



**LOWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT II**

INFORMANT: MARIE HUNTER

INTERVIEWER: MEHMED ALI

DATE: JUNE 28, 2003

M=MARIE

A=ALI

B=BOB SMITH

K=KEN WINGOOD

Tape I, side A

A: ...The Lowell National Historical Park. And this morning we're here at the Father John's Medicine Building in the apartment of Marie Hunter. And we're here, going to do an interview with Marie about her life as a Lowell person, as an African American woman. And also with us this morning is Ken Wingood, her brother. And we want to thank you both for coming down and sharing your memories of your lives as they have happened. Today is June 28, 2003. And feel free to jump in, either one of you, to answer the questions, but our primary focus will be Marie this morning.

So Marie, first a little bit of background information. Where and when were you born?

M: I was born in Cambridge, Mass., July 7, 1910.

A: Okay, and where did you go to school at?

M: Right here in Lowell. I started right at, around the corner from our house, West London Street School.

A: West London Street?

M: Umhm.

A: Okay.

M: And from there I had secondary school with London Street, and from there to Lincoln, Lincoln School (A: Okay) on Chelmsford Street, and Morey School, (A: Okay) and then of course high school.

A: Wow. You bounced around quite a bit.

M: And a lot (--). And I think of the children today being bussed from their homes right to the doors of the school. We walked to all of those. And it was a long walk from our house to the Morey School for instance, but we walked it everyday, rain, blow, shine, whatever. (A: Right)

A: Now you were born in Cambridge. So your folks lived in Cambridge for a number, number of years?

M: I was born there, and I was probably about three when they moved to Lowell.

A: Okay. And tell us about your family tree of sorts. Where were your parents from, and your grandparents, etc.?

M: My grandparents, and my parents were all born in Bermuda.

A: In Bermuda? Okay.

M: They came. My father came first from Bermuda. There isn't too much to do in the working area in Bermuda. It's just for tourist [my dad thought]. And so he came here, and then when he found work he sent my mother and we came to Lowell? Yah we came to Lowell. No we didn't. We came to Cambridge.

A: Cambridge.

M: Yah right.

A: What did your father do for work down in Cambridge?

M: Dad didn't work in Cambridge that I can remember, did he?

K: No, I don't think so.

M: But he was a machinist.

K: Machinist. (A: Okay). He got his, he got his (M: Training) education, training, at the dockyards in Bermuda.

A: Okay. And so he was just living in Cambridge?

M: He must have been working there somewhere because, but we didn't live there too long. We came to Lowell, and he work in several places in Lowell. One of them was the Old Lowell Cartridge Shop, (A: Okay) and Heinz Electric. (A: Okay) He worked at both of those.

K: You're going to go prior to that, when he first came to Lowell he was working as a waiter in the Prescott Club on Prescott Street.

M: Oh yes. What was the name of it? I didn't remember the name.

K: I think at that time there was not that much availability for machinists, and he was working as a waiter like most of the Afro-Americans at that time, where they had all of these different businessmen's clubs in Lowell, like Paige's and the Yorick Club, and there was one on Prescott Street where my dad worked.

M: Professional men.

K: Professional men.

A: Okay. Do you remember him working at that club Marie?

M: Oh yes. Yah. Like I remember going by there on my way from high school.

A: Yah.

M: Several of his friends worked there also. (A: Okay) So once in awhile we'd go by and have some lunch there at the club.

A: So a woman could go to eat there?

M: No. No, no, no, strictly a men's club. We, as well kids just coming in, you know, from high school we were allowed to. Although I do remember at one point being very obvious of the fact that I wasn't suppose to be there because I fainted. And somebody said, "Is there a doctor in the house?" And then these doctors came flying down. And I was so embarrassed. And I don't think I went back there ever again. [Both laugh]

A: So when you guys went in there did you eat in the back room?

M: Of course, of course, we'd eat in the kitchen.

A: Okay.

M: We didn't go in the front of the building at all. It was just strictly a men's, professional men's club. And we went into the kitchen and visited with what was his name?

K: Dick, Dick [Unclear]?

M: No. Hazard, the man named Hazard.

A: And that was one of your father's friends?

M: Yah, right, he worked there too. So when he was there we would also go in the kitchen, but that was as far as we went, into the kitchen and back out.

A: Yah, yah. And tell us about Mr. Hazard, was he married? Did he have a family?

M: He came from a long list of, a long, big family, but I think they originally came from Carver, or up that way. So there weren't too many of them here, but he had a wife. (A: Okay) And they, my mother and dad were very friendly with them.

A: Okay. And what else do you remember about that men's club?

M: You know I didn't even know too much about it. I remember that it was on Prescott Street, and I couldn't tell you today where on Prescott Street. I, as I say, went into the, visit in the kitchen and that was the end of that. Then we'd come back and go home.

A: Now tell us some more about the neighborhood that you grew up in.

M: Ah, neighborhood we grew up in. Well it's still the same neighborhood, and still some of the same people living there I'll tell you that. It was a very (--)

A: And this is Ayer City, right?

M: Yah right, a very nice place to grow up. We had a lot of fun up there. We were really kids. I mean kids today are not kids, they're young adults. We did all the little games and things. Of course Ken used to go up swimming where he wasn't supposed to be, and that type of thing. But it was a good (--). And we had a big yard. (A: Okay) And we had something that I had never seen anywhere in Lowell, an apricot tree (A: Oh!) right in the side yard, right towards the front of the yard, house, front of the yard. And nice tree for climbing and all. We used to have great times on that tree. And of course when the fruit was ready that was that. Then of course dad had a big garden.

A: Okay.

M: And he had a grape trellis with Concord Grapes you know, and an apple tree, but that was in the other yard, but it hung over our fence. So we used to have apples. [Both laugh] But it was a good, a good childhood. We had a good childhood. We weren't allowed to do too much wandering around the neighborhood. So all the kids used to come up to our house to play.

A: Oh really!

M: Oh yes. And as I say, that (--). Oh, and there was only one other black family in the area. (A: Okay) So it was mostly Irish.

A: Mostly Irish. Okay.

K: Well it wouldn't be (--)

M: And it still is.

K: What was the name of the other black family if you, if you recall?

M: Falcon.

A: The Falcons?

M: I can't think of any first names.

K: Fred, (M: Wilfred) Alfred, Lloyd,

A: Joyce.

K: And approximately what year was (--)

M: And Grace.

A: Grace.

K: Approximately what year was, approximately what year was that?

M: Oh.

K: 20s, 30s?

M: Let me see, I was probably around (--). Oh they were there from the time we moved there.

A: So, so they were the first family in the neighborhood? First black family?

M: I think so.

A: And tell us about them. Where did they originally come from?

M: That I don't know. Do you?

K: No I can't answer that.

M: I have no idea. They weren't too friendly a family.

A: Oh okay.

M: So we really didn't get to know them too much.

A: Okay. Now did a lot of people grow their own food up there in Ayer City.

M: No. There were, there weren't too many gardens, though the Italians used to have great gardens, but my dad like I said had a big garden, but most of them didn't grow anything.

A: Okay. And where did the people in that neighborhood work? Do you remember?

K: Harvard Brewery.

M: Oh yah, yes. Yes. Yes. Yes.

K: Most of those, there was an awful lot of Germans in that neighborhood, and right up the street was the Harvard Brewery. In fact on the nice warm summer day when the breezes were right you could go to sleep on the smell of the hops.

