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Male: All right, pretty good.

Holly McGlown: On behalf of Crossroads to Freedom at Rhode's College we want to thank you for coming here today and sharing your story with us. We really appreciate it. My name is **Holly McGlown**. I'm a sophomore at Rhode's College and this I **Caroline Mulloy** who is a senior at Rhode's College. We're both honored for you to be here to find out a little bit more about Memphis in every community. Today's interview will be available online at www.CrossroadsToFreedom.org. Okay, let's start off with some biographical information. For the record can you please state your name?

Jan Coleman: I'm **Jan Coleman**.

Holly McGlown: What year were you born?

Jan Coleman: 1952.

Holly McGlown: Where were you born and raised?

Jan Coleman: Memphis.

Holly McGlown: What is your occupation?

Jan Coleman: I am – I teach creative writing. I'm a teacher.

Holly McGlown: Who were your parents?

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Jan Coleman: **Noma** and **Al Smith**.

Holly McGlown: What are or were their occupations?

Jan Coleman: My father was a general surgeon. My mother was a nurse.

Holly McGlown: Do you have any brothers or sisters?

Jan Coleman: I have a brother.

Holly McGlown: Can you describe a little bit about him?

Jan Coleman: My brother? I worshipped him. [Laughter] I thought he was the coolest thing that ever happened. He is one of those friendly, outgoing people. He was Mr. Central. He was President of Student Council. I didn't go to Central because I didn't want to follow his footsteps. He was bright, smart. He lives in West Memphis, not far.

Holly McGlown: Can you tell me about the neighborhood that you grew up in?

Jan Coleman: Well for the most part I guess I grew up mostly in East Memphis in **Laurelwood** around **Court Mall** and all that is. When we moved there it was – the Laurelwood Shopping Center was not there. It was a cotton field.

[0:02:00] So it was kind of out in the boonies. Yeah. That was back in the days when there were – the only hospitals were down here on Union Avenue and my father refused to move passed **purpose**. He said he wouldn't ever move passed that and he never did because it was such a long drive. It wasn't like the doctors that now that go over the city.

Holly McGlown: What was your home life like?

Jan Coleman: Oh very warm. Real tight with my parents. I lived to please my parents. I think I did most of the time. A nice Donna Reed kind of family. My parents got along. They were great people. Supported me. Basically as long as I did well in school I could pretty much do what I wanted to do.

Holly McGlown: What kinds of activities were you involved in?

Jan Coleman: Well I had a – I was in a high school sorority which I understand now is not such a good one anymore.

[0:03:00] But at the time they were into a lot of charity things. We **wouldn't** go out to the public nursing homes and we'd take things and sing and play bingo and we did it pretty often. But I was real involved in that. I did youth group at church. I guess I dated a little bit. There were some organizations in school. I was like in Future Teachers of America and they had the school for the deaf was there. Then they had classes for kids with learning disabilities which is ultimately what I wanted to do is teach kids with learning disabilities. Back then they didn't have labels of, "You're dyslexic," or if you want a degree in special education you were either going to teach retarded children or psychologically damaged children and you couldn't teach learning disabilities as such.

[0:04:00] It was just beginning to be acknowledged that there were children that had problems that were bright, just odd things about themselves. Anyway, they had a special ed class. It was kind of like an odd mix of children with various abilities and problems. One of my good friends in high school her little sister was in this class because they had seen their father killed and her sister quit talking. Just totally quit talking. So I got real involved with that class. The kids liked me. They thought I was cool. I was a senior in high school and they were like 12. So I guess when you're 18 and they're 12 you're cool. So I was real active in that. That pretty much – played the piano.

[0:05:00] I did ballet not because my parents made me.

Holly McGlown: Do you have any memories from childhood that influenced you later on in life?

Jan Coleman: Oh absolutely. That experience I just talked about, teaching those kids at **White Station**. Absolutely. I was a special ed teacher for a long time then I started having babies and it just kind of got too hard for awhile to work. But that definitely did. I think the fact that I had a really tight family influenced how I developed and how I got married for life and I'm still married and it's been 35 years and I had kids and I didn't work because I wanted to spend time with my kids just like mother quit work and spent time with us. I think they're turning out okay.

Holly McGlown: Where did you go to elementary school?

Jan Coleman: I went to St. Mary's, all girls.

