

TMP-013

Interviewee: Betty Marshall

Interviewer: Jessica Taylor

Date: June 20, 2013

T: This is Jessica Taylor, interviewing Betty Marshall on June 20th, 2013 at Saunders Assisted Living in Gloucester Courthouse, Virginia. And the time is 12:00 PM. Ma'am, can you please state your full name?

M: Betty Anne Radcliff Marshall.

T: Okay. What is your date of birth?

M: March 8, 1920.

T: Okay. And where were you born?

M: Richmond, Virginia.

T: When did you move to Gloucester?

M: June 16th, 1960.

T: When did you start summering in Gloucester?

M: About ten years before.

T: All right. What are your parents' names?

M: Elizabeth Blanche Jones and Clyde Harvey Radcliff.

T: Okay. And what were their occupations?

M: Momma was a housekeeper, I guess. We had servants at the time. I'm from Richmond, Virginia. Daddy was a banker.

T: Okay. Do you have any siblings?

M: Yes, I have three sons. Beverly Wellford Marshall -- you want his age?

T: Sure.

M: Sixty-six, Davis Radcliff Marshall, sixty-two, and Philip Taliaferro Marshall, sixty.

T: Okay. Did you have any brothers or sisters?

M: Yes, I had two brothers and one sister.

T: What did they do?

M: My older brother, Davis Radcliff was an attorney, a lawyer. My younger brother was in the DuPont Paint business for a long time. And my sister was Barbara, a housewife.

T: Okay. Where was your father a banker at?

M: A bank that failed when they had the Depression. It was called America Bank and Trust Company.

T: Okay. What did he do after?

M: Various things. I can't even tell you, some of it was stock brokers.

T: Okay. That makes sense. And, as for you, what was your occupation?

M: Before I was married, during the war, World War II, I worked for Internal Revenue for almost five years. And after I married, I did not work.

T: When did you marry?

M: January 29, 1945.

T: Okay, and when you moved to Gloucester, where did you live?

M: My sons still live there, it's down Burgh Westra Lane, off of 14, and it's called Philippi, from the Bible. It's on a wonderful location, looks directly at North river, all the way down to Mathews. The Back creek is owned to the right, and on the other side of Back creek is where Ware Neck which is, if you get there you have ten miles to drive. But on, on occasions, you could almost walk over there.

T: That's wonderful. Is it an older house, or did you build it?

M: My husband's uncle, Dr. Edwin Tyler Wellford built it as a summer cottage, and we added two wings in 1960. It was originally, the cottage part, was built in 1903.

T: Wow. So, I'm going to ask you a little bit about living in Richmond.

M: Okay.

T: When did your family first get a car?

M: They had them before I was born, in 1920.

T: So they got a car before you were born.

M: Yes.

T: Do you remember-

M: When they first came out, they had a Cadillac, bought from- let me see- William Jones' automobile place.

T: How often was it used?

M: I don't know. I wasn't born then. That's before I was born.

T: Well, after you were born.

M: Oh, they always had one or two cars. My mother never drove, but one was for business, and one was for pleasure.

T: [Laughter] Which one was the business one, and which one was the pleasure one?

M: I think Daddy's car. They had several in my lifetime, mainly Dodges or Buicks.

T: Okay. And, when you were going on a trip in the car, where would you go?

M: Various places. We had a summer home in Barnel, Virginia, eight miles outside Richmond. My home was on Monument Avenue, between Robert E. Lee monument and Jefferson Davis' monument. And, in the summer, on Memorial

Day, we'd move to our summer home in Banel, which is eight miles away from Richmond, and supposedly, eight degrees cooler. [Laughter] from higher elevation. And we would stay in Banel until school started.

T: Wow. So your whole family would move outside of Richmond during the summer.

M: Yes.

T: Wow! Did you ever go on trips to Gloucester or Washington D.C.?

M: Not when I was real young. Yes, I went on trips. We went to Virginia Beach a lot, and various beaches. Up to Atlantic City, and Ocean City, and D.C. And I can remember going to Florida on a dirt road, long before the interstates.

T: Wow. As a teenager, what did you do for fun?

M: I had fun. [Laughter] I went to - I went to private school called Collegiate School for Girls. It was three blocks from where I lived on Monument Avenue. I studied some, and I liked boys, and I was very athletic.

T: If you were to go on a date, where would you go?

M: The Country Club of Virginia.

T: Wow.

M: Yeah, that was the club. When you live in Richmond, there were four things: the drive was the Skyline Drive, the club was the Country Club of Virginia, the beach was Virginia Beach, and the university was the University of Virginia.

T: Wow! That's severe! [Laughter] So, describe your friends to me. What kind of a group were you?