A: Did you ever go to the Harvard Brewery Marie?

M: No.

A: What did you know about the place?

M: That it was there. I knew where it was and that's about it. No we weren't allowed to do too much wandering around.

A: Yah. The boys could, but maybe the girls couldn't?

M: Well, and the fact that he was so far behind me that my family, my mother and father had let up quite a bit by the time he came along. They weren't quite as strict as they were when I was there.

A: Yah. So where did he go swimming? At River Meadow Brook? Hale's Brook?

K: [Unclear]. Hale's, Hale's Brook, yah, up the railroad tracks.

A: So what are your memories of school in Lowell? Did you have any favorite teachers, or any interesting stories about going to school?

M: I really wasn't that great a scholar. In the beginning I was, but I had gotten sort of a different [unclear] by the time I got to high school. My parents wanted to send me to college and I wasn't interested. I figured, what would I do when I came out? There wasn't really anything for black girls to do. I studied stenographic course in school, (A: Okay) and I was good at it, but where are you going to work? So it's funny because I never used that until I was about sixty years old. (A: Oh really) My husband never wanted me to work. He didn't want me to work, let's put it that way. So I was just a

homemaker. (A: Umhm) And I got to be sixty and I said to my husband, "You know, all our kids, even the kids in the family have a social security number. I'm the only one that doesn't have one." He says, "That's no problem, we'll go and get it." So we went to get my social security number. Now I decide well, it's not good unless I can use it. So during the tax time, when they take the temporary help, I went up and got a job at the Internal Revenue. And it was sort of a nothing kind of a job, but anyway I stuck it out until the tax time was over. But in the meantime I met, went to a dinner party, they were all laughing. They couldn't imagine Marie having a job, you know, [unclear]. So they all laughed about it. So this man said, "Well Marie I need a secretary, why don't you come and work for me?" I said, "Oh yah, that would be good." And I forgot all about it. So it must have been a few days later my phone rang and he said, "Marie I was serious. Will you come and work for me. I need a secretary." So my husband and I talked it over and he said, "Well that would be a change." So I went to work at Raytheon. (A: Oh) And I worked there for I don't know, probably two or three years. But my husband, now that he retired, he wanted to do something instead of staying home by himself all day. So we decided we were going to Mexico, and that's when I got through at Raytheon. But I had a great time while I was working there, and the funny part of it was my boss said to me one day, "Marie I want you to take a letter." Now he had told me in the beginning, you know, this part, I don't do too many letters or anything like that he said, but I want you to help me edit it." And I said, "Okay, good." But this day he said, "I'd like you to take the letter." So I said, "All right." So I sat down with my pen and he said, "Dear Sir," and he waited. I'm looking at him and he said, "As of," are you taking this in shorthand? And I said, "Yes." "Oh," he said. So now he went the regular pace. And now I hadn't taken a letter since I've been in high school. Now this was 60's, at least 50 years later. (A: Yah) I got it!

A: You remembered it, and (--)

M: And he was amazed. So as I say, it was fun working, but it didn't last too long.

A: So how old were you when you started your job there?

M: I think I was sixty, or sixty-two. [Both laugh]

A: Interesting. Now what church did your, did you attend as a young person?

M: Well it wasn't the Church of our mother and father, because they were going to church in Bermuda, which would be like the Church of England. (A: Okay) And there was nothing of course around like that. The nearest thing was the Saint Anne's Church, (A: Right) and that was too far away. (A: Okay) So neighbors used to take us to the Methodist Church.

K: Mathew Memorial Church.

M: Mathew Memorial Church at one time. And so that was, that was where we went. [So now I've grown up in it.] And of course when I got married my husband was a Catholic. So now I became a Catholic myself.

A: I see. I see. Now tell us about Mathew's Methodist. What do you remember about that church?

M: Not too much. I don't know why, but I didn't particular enjoy going to the church. Of course I was a kid, but then maybe that had something to do with it, but I don't really have any (--) Oh I met so many people of course, but the church itself didn't impress me.

A: Now you were saying you got a little bit discouraged during the course of your schooling. Was there a teacher, or an incident that kind of got you discouraged?

M: I, no I think what was happening here, I knew that no matter what I did in school I wasn't going to be able to use it. I didn't think I was going to be able to use it being a black girl in a white community. (A: Yah) What do you do? If there's a job and there are ten girls waiting and one is black, you know she's not going to get the job. So that's when I really, but I still got my grades and did all right in school, but you might say I was a little bit of a disenchanted.

A: Yah, yah. What was your sense about the city in regards to the relationships between blacks and whites?

M: I never had a chance to come in contact with any of that. As I say, my parents wouldn't allow us to wonder around anywhere. If we had to come downtown, we came downtown, did what we had to do and went back home again. So I really didn't know too much about the city. (A: Okay) Even when I came back here to live two or three years ago, I still say, well they'd say, "Well you know, up in the Acre residence." I didn't even know where the Acre was. I knew somewhere in Lowell, but I had no idea about the different sections of the city, (A: I see) and I had never been in them. (A: Yah) And the only contact I had was in our immediate neighborhood. So.

A: Now tell us some more about your father. He was very active in the community.

M: Yah. My father was active with the church. He was the president of the NAACP in Lowell. (A: Right) But he was into a lot of things. My father was a very interesting person, a very complex person. He, [pauses] I forgot what I was saying. He was into books and into health. (A: Okay) He was interested in everything. And I can remember some of the things he brought home; health things that we had to eat that were really atrocious. As a kid they to me were horrible. [Laughs]

A: What were some of the things he brought home?

M: I don't know. I think of one thing I can remember was some sort of rice, but it had [husk fill] on it or something, but this was suppose to be a health food. And I can

remember sitting there trying to get it down, and all of us looking at each other you know, making faces and trying to get this food down. Of course mother was very different. When he wasn't there we didn't have to eat it.

A: Now what were your parents' names?

M: My mother's name was Edith. (A: Okay) My father's name was Harold.

A: Harold. And what was your mother's maiden name?

M: Manders.

A: Manders, okay. So do you remember any of your father's work with the NAACP back in that early period, during like the 20s?

M: I remember him going to be, I remember people coming to the house in connection with it, and him getting speakers and a lot of times they would stay with us.

A: Oh really!

M: Come down over night and stay, and then go to his meeting, and then go back wherever they came from.

A: Yah. Do you remember any of the speakers?

M: The names don't come up.

A: And where would they speak at? Would they speak at a church, or a hall?

M: [Asks Ken] Do you remember? Because I don't remember where, where they used to meet.

K: No I can't. That's way before my time, but most of the times it was in churches, or the YMCA had a room. Places like that. Social organizations. Social halls like that, that were available at that time.

A: Yah. And were there any white speakers that came?

M: Not that I can remember.

A: Okay.

M: Not that I can remember.

A: And do you think they came from the South, or New York, or?

M: No, they (--) I can remember one man that came from Boston stands out in my mind, because he stayed over a couple of days, or something, and he took me to the theater.

A: Oh really?

M: Yah, isn't that (--) And I can't even think of his name, but I can remember that about him. But he came down, and [he and dad were], became very good friends.

K: Skank?

M: No. No, he was a lawyer in Boston.

A: He was a lawyer, black lawyer? Was he an active guy with your father?