[0:06:00] I stayed there through the 9th grade and then 10th, 11th and 12th I wanted to be where the boys were and it was so much easier. That sounds very snobby. I'm sorry but White Station was so much easier than St. Mary's.

Holly McGlown: White Station's where you went to high school?

Jan Coleman: Mmm-hmm. Yeah that – it was – the problem was that it wasn't that St. Mary's was so much harder. It's just that they were ahead. I didn't learn anything new until I was a senior and then senior year was hard.

Holly McGlown: So what was school like for you? You can describe it a little bit more.

Jan Coleman: Besides not being air conditioned and really hot? Well high school was really big compared – St. Mary’s my class had somewhere between 35 and 50 girls in it. At the time my senior class at White Station was the largest one they’d ever had. We had over 500 students in the senior class which – and those were all neighborhood kids.

[0:07:00] These weren’t bused in kids or kids transferring. This was neighborhood kids. So it was pretty full. Okay, now I forgot the question. What did you ask me?

Holly McGlown: What was school like for you?

Jan Coleman: Oh yeah, okay. Yeah, I mean I hung with my friends and did what everybody else did. We went to the football games and I remember going to people’s houses where you would roll out the big roll of butcher paper and paint, “Go Spartans,” and those things. Sell the pep squad ribbons. I wonder if they still do that but they did then. It was kind of a fundraiser kind of thing. For the sorority I remember every year to raise money for our – because we couldn’t have proms at the – it was school sponsored all the little high school sororities would try to have formals. So we would try to have fundraisers. So we would have garage sales and we would sell bubblegum and we’d buy it wholesale and sell it for \$0.02 a piece and we paid a penny which I know doesn’t sound like you’re going to make much money but it didn’t cost as much back then.

[0:08:00] We did bake sales. Every Saturday we would go from beauty shop to beauty shop selling homemade sandwiches and that’s how we paid for our prom. We had them down at the Peabody in the ballroom down there and the whole thing probably cost us \$500.00 total. That was the band and everything. You couldn’t do that today but – in the contract we would write like every fifth song had to be a slow dance in the contract. I’m sure people don’t do that anymore but we did. The fascinations of women’s minds I guess. But I think my social life probably evolved around those people that were in the – because having been in this little school and you go to this big school and you don’t anybody it took her awhile to find a community where I was comfortable.

[0:09:00] Never having been in school with boys it was a little odd. Learning that you couldn’t sit like this in the classroom because you have to look a little more ladylike, not that I typically sat like that in the classroom but I didn’t think about it and notice it. In

fact I've written about this in the book going – I thought I was wicked because I chewed gum in class because if I'd done that at St. Mary's I was in the Saturday school. I would have been in trouble. So you didn't – so to be able to chew gum and be slightly disrespectful to a teacher was a fun experience to me. That was the height of my wickedness if that tells you anything. I was kind of a stick in the mud. I wasn't much a party person. Also, I'll say this much too, during that time period there is a clear line of the good kids and the bad kids. The hippies, pot-smoking bad kids drank. All that. Then the rest of us. I mean it was a clear line whereas now I think it's a really murky, wide, gray space.

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So I see that huge difference. Of course having been in academics all this time I see a huge difference between what I had to face in my naiveté. I was naïve. There we go. What my children have had to deal with, it was their exposure to drugs and alcohol was so much easier to get than it was for me. So that's – I see a big difference there in the schools. Also I think a lot of that's because nobody had cars. Only a few people had cars back then. Now all the kids have cars. So it's harder for parents to control what their children do and know where they are because they're driving which is a little scary, too. You all are that age.

Holly McGlown:

Do you think that being in an integrated school affected your educational experience?

[0:11:00]

Well it was because of when I was in school and the fact that we had the sanitation strike and Martin Luther King was assassinated then. Because of that I would say integration affected my school and actually – I was talking to you a little earlier – I had no idea, did not understand the problem of integration because of the black kids that were in school with me I liked great. They were fine. I didn't – they were my friends. I just hadn't been around a whole lot of black people. So ones in school and a housekeeper. I just didn't understand. So I think once that happened it dawned on me – especially even before he was killed the sanitation strike brought it to home in that one of my father's friends was on the city council.