M: Oh, my friends were, it was a girls' school. My classmates mainly.

T: Would you go to the beach together?

M: No, with the family.

T: Okay, so what would you do with your friends on a Saturday night?

M: For, with dates? Well, I said we'd probably go to the country club, or a movie, the theatre, what everybody does at that age, I think.

T: [Laughter] If you were to go to Virginia Beach, would you spend all your time on the actual beach, like swimming, or would you go out to a restaurant, or-?

M: Well, in those days, Virginia Beach had resorts that would furnish breakfast and dinner. They're all gone now. You could sometimes study Virginia Beach, the history of that, it's interesting. And, I'd spend a lot of time on the beach, of course, that's what I was there for!

T: [Laughter] Did your servants and things like that come with your family --

M: No.

T: -to Virginia Beach?

M: No.

T: No?

M: No, she moved out to Barnel with us.

T: Oh. She. What's her name?

M: Mary Blackwell Hackett.

T: Wow.

M: And she was hired when I was five years old, and helped marry us, and bury us, and so forth. So, she was there a long time.

T: Yeah. Where did she come from?

M: Place called McKenney, Virginia. Not too far from Richmond.

T: Was she a white woman --

M: Oh, she was black.

T: She was black.

M: And of course, we called them colored.

T: [Laughter] So, was your relationship close?

M: Very.

T: Very close?

M: Yeah, she- she was wonderful with me.

T: Do you have any anecdotes about that time? With her?

M: Any what?

T: Anecdotes. Like moments that stand out to you.

M: Well, I know if I was sick, she was the one that would sort of, bring me what I needed. Whatever. She was wonderful.

T: So, when you came to Gloucester, you started summering you said in 1950?

M: Oh, in the summers for many years.

T: Okay, what's your earliest memory of Main Street? What'd it look like to you?

M: Oh, I don't know. Well, the cars were entirely different from these days. You can remember some of the old stores, but I can't remember -- there was one called Tucker's, 5 and 10 cent store, and a clothing store, and good old Morgan's drugstore, and Grey's drugstore. And, of course we had no ABC Store, you had to go to West Point, Virginia for any of that.

T: Really?

M: Mm-hm.

T: Some people have mentioned watering holes, or beer joints. Have you -- did you ever notice anything like that?

M: No, I don't, I can't go back that far. Watering holes?

T: Or beer joints, like places where you can get beer with your dinner.

M: Well, you can get beer at Grey's, and if you wanted a milkshake, you went to Morgan's. They were right across the street from each other.

T: Uh-huh. Coming from Richmond, did you notice a difference in the quality of goods, or the amount of goods that were sold on Main Street?

M: When I went to Burgh Westra, we would order our groceries, from Ware Academy, if you know where that is. It was called **McCloud's** grocery store. We would order there by phone, and go up and pick it up. They'd have it all ready for us.

T: Wow.

M: And we had, at Burgh Westra years ago, this is long before 1960, you'd have a phone that you'd pick up and you'd ring, and then you'd have a certain ring for your phone. You went through an operator, and they could get you in touch with certain people, and they might just know where they were.

T: So, was that the way that it was in Richmond?

M: No, in Richmond it was- we had definite phones, regular phones, no- no party line.

T: But would you order your groceries over the phone?

M: Yes, we certainly did that.

T: Okay.

M: Mother and Colored Mary would do all that.

T: [Laughter] So, when you were ordering your groceries over the phone in Gloucester, do you remember the year, or around the year that that was?

M: Yes, I would say in the late thirties, and even before. I was there from [19]30 until the [19]50s.

T: Okay. How did Gloucester change over that time period?

M: A great deal. Oh my goodness, we had no Wal-Mart, or Home Depot, Lowe's, any of those places.

T: But between the [19]30s and the [19]50s, did you notice a large change?

M: Oh, we had a good old restaurant here called Calvin's. Maybe somebody's mentioned that. I don't know what else you want to know. They had several automobile places on Main Street.

T: Can you remember the people that you would see every day? Like the people that work behind the counters, or --

M: Oh, we knew everybody.

T: Yeah?

M: When you went in a restaurant, you'd know three or four people. Now you don't know anyone sometimes.

T: Well, tell me about some of the people that you'd see every day.

M: Way back then? I don't think I ought to say their names.

T: Oh, you don't have to.

M: No, well I would -- I had, later on I had little children, and I loved to go fishing, we'd go fishing a lot. And sailing some. And what else do you want to know?

T: Okay. What is your earliest memory of the Texaco station on Main Street?

M: I can't remember when it wasn't there, I don't think.

T: Do you remember when it came into town? When it was built?

M: No, I have no idea.

T: You said you --

M: When was it built?