M: Not (--) No, just socially. (A: Okay) He was a lawyer and he lived in Boston. He used to come down the house quite often. He had a summer place in, I can't remember the name of the place. I can't remember. It had a name like a pond or something. But anyway my dad and he were very, very close. I can't remember any of [unclear]. All I can remember [unclear]. It's been so long. And I can think of faces and I can't put names to them anymore.

A: Yah, yah, yah. How about your mom? What were her interests and accomplishments?

M: She was a homebody, but she was a terrific mother. And with that I can't remember except that she didn't have too much time to socialize, because she did, well she did everything. I still wonder how she did it, with all of these kids and all this washing she had to do. On top of that she made our clothes. (A: Wow) And of course she was a great cook, and they, way back there were interested in balanced meals. And we always ate very well.

A: How many kids in the family?

M: There were nine. One of them died as a baby. So we'd have to say eight, but there were nine of us.

A: Wow.

M: But as I say, she was a great cook and this was her, this was her life. (A: Yah) Between keeping the house clean; she was an immaculate housekeeper, and as I say, she cooked all sorts of things. Where I can remember kids would be eating bologna, or minced ham or something, and a pot of boiled potatoes. My mother was making like a roast lamb, leg of lamb and real meals, balanced meals. (A: Yah, yah) So that took up all of her time. Of course she had friends, and there were always relatives. (A: Okay) We had relatives coming all the time. (A: Really) Oh yes. And I can remember one, I think she was my great aunt, that used to come down regularly. And whenever she came

she brought some sort of craft with her. One year it was tatting; one year it was knitting; and one year it was crocheting, and she'd teach us kids how to do these things, all except me.

A: Why?

M: I'm left handed and she didn't know what to do with me.

A: Really? [Both chuckle]

M: So my older sister could do all of these things, and do them well. And I come trying to do it you know, working backwards to try to see what they were doing. And I think they just gave up on me. But I learned after I got old enough to do it on my own.

A: Now where did your extended family live? Were there some in Boston, or?

M: Boston and New York.

A: Ah huh. And did anybody ever visit from Bermuda?

M: Oh yes, always. (A: Really) And the ones, all the relatives. As I say, there was always somebody coming to visit. That aunt came once a year with her arts and craft. And my uncles, one of them lived in Philadelphia, but he would get up once in a while. The people in Bermuda always came up to visit.

A: Did you guys ever go to Bermuda? You did?

M: Oh yah. I can remember the first time we went I was about probably three or four. (A: Okay) And my mother took a trip down with us three oldest. We were only, only ones she had at that time. (A: Right) Yah. No, [Enith, Edmond, and Ken and I], four of us, and she went to Bermuda to visit grandma. We stayed at my grandmother's house. And of course all the relatives had to come and see these people who they hadn't seen since my mother left there of course. So we had a grand time. And we went back several times after that. Of course the kids that are coming along today still go to Bermuda, (A: Okay) and the relatives still come here to visit.

A: Oh great. Great.

M: So it's a close, close group. I understand one of them went through my mother's side. One of my mother's relatives has a family tree on his wall. And so she said, as big as from that edge of the thing to this door, and the whole thing is a big tree. It's a family tree.

A: So it's probably about seven feet wide?

M: I would say. (A: Wow) And it was funny, my niece was down there a couple of, oh about three or four weeks ago now, and she looked at this tree. She thought it was great until she said, “Well where’s my grandmother? My great grandmother?” And they had shunned out, left her off the table. So now they’ve got to change it. [Laughs] Oh dear.

A: Now speaking of family trees, could you tell us the names of the kids in your family from oldest to youngest?

M: My oldest sister is named [Enith]; I’m the second one; (A: Okay) Edna, Cynthia, Ellen, Mae, [Amy] and Ken.

A: Holding out for that boy huh?

M: Last but not least.

A: Ken, what did it mean to grow up in a house predominantly filled with ladies?

K: Trouble, trouble, trouble.

M: He had it made. Believe me he had it made! Ken could do no wrong.

[Phone rings]

M: Answer that and just tell them I’ll call back.

K: Good morning.

[Tape is turned off, then on again]

A: Interviewing Marie Hunter and Ken Wingood. And you were talking about your family and all of your sisters and your brother. And where did most of those people when they grew up, did a lot of those people stay here in Lowell? Did people move far away?

M: Until we were in our teens, after high school, oh my sister Helen went to college. She’s the only one that was really interested in going to college. (A: Yah) So she went away to school. But we didn’t stay around Lowell because there was nothing in Lowell to do. So I went to, I think maybe Newton was the first place I went by car working as a, what they call nannies now. (A: Umhm) And then I came in contact with some of the very wealthy families. Had some really interesting experiences with them. But Lowell, we didn’t get (--) There was nothing to do for us kids in Lowell.

K: Socially.

M: Or job wise.

K: Or job wise.

A: Job wise it was also difficult? Did you guys apply for jobs and didn't get them?

M: No, no. I never, never really tried to get a job in Lowell actually. When I was old enough I just left Lowell. (A: Okay) [Unclear] started out as working for the rich people as the nanny. They didn't call it that at that time, but.

A: What did they call it?

M: Ah, oh boy what did they call it? I can't even remember. It doesn't come, but it was like a maid type of job. (A: Yah. Yah) I can remember one job I had, it was in this, in Newton, in this beautiful great big mansion. They had one little child. They had a chauffeur and a cook. And they were, as I say, very wealthy people. So this little girl was about three. She couldn't, she just didn't talk or do anything. She was just there. (A: Really) Well evidently it was just because she hadn't been talked to. I don't know, but anyhow I was always good with children. So I took this little girl, I think it was the first day I was there, I took her to the park. (A: Umhm) And whatever I was saying to her, because it wasn't, I was just talking. And when we got back to the house she told her mother, "And we saw all of these beautiful big trees." And the mother looked at her, and looked at me. She couldn't [unclear] this child had actually talked. (A: Wow) And as I say, they had the cook and the chauffeur there, and help quarters over the garage. And I had a room over the garage. When they found out this little girl was talking the first day I had her out, they were so excited they moved me over into the big house so I'd be with the child. So I wouldn't have to get up so early.

A: Really. Wow.

M: And whenever they went out I went with them. And it was just like another world.

A: How did you find out about this job? Did you know the family?

M: No, no, I didn't. I wouldn't know them. I think they were connected to the Jordan Marsh people at that time.

A: Okay. What was the family name?

M: Finn, Flynn, one or the other. I think Flynn, but I'm not sure.

A: Flynn?

M: [Unclear] remember talking ages ago.

A: This would have been when, in the late 20s, early 30s?

M: Probably early 30s. Late 20s I guess. Yah. But I had several of those kinds of jobs. And then of course when I got married my husband said, "No job." (A: Yah) So that was the end of my experience, which was working.

A: Now you said one of the (--) What's that?

M: Compensation.

A: Oh. How much, how much did you get paid as a domestic?

M: Twelve dollars a week if I remember correctly.

A: And how was that for a wage? Was that all right?

M: The secretaries in Lowell were getting twelve and fourteen dollars [unclear].

A: Okay. And did that (--) So that included your board as well?

M: That included my room and board, yes.

A: So that wasn't a bad job.

M: That's right. Right.

A: And the chauffeur and the other folks, were there other blacks there?

M: Oh yah, both of them were black.

A: Oh okay. Where did they come from, Boston?

M: I don't know. I didn't, I didn't see too much of them after I moved in to the big house. They were, they'd get their work done and go back to their quarters and I would be in the other building. So I didn't know too much about them, and what little I did know, long gone.