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Lovely man. Looked like a bulldog. He looked mean. He was a football player at Yale or some place. He was one of those. He was square. He was very much for solving the strike, giving them better wages and moving on but the problem was the law stated that they could not – the city could not negotiate with them as long as there was a – they were striking. They had to be at work in order to negotiate and they wouldn't go back to work. So it was a

stalemate. What this man was wanting to do was say, "Let's go ahead and negotiate. We're not accomplishing anything." So his children were in East High School at the time. East High School was almost all white it is wasn't all white.

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He was getting – his children were getting threatened. He was getting threatened just because he was for stopping the strike. He was truly on the sanitation workers' side. When all this happened I remember talking – my dad was talking about it at the dinner table because they played golf together and it hit me like, "You mean somebody might try to kill his children because" – "Yeah, that's what I'm trying to tell you." I think that's when it was like – it hit me like, "Oh this is really a problem." At that point I was beginning to have – I was beginning to agree with Mr. Blanchard, this man, because I was like, "This is not right." Up until that point I was some self-absorbed teenager that it hadn't really clicked with me what the problem was. I think I lived in a very insulated society, just in my own little bubble, my own little world.

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I – now we had shopping centers and everything out here so we didn't go downtown to shop like we did when I was a kid which used to be a big deal. I used to love to do that. I think that is a point in which it really hit me. One of the reasons I changed from St. Mary's to public school was because I wanted the prom and I wanted the social events that would come with being in a co-ed school and all of this stopped it. With integration they quit having all of these proms. My brother didn't have one and he was four years ahead of me at school. So it's – it was – it took awhile for it to dawn on me. It was like if I went in school and started talking to my friends and like about supporting sanitation workers I would have become a pariah. So what do you do? Do you go with your friends and just in your head think one thing and out of your mouth comes another or do you stand for your rights and then no one wants anything to do with you when you had changed to this school just to be part of something new?

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It was really difficult. I look at my own children now. They – for – I mean if I had come home and I had brought home an African-American boyfriend my father would not have been angry but he would have been upset or concerned. Not because he was black but because if I got married we're going to have mixed race babies. He was – at that point in our life if you had a mixed race baby you had no – you didn't belong anywhere. I think this is something that's improving. Whereas my children they say – they ask me how I would feel if they brought home a different race, somebody they were seriously talking about getting married.

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I said, “Well my first question is are they educated? Do they have a job? What are their ambitions? Are their parents together?” All the things that I want for my family I want whoever they choose to come from the same thing, to have education and ambition and solid home life. So those are the things that bother me. So I look at it differently than my parents looked at it. It’s not that they would object to that mixed race. It’s just they were thinking about what would happen to children and were you willing to be looked at funny because you were a mixed couple. I don’t look at it that way. So I think beginnings of those things all happened – those thoughts all happened when I was in high school. I probably was way different from most folks. In other wise very conservative. That was probably my one non-conservative thing but I’m an educator so I want everybody to be educated.

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Holly McGlown: What role did religion play in your life growing up?

Jan Coleman: I went to church every Sunday. Going to church. Was in youth group. It gave me moral values. I can’t say that they hung a lot with people from church unless they went to school with me anyway, but I mean we celebrated religious holidays and Christmas. Christ’s birthday was more important to us than Santa Claus except when I was a little kid. That doesn’t count. Easter, I mean Easter was completely a religious holiday to us. It wasn’t bunnies and Easter Egg hunts ever although my kids got those. I didn’t *[laughs]*. So I mean yeah, it was definitely part of my life. I think it was mostly a moral compass.

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Holly McGlown: Can you tell me about your family, a little bit about your family and your children?

Jan Coleman: Oh my children?

Holly McGlown: Mmm-hmm.

Jan Coleman: Well my oldest is a law student. My middle one’s a chef and my youngest is about to graduate and hopefully she’s going to be some kind of opera diva *[laughs]* I think. She has a real gift and so I hope she will use it and not that she wouldn’t make a great doctor because she would but she’s going to get through all those sciences to do that. So we’ll see. But I mean I’m real close to my kids.

I've never missed anything they've done. I've been to every soccer game, basketball game, baseball game, t-ball game, opera performance, play, musical, anything they've done I've seen them all. So I am – I'm real involved with my children. Usually if something's wrong they'll come ask me first about it and then I'll say, "You've got to go talk to your dad," but they feel it out first with me.