T: It was built in 1931, but, I don't know when people started going there. Do you remember Captain Jack Brown, or Herman Brown?

M: Which was the one that ran the gas station?

T: Captain Jack Brown owned it--

M: The Browns.

T: Yeah, do you remember him?

M: Was his name Jack? Oh, yes, I remember him. They always filled it up for us. We didn't get out.

T: So, because it's so different from now can you describe that process to me?

M: What they would do? They would take the cap off your car, and put the nozzle in there and pump the gas for you.

T: Would you talk during that time?

M: Possibly.

T: Possibly.

M: Yes, everybody's a friend in Gloucester.

T: [Laughter] Do you remember the one-armed man?

M: That's the one I'm talking about.

T: Oh, that's Herman Brown.

M: Herman? Herman is the one I knew. I don't remember any others.

T: Okay. What was he like as a person?

M: Very nice.

T: Yeah? Do any moments stick out to you?

M: No, I can just remember him filling the car.

T: Okay.

M: With gas.

T: Do you remember a place on the side of the gas station called the Ladies' Lounge?

M: No, I don't remember that.

T: Okay. So you never really got out of the --

M: Well, later on there was a carwash place. Still there, isn't it?

T: Mm-hm. Do you remember anything about that?

M: Well, yes, you could run your car through. Very nice. Or you could wash your own car.

T: Mm-hm. Did you notice that Gloucester has gotten more populous in the last thirty --

M: Oh my heavens yes.

T: How has that affected your life?

M: Well, it's just not the same place. As I said we have a Wal-Mart, especially, come into town. When that opened here, the second one, they had one that was at another location nearby, was the largest Wal-Mart on the East coast.

- T: I heard that there was a, kind of a celebration when it came into town.
- M: If so, I might've been in Florida. I don't remember that.
- T: Oh, okay. Do you remember any Main Street traditions, like the Daffodil Festival, or the Halloween parade?
- M: Oh, I would bring my children up to Lewis Avenue, all three of them for Halloween, and they'd go up and down the street.
- T: Well, tell me about that. What'd they dress up like, who'd they go see?
- M: Well, I don't remember what they dressed up like.
- T: Oh, okay.
- M: Clowns, probably. I don't remember.
- T: Okay. [Laughter] And everybody was really friendly-
- M: Oh yes.
- T: -on Halloween. What kind of a show did people put on for kids, on Halloween? Did they decorate their houses, or. . .
- M: Well, see, I was down on the river. Yes, I think they'd have jack o' lanterns and things in the window.
- T: What about Christmas. Were you ever here on Christmas?
- M: Not until I moved here. And they were wonderful.
- T: Did you have a best Christmas in Gloucester?
- M: A best Christmas?
- T: Yeah, in Gloucester.
- M: They're all great.

T: [Laughter] Okay. Okay. Are there any other anecdotes or key moments you can tell us about?

M: Well, I'm sorry, I don't know. I know when I moved here I was elected immediately into the Gloucester Women's Club. And then in 1961, I was elected to the Garden Club of Gloucester. And I've always loved the North River Circle of the King's Daughters. And I've been an avid member of Ware Church - I sang in the choir twenty years, my husband was vester and so forth. My boys all carried the cross. Ware Church.

T: What was the Women's Club like?

M: Well, we had wonderful programs, and we'd have good attendance. It was very active.

T: What about it did you find meaningful? What brought you there?

M: I guess, the purpose of any women's club: to have good programs and good presence and so forth.

T: Okay. Did you notice how the vision of the Women's Club changed over time? Things that you would do differently?

M: Well, I don't think we have as many active members now, because back in my day, a lot of women didn't work, and most of them do now. So the attendance isn't as much. But that's true I think of all women's clubs.

T: Now, what's it like to be part of a group of just women, did you--

M: It was just fine.

T: [Laughter] It was just fine.

M: Yeah.

T: Did you find it like empowering, or did you find the companionship is easier, or things like that?

M: I don't know what to say. I think it was just like all women's clubs: typical.

T: Okay.

M: I mean, like the programs, and the food was good. Also, for many years at the Women's Club we had wonderful lunch and bridge parties, and I'm an avid bridge player, all my life. So, I enjoyed that very much.

T: [Laughter] That's wonderful. Who'd you play bridge with?

M: Lots of people.

T: Oh, that's right, you didn't want to say names.

M: I have bridge clubs I belonged to.

T: Okay, that's great.

M: And I particularly like duplicate bridge.

T: Oh. I don't know what that is. [Laughter]

M: It's more competitive than regular bridge. It's a regular kind of fun. You don't play bridge, obviously. You'll miss a lot.

T: [Laughter] Fair enough, well, thank you so much, ma'am.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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