A: Yah. Now you talked about Lowell not having much in the way of potential for work, for a young black person. How about social life?

M: I think the only social life we had was with the neighborhood kids. This was all we knew. So of course when the kids got to be teenagers and going to the dances and all, I was gone. So that part of it, I never got into, but I doubt it would have been very great to be into it.

A: So you're saying it would have been difficult to experience dating?

M: Not that bad. (A: No?) No. It's, as I say, we had no contact with black people. (A: Yah) I should say [unclear], because my parents did. (A: Right) But now for instance, the Lews lived the other side of town. (A: Okay) And one of them I think is just about my age. But I knew that she was there, and she knew I was there, but we never really got that friendly. I think that's because we lived so far apart. And I think their family were also very strict, and they weren't allowed to wander around the city either. But I had (--) I could have married one of the kids in my neighborhood.

A: Who was that?

M: I shouldn't say his name, should I? No.

K: Why not?

M: I don't think I ought to say that.

A: Why is that?

M: I don't know. It's just not a known fact for one thing.

A: I mean so this is a white person?

M: Yes.

A: Well it might be interesting to say how that could have happened back so, you know, relatively so long ago.

M: Well it, it was one (--) We used to do a lot of socializing with the neighborhood kids. And for instance in the summer time it was games and I never went swimming. Well a couple of times. My mother, my mother lived right on the water. And I think she was really not too comfortable with water. Now I understand that her brothers and her sisters all used to, a bunch of kids used to come up to their house every morning and they'd all go swimming. Get up and go swimming, and then go home and get breakfast and whatnot. But mother was not one of them. So she never wanted us to get too near the water. And there was a little pond across the street from us, and all the kids used to go there during the hot weather, swimming. Mother took us over there a couple of times, but she'd say now, we'd step into the water, "And that's far enough." So none of us learned to swim. Well you did. (Speaking to Ken) But none of us learned to swim because mother was scared of water I swear. And most of the kids in Bermuda are like fish.

A: Sure. Sure.

M: But not my mother. So we didn't, I didn't learn how to swim until I was, I think I was in my twenties. (A: Okay) But I started to say something and I lost track of where I was going.

A: You were talking about this, the families that you used to hang around with.

M: Oh yes. This one boy was, how kids get together. Now I'm not saying this in the sense that kids get together today. (Umhm. Umhm) This was just friendly kids. (A: Sure) We were kids. (A: Right) And we coasted in the wintertime, we skated you know, but this one boy and I were quite friendly. So when I left and went to work in Boston he sent me a special delivery letter. And he missed me and he wanted to come back. He said we could get married and we could do this, and this, and he went through the whole thing. (A: Really) And I said, "No, I'm not interested. I really would only marry somebody of my own." So that ended that.

A: Yah. And why did you feel that you didn't want to marry a white person?

M: I just thought I wanted to marry a black person. I was a black person and I wanted a black husband.

A: Yah. Now do you think if you married that person, would that have been accepted in Lowell?

M: Yes.

A: It would have been. Were there other people (--)

M: There was one that, one black boy that did marry a white girl.

A: Okay. Who was that family? Do you remember them?

M: Falcon.

K: Lloyd Falcon.

A: And how old were they? I mean are they your age, younger, older?

M: A little younger than me. Probably in their 80s now. Of course Lloyd is dead.

K: So is she.

M: Hm?

K: She passed away also.

M: Oh yah. So they're both gone now.

A: And so when did they get married? Like during the war? Before the war?

K: I'm going to say before the war, because their daughter is Alma's age, 1933, [unclear] I'm quite sure they were married around 1932, 1933

A: Okay. And what church did they go to? Do you know?

K: I think they're home Baptist.

A: Home Baptist?

K: Yah.

A: And what is that? Describe that.

[K&M: Laugh]

A: No, I never heard that term before.

K: Oh, you know Sunday morning you turn the radio on, you listen to the (B: Oh okay) you listen to the lecture, the sermon and you know. (B: Church at home) you turn the radio off and you're done you're church service.

A: That's almost like the drive-thru huh? [All laugh] That sounds like an easy way.

M: Yes, really.

R: I think part of that, you know I'm Robert Smith over here on the camera, but I think part of that could have been, particularly for blacks, that if you don't feel comfortable in having a church community in the real sense, you find other ways to get your ministry, your spiritual up beating so to speak. So that was as much as it was called home Baptist, that was probably the easier way out to not, all the conflict, or not feel the conflict of trying to find a church, a black church when there was none in the area.

M: When I was coming along there wasn't a black church in the area.

R: Yah, so kind of reflecting the times of worshiping and (--)

K: I just feel that particular, that family was not really interested in going to church because the brother was, had a Reverend in front of his name and they were very, very active in the Emanuel Baptist Church, the whole family, except this young man. I don't think so. That's what I, you know, that's why I (--)

A: And where was the Emanuel Baptist Church?

K: On Blossom Street. It's still, the building is still there.

A: Okay. It's a Spanish church now maybe?

K: I can't answer. I think so. (A: Yah) But out of that, out of that the Falcon family, Dr. Reverend [Deighton Douglin], they used to go, he's my age, and they used to go to church every single day at the you know, the Emanuel Baptist Church.

M: Everyday?

K: Every evening they had this thing. I'd be out playing ball and things like that, and they'd have their bible going to church. And he spent his, he was a missionary in Africa most of his working career. So the family is very, very religious, you know, other than Lloyd. [Chuckle]

A: Now you were talking about the Lew family that lived across the other side of town. And you did learn from the Lew family how to play piano?

M: Piano lessons, yah.

A: Yah. How did that come about? Do you remember how old you were when you started taking lessons?

M: Probably around, I'm thinking ten, but I'm not sure. And I probably took lessons from her for about a year. And then she suggested to my mother that I go further, that she thought I really had some ability. And she suggested another teacher that could teach me more than she could.

A: Okay.

M: So that's when I went to the other teacher, and I stayed with her for about a year. Now I was getting to be old enough to decide I didn't want to take piano lessons anymore.

A: Oh really, you had learned enough that you wanted.

M: So I stopped taking lessons, but I did last long enough to go and have, be in recital. And after that I was [unclear], but I've been playing ever since. Actually I enjoy my piano. I've always had a piano.

A: Yah. Now which Lew did you learn the original lessons from?

K: I don't remember?

M: Was her name Ella?

K: I don't know.

M: We can't remember her name. There were two sisters that lived together, unmarried [unclear].

A: Okay. And one of them was a schoolteacher as well?

M: No, that's not, that's one of the other Lews. (A: Okay) They're all the same family, but you know, this teacher, I didn't really know her when I came along until I was probably a young teenager. And she had connections with a club group in Boston, and they used to send kids to camp every summer. And she came up to my mother and asked my mother if we could, my sister and I could go to camp for whatever length of time. Probably a couple of weeks, I don't remember. And my mother let us go. That was the first time we ever went away from home. (A: Really) Alone, you know. But we went up to East Brook, East Brookfield, or East Brook, or wherever. There was a camp up there, you know, it was a black camp.

A: It was a black camp?

M: Yes.

A: In New Hampshire?

M: No, no, no. Was it New York? You don't know anymore about it.

K: It's before my time Marie.

M: Yah, yah, you weren't even born [unclear]. I think of East Bridgewater, but I'm not even sure. But I remember going [few words unclear] the teacher.

K: [Unclear] No, I don't know the teacher's name.