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I'm the nurture, gentle soul. My husband's more of the tough guy which is good. A good balance.

Holly McGlown:

Can you talk a little bit about your husband?

Jan Coleman:

Well actually my husband is a self-made man. I'm very proud of him. When we got married we had a tiny, tiny, tiny, tiny little savings account and he went to law school at Tulane. He's – when he started looking for jobs this is where he got a job offer. So it ended up – I was pretty much willing to go wherever he was going much to my father's chagrin but anyway he ended up here. We dated for seven years and he had been out of school for four years and I had been out of graduate school for four years when we got married – three years when we got married. We bought a little condominium way out in – where **Wolf Chase** is was when **Germantown** Road was this teeny, tiny, little winding shaded road.

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There was no nothing out there. Our condo looked out over a bull pasture. If the wind was right it wasn't a good night. It was stinky. Then – anyway, so he was a young attorney and he barely made above minimum wage. It was sad to have these kind of degrees and get paid as pitifully as he did. I was getting paid really badly. He kind of worked his way up in the law firm. Got his own clients. One of his clients was a company called **Competition Cams** and he was – they were not – they were all mechanic type guys. They didn't have business sense and they needed a businessman. So he ended up with them as their attorney and then slowly but surely that's all he did was their business. So now he's the CEO of the company. As the partners retired out he bought them out because he was the youngest **of the bat**.

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So he had one other partner. He – it's the – he has about 250 employees. He's been named in one of these *Financial Times* or whatever as one of the best small companies and that kind of thing. But anyway, he's – we have all this because he had worked really, really, really hard and he keeps really long hours. He's kind of a workaholic guy. But he's real active. I mean he is on the board of the – Memphis Museum Board. He's on the Memphis in May

Board. He has been President of Catholic Charities twice. He's – what else does he do? Oh he's on the Library – Friends of the Library Foundation Board. So he's active within the community but he likes to be very quiet in the background. He's just as soon people not know that he is.

[0:22:00] We support political candidates. We were real active in Herman Morris' campaign. He lives next door. So we were – he didn't win unfortunately but we wanted him to win.

Holly McGlown: You stay in the Evergreen community. Have you been in the community before when you were younger?

Jan Coleman: Yes. I – actually when I was a little kid we lived on **Ashlawn** which is a little, bitty street off of **Alicia**. If you go down Hollywood there's a – like two blocks where it's not Hollywood, it's Alicia, just right over here. I mean it's real close. So that's where I was when I was a little kid. But I in 1947 Southwestern which is now Rhode's bought this house and this was their School of Music, Conservatory of Music. Mrs. **Walt – Walk** – yeah, Ms. Walk I believe. Anyway, she lived in the house and there were some students that were housed in the house.

[[0:23:00] They took the ballroom and they made it into – they partitioned it so it became small rehearsal rooms. Those are gone now but anyway. So while it was the School of Music my piano teacher lived across the street and she came to St. Mary's and gave her lessons but we would have recitals here sometimes. My brother who took piano lessons at Presbyterian Day School which is popular his were here and the piano was right there where my piano is. They would set up chairs and we would have the recitals in here. So I had that much as a kid and I would come here. I had told you all before that this had also been a Brooks Museum house, decorated show house. I was a docent for that when that happened in 1977.

[[0:24:00] So yeah, I still would – I grew up going to the zoo all the time which is in the neighborhood. So yeah, I came to Evergreen pretty often. Plus my husband's aunt lived on **Angelus** for a long time which is just a few streets down. So we were – we had family that lived in the area.

Holly McGlown: Does the community seem like it's the same now as it did when you were younger?

Jan Coleman: No.

Holly McGlown: How has it changed?

Jan Coleman: I think in probably when I was in high school it was more predominantly white neighborhood. It wasn't a mixed neighborhood. I think it was a neighborhood in flux because of the expressway. There were people worried. So you had a lot of flight out of it. We still had Central High School which was a good school but I think people were worried about it not staying a good school.

[0:25:00] So you had the white flight to the county. Also Evergreen, they've changed it now but originally there was a mixed use of the land and when they eventually got it changed it had to be all residential except for a few exceptions like down here where the restaurants are. Then they sold the land back and started building these houses and then the neighborhood started building back up again. But I think that period of time where they had a lot of duplexes and apartments and multi-family housing that was probably not maintained really well, that it kind of went downhill for awhile. I think once they started building all these new houses to replace where they all been torn down that it began to come back. But I will say once we moved in here and you meet – this is the most walking neighborhood I've ever seen.

