—there are no traffic lights. No traffic lights on this island. It's a different lifestyle! And I'm hoping, by having moved here, that I've added ten years to my life.

JW: Mm-hm, yes.

GT: I mean, Granny did very well here, 'til one hundred.

JB: Yeah, she certainly did.

JW: You know, as much as people talk about it being a vacation place and what have you, it's a place, as Gretchen was saying, that you have to nurture, and you have to maintain it, so that it will be like this for our children. We talk about—there's a bench down at the Oak Bluffs—at the Inkwel, that our family, that the kids, we and our kids, had put there, because you can put benches down there. And it says, "To Ralf and Luella, "Granny Coleman". Thank you for the legacy of love." The people who came here, you know, who we grew up with, and their parents came here, and they bought little cottages, and they maintained them. Some of them they bubble-gummed, you know, to keep—it's a legacy that they've given us. And it's important to do all that we can on this island to have that, to pass that legacy on to our own children, and our grandchildren.

JB: Yeah.

JW: Because there are very few unspoiled places, unfortunately, in the United States, and probably on the continent. So it's important that we take care of this place. And I like what I see, that they have signs on the beach: "What you take in, please take out." But more and more I'm seeing—we were walking through Ocean Park this morning, and there was an empty bag of chips in the flower bed. You know, I

mean, it's the home of many wonderful people, many wonderful animals and fish, and we have to take care of it. So I would hope that people who come here don't just come to walk the road that Clinton or Obama have walked, but to—but to treasure it, like we do.

JB: Well, that's great! I think we can stop there.

[End of Interview]