A: Oh um, I should know that.

K: Which one?

A: Miss Lew.

K: Miss Lew.

M: Yah, that's right. She came and took us to an area close to the camp, and left us there for the night with this lawyer and his wife. We stayed there over night, and then from there we went up to camp. And it was a great experience.

A: Yah, and it was all black kids?

M: And evidently most of them were fairly wealthy, fairly wealthy families.

A: Yah, yah. Was that one of the first times you played with a lot of black kids?

M: Yes. Yes.

A: And what was your initial impression?

M: I had a grand time. It was great! Yah, it was the first time.

A: Now back to the fellow that wanted to marry you? Was he Irish? He was, okay.

K: Tommy.

A: Tommy? Now you've given away the first name. [All laugh]

M: [Unclear].

K: You have to realize though that you know, being a minority in Lowell, most of the social functions were in Boston. (A: Okay) Like Marie mentioned, my mother and father were born in Bermuda. And there was a Bermuda Overseas Club in Boston that they were very, very active in. And that as Marie during her marriage life, her and her husband belonged to the [unclear], a very exclusive men's club that used to have formal dances once or twice a year? (M: Yah) You know, it was invitation. There wasn't money making, it was invitation only type of thing. (A: Yah) And her husband also belonged to the Professional Businessmen's Club in Boston.

A: And these are all black organizations?

K: Black organizations. So that we, they really did rely on Lowell for any social activities, because it just wasn't available, and you felt so much more comfortable in Boston, you know, with the (--) Like I said, the different organizations that, how my parents were many. My father and Marie's husband were very active in Boston.

A: How did you, how did you meet your husband?

M: It was a strange thing. I met him in my mother's house.

A: You did? And where was he from?

M: Boston.

A: He was from Boston.

M: Yah, he was from Boston. And my sister and I were having a party at my mother's house. And a friend of ours invited Charles to come to the party, because Charles had a car. So he came to the party, and that was the first time I'd ever laid eyes on him. So he seemed to be all right. You know I had a boyfriend. I wasn't impressed. (A: Yah) So it

was quite awhile before we got together. But finally, he came around often enough and I finally said, "Yes, I'd go out with him," type of thing. And that was the end of that! (A: Yah) We got married and later on it was, that was it.

A: What year did you get married?

M: 1937.

A: Okay. And where were you living at that time? In Newton?

M: Yes. Yes. And Charles was working in Newton. (A: Okay) So uh, and from there and after we got married we moved to Roxbury in an apartment. And just before we got married Charles lost his job. So the place closed down. So the wedding was all planned. So we got married and we had an apartment already. So we took it from there, but the very first day he went out looking for a job he went down in General Electric and he got a job. So we stayed in that apartment for five years, and he commuted back and forth to Lynn until we bought our house in Lynn. And that's why we got [closer]. So he was closer to his work. But we lived in Lynn for years, and then (--)

Side A ends
Side B begins

M: ...in that apartment for five years and he commuted back and forth to Lynn until we bought our house in Lynn. (A: Yah) And that's why we got [closer]. So he was closer to his work. But we lived in Lynn for years, and then there too we didn't really have any black connections other than Boston and [unclear].

A: So there wasn't much of a black community in so to speak, in Lynn either?

M: No. No.

A: How about in Lawrence?

M: Where?

A: Lawrence? Were there many blacks in Lawrence?

M: I don't know. I never went to Lawrence.

A: No.

K: There were a few. There were a few, but it seems like they were just, that was another social type of thing, you know. The, several young men used to come to visit me at that time and [unclear] from Lawrence, but there was, it seems like the attraction was in Boston.

A: Yah.

K: And the same thing with the Lawrence side, they were going to Boston also.

A: Sure.

K: Or Cambridge.

A: Yah, yah. When you were living in Newton as a domestic, did you come home on the weekends to Lowell?

M: I used to come home on my day off.

A: Day off. You had one day off a week?

M: Yah.

A: On Sundays, or?

M: Well one day a week that I was off, but that was on Thursday usually was the day, but I think on Sundays I didn't work, but I didn't come to Lowell. (A: Okay) I just stayed locally. And of course I had a lot of people from there I met in Newton, black people that I socialized with. There was always some socializing, but it wasn't Lowell.

A: Yah, okay. Did you ever feel you suffered from discrimination in any of your relations over the years?

M: I'm sorry to say that, well I probably should say I'm glad to say I never saw that but one time in my whole life. (A: Okay) And that was when I had been married for quite a few years, and my husband and I took a trip. And I'm thinking, trying to remember which trip it was. But we were driving and we were coming back, coming home from the trip. And we stop at a motel and the man said, "Well we don't have any vacancies." And a voice from the back said, "Yes, we had number so and so." And so he looked really sheepish and he said, "Well um, there are some southerners here and I don't think it's a good idea to have you here." So we walked out. And then about a half an hour down the road to the next place we were welcomed with open arms. So you know, it was really a strange situation, within a half a mile you could or you couldn't stay. So we, as I say, that's the only time I actually come in contact with it. At one point I did do a, I don't know what you'd call it, panel type thing, where they had an Irish girl, a Jewish girl, a black girl, I was the black girl of course, and there were three or four different groups, and we all had our little thing to say about how we had been discriminated against. (A: Yah) That was quite a, quite a thing that we did. It was written up in the papers and the whole bit, you know.

A: Where was that held?

M: In Danvers.

A: Okay.

M: That was my, my third home.

A: Yah. And this time that you were traveling and you wanted to stay at the hotel, at the motel, where was that?

M: It was in Maine somewhere. (A: Oh okay) I have no idea where it was. It was funny because we went down to the next place and we were [lovely]. We were glad we got there instead of the first place, because it was a more interesting place. For instance, we looked out the window and the river was just dry, and logs, full of logs. And by the time we got up in the morning the water was running and the logs were going down the river (A: Really) to the mill. (A: Really) And that was something we had never seen before.

A: They must have regulated it or something.

M: Yah, they had a sort of dam or something, because they got them down. And when, once they started going they were really going. So that was an interesting thing.

A: Now Marie did you follow the national issues affecting blacks over the years?

M: Oh yes, yah sure.

A: And what are some of your thoughts about that progress if you will?

M: Well all I can say is progress was very, very slow. I still think there's a lot of it left. I don't think, I know there's a lot of it still around. And I don't see any real, real effort on people's part to do anything about it. Now I have never had a problem living among white people. (A: Yah) This is where my husband's job took me, where I happened to be living when I was with my parents. So I've always been around white people. I never had any problems with them. And to me if we could do it why doesn't everybody do the same thing? I just don't understand why it's such a big problem. (A: Um) Now I'm the only black in this building.

A: Are you?

M: There used to be, well Ken's father-in-law used to live in here. (A: Okay) And they just thought he was the greatest person in the world. Everybody in here is my friend. And if I want anything all I got to do is ask and I get it. So as I say, I've never really experienced too much of this thing, but I do of course I know it exist and I know it hasn't gone that far. (A: Yah) It should be at this stage I think a lot farther than it is. But then of course I think it's really changing now, because there are an awful lot of black and white marriages coming along. (A: Yes) And that's bound to have some affect.