[0:26:00] Halloween here is unbelievable. You should come at Halloween. You would not believe Halloween. But the – I will just be standing out there working in the yard and people come up and just start talking to me about the house. **Erma Merrill** who at one point had been the President of the Evergreen Association was real active in getting the expressway stopped was talking – I was talking to her husband and he said that when he was a kid and Mrs. Galloway lived here that they would play football in the lot. Of course this was all lot. It's like four and a half acres. It was the whole block. They would come over here and play football and she and her butler would sit out there in director's chairs and watch them, after school. When they were through playing she would give them all milk and cookies and he did it every day. I get stories like that a lot where people tell me those kinds of things.

[0:27:00] So people that are Evergreeners that have always been Evergreeners because Erma's husband grew up in Evergreen, he stayed in Evergreen as an adult. I mean he never – so there are a lot of people like that that have never left and it can – know a whole lot more about it than I do. They're the ones that told me that when Rhode's had the school here that the garage which

eventually fell down but that that was the polling place. Now we go up here to the Methodist Church but that everybody came here to vote which I thought was really interesting. I'd never have thought that.

Holly McGlown: Can you talk a little bit about your house and say its name and just the history, what you know about it?

Jan Coleman: Oh I can tell you a lot. Yeah, well it was originally called Paisley Hall because Robert Galloway who built the house his mother was from Paisley, Scotland which is five miles from Glasgow in Scotland.

[0:28:00] So that's why he called it. We just assumed it became known as the Galloway House because he kind of became important in the city. So everybody identified him with the house plus he – that's why you see Galloway Avenue, Galloway Street and Galloway Golf Course. They're all named after him. But anyway, the house has not had that many owners. He died – it was started in 1908 was when they started building the house. He died – I can't remember if it was 1912, 1917. I can't remember but he wasn't in it that long and his – he built a house on the corner up here for one point had been the dental school's fraternity house. It was kind of messed up at that point. But anyway, he built it and he had his doctor live in it. There had been a fire in the house not too long after they moved in and while they were doing some repairs and getting the smell out they lived over there in his house.

[0:29:00] Galloway had a heart condition and I assume that's what he died from but I'm not sure. But anyway, his wife Mae lived – who was his second wife – his first wife had died – lived in the house for like 45 years until she died. Because none of her descendents wanted the house Rhode's bought it and changed it into the school. Then Rhode's had it until I think 1970 I think and then from 1970 to '77 there was no one in it. Nope, that's wrong. That's wrong. Mr. Billingsley and Mr. Bells and I can't tell you what their first names are because I don't know off the top of my head bought the house with the intent of renovating the house and breaking it up into five apartments and building a long the plane ten like townhouses in keeping with the neighborhood.

[0:30:00] Evergreen was not happy. Plus we had the issue of the expressway possibly coming right across the backyard. So long story short Mr. Billingsley bought Mr. Bells out. Mr. Billingsley lived – Billings, excuse me. Billings, excuse me. Lived in the house for a year and then he eventually sold the house and Dr. Kunz bought it in 1977.

During that period before Kunz moved in was when they had the Brooks Decorator Show House and then Kunz moved in. That was when he in doing some of the renovation – at that point the house was in disrepair and he kind of paint up, fix up, clean up but didn't repair.

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There was – they found a Japanese garden that was over here on the side and it had little Buddha's and trees that were cut in funny Japanese shapes. So they tried to restore that. Of course when the two houses were built over here that got just flattened but you can see the one pine tree that's kind of left over. But there were these little statues and all in there. But it had gotten – during World War II it was covered over because that became not popular to have Japanese garden. So it was just mounded up. Then after Dr. Kunz he became ill and eventually died and his nephew sold the house and then Laurie and Barry Bolding bought it and they extensively decorated. They added air conditioning – thank you, thank you, thank you. They redid the kitchen.