Because okay, so you got your children that are coming along the way. Some of these kids, you're not going to be able to call them black. We've got a great grand, great granddaughter that is, well whiter than you. (A: Yah) She, her father (--) No, her mother's father is black, but her mother is white. (A: Umhm) Okay. So the child married, and she married a white fellow. So now we've got half white girl, and half, and a white fellow. (A: Umhm) They have a child, and as I say, she's whiter than you. What can she call herself when she gets older, you know? (A: Yah, yah) She doesn't look anything like a black child, and is she going to have to call herself black? So I don't mean, it's not that it's any disadvantage, it's a disadvantage to be black, yes, but I mean it's no disgrace to be black. I mean I'm very happy that I'm black. But this child is going to say I'm black when she's white. And I imagine there are a lot of them like this. And of course there have always been people that had moved just over, right over into the white family. And I know in Bermuda there's a whole group of white Wingoods.

A: Oh really?

M: Yah.

A: So you have family connections to them probably. (M: No, no) No?

M: No. I've never (--) I don't think anyone's ever met them. As a matter of fact I saw them on television. (A: Really?) Yes, they were doing something. Oh I think it was on the Bermuda Triangle at one time or another. And this man had a boat and they named it Wingood. It was a white Wingood.

A: So you don't think there's a connection way, way back to tie in with the tree?

M: I don't know, there must be something there, but we don't know anything about it. You know the kids are really trying to do trees and all now, and they said, "Well maybe we ought to go and ask them," you know? But so far they haven't done that.

A: How could you typify, knowing that you were gone from Lowell for much of your adult life, how would you typify Lowell as a community that does, or does not welcome blacks, or newcomers, or immigrants to it?

M: Well back when I came along, I think Lowell was considered a very bad place for black residents. (A: Okay) There was no connections at all. They were just, well they were just here. (A: Okay) No, no getting together. And Lowell always seemed to have been ignoring that situation. (A: Okay) As I say, we didn't, we didn't experience too much of it, we didn't do anything in Lowell, but this is what I had heard. And I understand that Lowell today is still quite the same as they were. (A: Umhm) I haven't run into it, but evidently it's here.

A: Do you remember other families from Lowell talking about instances of difficulties?

M: No, I really don't.

A: Do you remember stories about instances of folks going out of their way to make blacks welcomed?

M: Well that would be an area that I would be more or less in. I have never had any problems. (A: Umhm) I don't think any of our family has ever had any problems. Do you?

K: No. No.

M: We, we were just accepted for some, somehow.

A: Yah.

M: I don't, I don't, I didn't stay long enough to go to parties and that type of thing, social affairs. I don't know how that would have worked out. (A: Yah) But what we saw, all our growing years we were accepted back then.

A: Umhm.

M: As I say I really never saw the real bad side of the segregation issue. Was it good or bad, I don't know.

A: So you moved back to Lowell after your husband passed away? And what brought you back to the city?

M: My brother.

A: What did he say?

M: Well Ken, I can say this, and my husband, were very, very close. And Ken told my husband he would watch out for me. And he took this right to heart. So my husband has been gone about a year, maybe a little better than that, then I had a heart attack. And of course they called Ken. So Ken jumped in his car and he comes flying to Epson, New Hampshire, which is fifty miles away in the middle of the night, and between the two of us we decided that there was no need for me to be there alone. And that it was too far, I was too far away, and why didn't I come down either here, or go to Boston where I'd be near some of the family. (A: Yah) So that's when we decided that I would come down and come to Lowell. And here I am!

A: And what were your thoughts when you came back to the city that you had grown up in?

M: Well what do I say, because I really haven't had too much connection with Lowell. It was like coming to a strange place, although I did have a couple of friends that were still here. Now they're all, both gone. I have one friend, she lives in Lawrence, that I

went to school with. And the other two that are gone I went to school with them. So we stayed friends all down through the years. When I'd come to Lowell I would, if I had time, see them. Of course once I got to Lowell I was failing. So I didn't do too much getting around. But when I got back here, and the girls knew I was back, they visited and we visited back and forth and went out to lunch, and went to a couple of class reunions together and all that kind of thing.

A: Great.

M: But that was about my connection with social life.

A: Bob, do you have any other questions for Marie, or Ken?

B: No.

A: So Ken and Marie, you were just talking about Ayer City neighborhood, as although there were a lot of Irish people down there, there were other groups represented as well.

K: Ayer City as far as we were concerned, Ayer City was between the four bridges. You had to cross the bridge to get into Ayer City.

A: Oh okay. And what were the four bridges?

K: On Lincoln Street there was a bridge over the New York/New Haven Railroad, and over Hale's Brook. (A: Okay) And the same thing on Plain Street. (A: Okay) So that was, that was our little niche. And in that niche there was practically every ethnic group you want, you could imagine at that time. And there was like my neighbor we used to call half Nelson, because he was half German and half English. And this is during WWII you know, and so that wasn't you know. And there was, the Italian families were there. Like everybody was friendly. There was always some of the mothers sitting in the house visiting with my mother. My mother was over their house. So it was, and it was, there was no, there was really, you were just part of the neighborhood.

M: Umhm.

A: What were some of the other groups that were there prevalent?

K: Um, like Marie said, the Irish. The Irish were next door, the Marr. Pat Marr came over in a boat from Ireland. You know, and (M: Italians) the Italians. Like Marie said, my father had all of these grapevines, and Mr. [Salvo] would come down in the fall and trim them for him (A: Really) you know. And my father was one of the fortunate ones, in the fall he got a gallon of wine from the Italians because you know, the Italians like him you know. If you didn't like them you got a pint. Well that, that was (--)

B: Okay. You know that's (--)

K: This was the type of neighborhood it was. I can (--)

M: Then we had Germans.

K: There were Germans.

M: Remember Mr. Roth next door?

K: The Roths, because a lot of them (--). There were an awful lot of Germans because they all worked at the Harvard Brewery. The Harvard Brewery was owned by a German family who lived in Germany, (A: Umhm) until World War II when the United States government took over as one of the prizes of war. (A: Right) But so this is the type of neighborhood. Like I say, there's an awful lot of people who worked at the Harvard Brewery. And if anything you did wrong in the neighborhood you know, you had all of these mothers there, because they're all watching out for you, you know. (A: Yah, yah) And if I did something wrong and my mother heard about it you know, and it was the same thing. It was a family type neighborhood. I can remember eating at the, well my favorite Marion Finn, the cheapest dinner she ever had, and the most delicious thing when I was five or six years old, was American Chop Suey. (A: Yah) You know, ten cents worth of hamburger, and ten pounds of pasta you know, and a can of tomatoes. I thought that was, that was, that was living, you know. And so anytime they had that I was always invited there. The Italian family, I can remember sitting down with the Italians and having all of this food piled up because of the big family. And one more didn't make any difference, you know. And that's the type of neighborhood it was. And so there wasn't any really prejudice there you know, or I don't think I ever heard the word, the "N" word nigger in the neighborhood. And so you sort of stayed in that little group, you know, and that was, that was the type of neighborhood that (--). And so we really didn't have that much discussion with our parents (B: Okay. Okay) about the prejudice and bigotry. (A: Uh huh) My father was shielding us from it. He was very, very active in the NAACP. Like he said, he was one of the co-founders. And when there was a problem he, and the other group of the Afro-Americans would go down and consult the problem. And they didn't, they didn't bring it to the house, you know. And that's another thing where most of the social, at my age that's where most of the social life was at the (--). They formed another little social club here, The Lowell Social Club, which was all black. We used to have dances. And every (--). We went socializing in Lowell, then you were going to Lawrence of Haverhill, you know, to the different group NAACP dances and things like that. And that's where, that's where we really got together. And back in the 30's there wasn't any black churches in Lowell. And I personally feel that's one of the biggest steps backwards that the Afro-Americans have as segregating us all into the churches because their children are sticking, they aren't being (--). They don't know how to deal in that specification, occasion for families. And so it's fine in church, and it's fine at home, but they still had to go out and work that forty hours, and there were no solid black outfit that they could work in. So they had to learn to socialize and (-). I'm sorry, not (--). The word socialize is wrong, you had to learn how to work with all of the different minority groups. And that's, that's, that's why like I said, that's (--). And that's one of the things, main things that my father emphasized and I think that's why he

was living in Lowell rather than in Boston, because you have to work in this atmosphere, you just can't stay in the ghetto type thing.

A: So Ayer City being not predominant by one single ethnic group, would that be one of the reasons why it was easier maybe for a black family to live there?

K: Absolutely. Absolutely. And we talk about religion, there was the Catholics, because the Sacred Heart Church is right up the street, but then there was all of these Methodist Churches and Baptist Churches in the area for the Protestants, and everything.

A: And even some German Churches, right?

K: That's right, and it didn't seem to matter at the time whether you were black, white, Jewish, or anything, or Catholic, it didn't matter, because everybody went their own little separate ways and they all had their own separate worlds, and when they got together it was just you know, you accepted a person for what they were, not by the color of their skin, or their religious, or their religious affiliation.

A: Marie, do you have some final thoughts about your time living in Lowell, working around different places, your family?

M: Well of course I never worked in Lowell at all. (A: Yah) I feel that we had a good living. I feel that we had a well-rounded living, because we were, we had to associate with white people because that's what most of them were. So we know how to get with, be together and still not be on the outside. (A: Yah) And Ken said he never heard the word nigger, (A: Yah) but I remember hearing it once and never again. And that was when a little, a new family moved into the area, on West London Street, and I don't think you even know about her. I don't think you were here. And this little boy, little boy in the family, I don't even know the name of the family, or how many children there were, I just know there was one little boy, and he called my sister Edna that "n" word. And she jumped him, and she really did a job on him. My sister Edna was the tall one of the family, and you know, but that family didn't even stay in the area, (A: Really) because everybody was down on him because he said this. (A: Really) So they moved very shortly after they came in there, they were gone.

A: What ethnic background were they? Do you remember?

M: No I don't, and I, I used to know the name of the little boy. Don't even remember that anymore. I was somewhere around eight or nine years old. But he was the only one that ever used that word.

A: Do you remember any stories about your father at his work place, and why he decided to go off to make his own machine shop?

M: Well of course the machine shops were closing down for one thing. (A: Okay) The Cartridge Shop was gone. Heinz Electric was not doing that well at that time. And he

had the expertise because he was trained in his majesty's dockyard in Bermuda. So he could always get a job with his background, but he just decided he was getting older and that he could do what he wanted to do, and he did it. And evidently he was very successful at it. But ah, I said that to say something. But I think we had a good life and we really didn't get the full treatment actually. And we just, it's still a strange thing that people can't get along because they got different color skin. But I guess I'll never see it any different.

A: Maybe we need to create a worldwide Ayer City. [All laugh]

M: That sounds like a good idea too, because as Ken said, it really was a good place to be.

A: Well I want to thank you both for sharing some of your memories today. And I think Bob will take us on some more memory trips through maybe some of the photos that you have. And you can talk a little bit more about your friends and family. So thanks again Marie.

M: I've got my grandfather there. [Tape turned off then on again] We had never had a photo of us taken at all. Just you know, a camera, a shot.

A: Just candid shots, not a professional?

M: And Ken's wife worked for (A: Allen Mills?) Olan Mills. (A: Olan Mills) And she said, "You know you should have a picture." And, "Yah, we should." And we didn't do too much about it, but Olan kind of kept at us and we finally went and got this picture taken. And we were glad we did once we did it, but it took us a long time to get to it. But we had been married now about, I think we were in Danvers at that time, weren't we?

K: No. No that was ah (M: Lynn?), that was in Epsom

M: Oh was it New Hampshire? (K: Yes) Oh, it was after we moved.

A: So how old are you there roughly?

M: Probably late 60s.

A: Okay. And you never had a formal wedding portrait taken when you guys first got married?

M: No. We, I didn't want a formal wedding, and I told my mother I wanted to just go and get married. (A: Yah) And my father said, "That is not done." My father was very proper. His English came out in him. Bermuda is an English territory, and English territory, and he was really very English, because there were things we did and things we

didn't do. You don't just get married, because then that doesn't look right. So I said, "Okay, I'll just get married at the house then." So they accepted that.

A: And you got married at your house?

M: Right. Right.

A: And you said your husband was Catholic. So were you married as a Catholic?

M: No.

A: Who married you guys?

M: Because I wasn't a Catholic

A: Oh okay.

M: Um.

K: Arthur E.

M: What was the name?

K: Remember Arthur E. Hiley?

M: No, no, no, it was one of dad's, from dad's church.

K: Oh, Burma McGinnis?

M: It could have been McGinnis.

K: No, I don't think him. No. No.

M: Yah, no, I don't think it was him though, but it was someone that was, my father decided to be (--). Anyway he changed his religion, and it could have been him. I don't remember. I think his name was Smith actually.

A: And so he wasn't from Matthew's Memorial?

M: No. No.

A: What church did your father start attending after that?

K: Unitarian Universalist.

M: That's it.

A: Unitarian Universalist? And that was the one from the Highlands?

K: Yup.

A: Up on Princeton Boulevard?

K: Yup.

A: Okay. And so it was the pastor from that church that married you?

M: I'm not sure. I'm not sure. All I can remember I think his name was Smith. And he just came to the house and married us. And we had just relatives, a very small wedding, but that was what I wanted. And that was that.

A: Did you guys go anywhere on a honeymoon?

M: My husband had just gotten his job at General Electric. So he had to go back to work the next day.

A: Okay. [Pause] And you were living down in Roxbury at the time? Is that where you said you lived?

M: No this was before we were married. Yah, before we were married, because I was still in Newton I think. (A: Okay) We both were in Newton.

A: Now where did your husband work that he lost his job shortly before you folks got married?

M: South Boston.

A: What was he doing?

M: It was in machine shop. (A: Okay) He was just 28. My grandfather was a machinist. My father was a machinist. My husband was a machinist. My brother was a machinist. And so it came right down the line. There's (--)

A: Did your husband know your father through doing machine shop work?

M: No. (A: No) No, he didn't meet him until he came there as my friend.

A: Yah, but how did he know your family?

M: Through a friend of ours, Chet [Momed] brought him down to the house. As I say, we had a party and [unclear] had a group, and [few words unclear] on Charles who didn't get a car. And he brought him down to Lowell for the first time, and I met him for the first time.

A: All right.

M: I think that's grammar school, but I thought it was interesting because the outfit and the way the boys got bouquets of flowers like just the girls do now, and the high shoes and all. I think it's really priceless.

A: Yah. Where did your husband grow up?

M: In Boston.

A: In Boston.

M: Yah, and he went to school at [unclear] (A: Really) torn down [unclear] I think was the name of the high school.

A: Okay.

M: Waldorf Street. [Reviewing photos]

A: One Waldorf Street.

M: Which is up in Ayer City. The house that my father bought when he first came, well when we first, he first came to Lowell we lived in an apartment on Lincoln Street until he could buy a house.

A: Oh really!

M: And I think we weren't there too long, because we were on the second floor, and the kids were a little bit annoying to the people downstairs running back and forth. So dad very quickly bought One Waldorf Street, and we moved there. And let's see, Helen, Ken, me, Helen all were born in the [unclear] at One Waldorf Street.

A: Were you born, Ken, in the house?

K: Yes.

A: Not at the hospital.

K: Not at the hospital.

A: And in Cambridge were you born in a house?

M: I don't know.

A: You don't remember?

M: No, I don't remember. [All laugh] Isn't that strange!

A: Now do you know what this picture is about, why they were all dressed up that day?

M: Ah, all I know is that my husband took the picture. (A: Oh okay)

K: May's wedding. (M: Huh?) May's wedding.

M: Oh was it? (K: Yah) Oh! Okay.

A: The wedding of your sister?

M: Right.

A: Okay.

M: I didn't remember that.

A: And was that wedding held in the house as well?

M: She had a gown and everything, didn't she, May?

K: Not that I know of. I remember Alonza was there, but I remember the flower you know?

M: Oh yah, yah.

K: The church.

A: Which church?

M: Billerica?

K: Billerica. Her husband was a [Waldo] Finnegan from the Finnegans in Billerica. And they're, I don't know, or remember the name of the church, but it was at the church right here in Billerica Center.

A: Okay. All right. Great. So this is a picture of your mother's father?

M: My mother's father, yes.

A: Named Charles Manders? (M: Right) And this is of course in Bermuda?

M: In Bermuda, right, in his yard. He was quite a person in Lowell, in Bermuda, and he lived to be 99 years old. (A: Ah) But when he was really up in his late 80s they tell me

they had to take his bicycle away from him because they were sure he was going to hurt himself, and he's still riding a bicycle. But he wanted to live to be a 100, but he didn't make it. He lived to be 99, but he was quite a guy.

A: What did he do for work?

M: He was a machinist!

A: Another machinist.

M: And they all worked, they all came through the dockyard. (A: Yah) Evidently it was supposed to be quite an honor type thing to go to school there. (A: Oh okay) I don't know about grandfather, but my brother, my father and my uncle went to school there. (A: Okay) It was suppose to be quite something to do this. And what they were taught there was evidently accepted no matter where they went they were real artisans. And they were, my uncle was a, in the ship building area. (A: Okay) So he worked down at Quincy?

K: Bethlehem.

M: Bethlehem Steel.

A: Okay.

M: And had a good job. And a matter of fact, he was still into so much that in his home in Boston he did his playroom downstairs like the inside of a ship, with the portholes and all.

A: Great. Okay, thanks.

M: [Unclear].

A: And when he was very young.

M: Yes, as I say, he was a sickly child. I think that's why they had so many pictures of him as a child. They didn't expect him to live, some sort of a heart murmur or something. And but he fooled them all because he lived longer than any of his siblings.

A: Oh really! And describe his outfit there for us.

M: Well I would say he looks like a little girl, but this was the time. He had the little high, of course the high heels, the high shoes, laced up shoes, and a long, like a tunic on, the pants barely showing. You could really say he looks like a little girl, but that's the way they dressed in those days.

A: And what year would that be roughly?

M: Probably would you say about three or four? He was born in 1903. It was probably around 1909?

A: Okay.

[Reviewing photos]

A: Start with each one of them and go down. Point to each one and then tell us a little bit about who's in there and what's happening.

M: The first one here is just a picture of my husband and I. I think we were at the beach.
(A: Okay) This is me with some of my friends on a picnic, and they're all gone now. Midge Lee is there and she's long gone.

A: What's her name?

M: Midge Lee. (A: Midge Lee?) [Unclear] her name was Marjorie.

A: Marjorie? (M: Yah) And where are you guys at?

M: I think that was Mashpee, Mashpee, which is down the Cape.

A: Okay. And where was Midge Lee? From Lowell?

M: Boston.

A: Boston. Okay.

M: And the next one? Oh it's my cousin and I when we were about ten years old, and it was taken in the yard at One Waldorf Street.

A: Okay. And that's this picture right here?

M: Yes, umhm.

A: And what's your cousin's name?

M: Sterling [Bogster], and he's deceased also. (A: Okay) The next one is when my father and I went to New Orleans to visit my sister who was living there at the time. We were there for Mardi Gras. So we had quite a time. Her husband worked at the hospital.

K: [Wentgoodrich].

M: [Wentgoodrich] Hospital in New Orleans.

K: That was a black, black hospital. Black only hospital.

A: Oh really! I never heard of it.

M: And the next one is just a beach picture of me. This is a picture of my husband and I at, down Martha's Vineyard. (A: Okay) This is a photo that was taken at the same time. No, I don't have it on there. We both had pictures taken you know, at a studio.

A: Where was that taken?

M: In Boston. (A: Okay) Bacharach I think.

A: Bacharach, really?

M: It think it's Bacharach, and that's the same, same time. This is when I was modeling a work outfit at a show. I think it was a hairstyling show in Boston.

A: Okay. How did you get involved in that?

M: My hairdresser was one of the group associated you know, that put on the show. And she asked me to model for it. And that's just a picture in an evening gown. We were going somewhere. This one, oh a small picture with a big one. They gave you little ones along with it, (A: Okay) and it's one of my husband and I. This one is, oh this is my husband and I, oh at the World's Fair in New York.

A: Oh really! (M: Yes)

K: '64 or sooner?

M: '39?

A: '30 ah.

K: Oh earlier.

A: 36?

M: No it wasn't '36 because we were married.

K: Probably '36.

A: Oh you were married. Good. Is there anybody else in that picture with you guys?

M: No, just the two of us.

A: Okay.

M: And that of course, that's one of the pictures from that one. (A: Yah) And this is my niece, and my grandniece, their daughter.

A: And what are their names?

M: And that's Ken's, Ken's daughter, and her name is Joanne, and Lauren is the daughter.

A: Now did you have children?

M: No, I didn't have any children, but I have a lot of nice nieces and nephews to fill in the gaps.

A: Great. Well Marie, thanks very much again, and any final thoughts that you have for us today?

M: I'll probably think of a lot of things after you're gone.

A: Well you have to write your memoirs down.

M: I know. Yah, that's what I was doing last week. One of my nieces was down here. And whenever she comes she's always asking a lot of questions because she's very, well they're all into family. They're trying to get down to where, how, why and we came along. So she was writing notes by the minute and asking me questions. And then one of the things she said, you know. Oh boy, we are family. And I was talking to her, I said, "How come we think our family is so great?" "Because we are!"

A: All right, great. Well thanks again.

M: Well thank you for coming.

[Tape is turned off then on again]

K: I want to emphasize the fact that when they raised us children that family is important, and to love one another, and love the country, and love people for what they are, not who they are, or what they are, but just love the human race.

B: And Mehmed, just a brief summary from where we are, and what you intend to do with the project.

A: Well this is part of the Historical Society Project where we've been interviewing community leaders and just to get an idea of what happened to all of the different segments of society that lived in Lowell. And we're fortunate to have Marie and Ken here combined years, well over a hundred years worth of memories. And it's great to, in this particular instance, get some memories of what it meant to be an African American

here in Lowell, and the relationships within the community. So I just want to thank the both of you folks again for sharing your time and your memories this morning.

M: Well thank you.

Interview ends