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The house originally had been six bedrooms and it became five bedrooms. In the original description it said it had four full baths but we don't have four full baths. We only have three. But that may have been just a mistake and it was like three and a half baths. I don't know. They bought it in 1998 and – when did we buy it? I've been in the house six years and we bought it before that. So it's probably seven years before that. I guess we can figure that out. We'll subtract that later. We came in and we – our biggest thing was to make it not leak. We tuck pointed every brick. Do you know what that is? That's where you redo all the grout between all bricks. There a lot of bricks here. We redid all that. We acid washed it. Got it clean and sparkling. Painted it again the right way. We chip off all the old, put in the new. All the columns out front are metal.

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They're all metal. It's all copper, every bit of it. All the curly parts that are on the columns all that's metal, hand-wrought metal. We replaced all the gutters, got all those things repaired and all the metal repaired. We put on a new roof and in 100 years it had never had a new roof. It took them six months. It was an event. We had to replace the porch. We had to concrete the basement because it was just dirt and the basement runs the full length of the house. It's 12,000 square feet so that's a lot of basement. We had to redo all the landscaping, all of the drive we had to rebuild. Obviously we had to rebuild a garage because there wasn't one. We're fencing. We haven't finished that. But it's become no longer an investment but a labor of love.

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But anyway it's – we're trying to preserve it and get it back to what it once was because I think the neighborhood has come full circle and back to what it was at the beginning. So hopefully – by what people say to us they're pretty happy with what we did. The thing they got upset about is we had to cut down some trees. They were diseased and Evergreen has a whole lot of trees that are beginning to fall down because they're diseased. Ours – we have one huge, huge tree. I mean it would probably take three of us to go around it it was so big and it was hollow in the center. We had raccoons living in it. When they cut it down when it – you know they had it – had to fall so it wouldn't fall on anything it set off their alarm next door. It was such a jolt to the earth that it set off their house alarm. But we had to cut down two or three and we had – well we cut down like 12 trees but those were the biggies.

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We had three big ones out front and they were all diseased. They were going to fall on my house, their house, somebody's car, some person. So we had to get it done. People came by it's like, "When are you going to plant on some more hardwood. You have to do it today." I mean like immediately. It's like, "**We're gone.**" It's like, "Give me a minute here." But they're real involved. The neighborhood is very involved with my house and I think it's because it's so large and it does stick out that they're really – they're happy to see that it's being cared for. In a story – well an essay I wrote about the house because having lived in East Memphis with big closets and low ceilings but big closets and you come here, me and a teenage daughter with a closet that's three feet wide – it's 13 feet tall but the rod's here so what good does that do me and it's this wide. We're both like, "Okay, we're going to hang our clothes." So I had a friend come over and I said – that lives in the area.

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I said, "What do you do about closets?" She says, "Do you have a guest room?" I said, "Yes." She said, "That's your closet. Just put some rods in there." I was like, "I can't do that." She said, "Well then you're not going to have closets." That's how a lot of people around here they just take a bedroom and make it into a dressing closet because that's – I've had to adjust to teeny, tiny closets. As I told you it had a few electrical issues like a decorator came in and she wanted to put some stuff. The landing upstairs on the second floor looks just like this. It's wide and she wanted to put some furniture there and some lamps and make seating areas. I said, "No plugs. There's no plugs on the second floor landing. There's none and it's not grounded." So a few issues. Old houses have different issues than new houses but I have to say I don't

want to move when I get to the stage that we no longer want to deal with such a large home.

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I do not want to move back East. I want to stay in **Midtown**. We own the lot and I would really, really, really like to build a house on the lot. I don't know if my marriage would survive *[laughs]*. Hopefully that's – I would like to live either in Midtown or downtown. I don't think I would go. I like the eclecticism of the neighborhood. I like the variety of people, what they do for a living. I mean it's like there are a lot of Rhode's students that live around here. I enjoy that. I have some of the graduate students I work with live over here in some of these guest houses behind – on the **Kenilworth**. I don't think you can get that in East Memphis. Everybody drives the same car. Everybody wears the same clothes. Everybody goes to the same school. It's just not interesting. Midtown is interesting.

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So I really, really like it. I have really gotten into it. I love the neighbors. They're just lovely. They're really pleasant people and they have embraced us and include us in the neighborhood fish fry that they have. It's coming up next weekend and it's going to be down there. I'm just looking forward to it. So I've just – before I know anything about anybody the neighborhood gossip lives right over there and I find out everything and I love them. Don't get me wrong, they're great. But if you want to know what's going on in Evergreen they're know. **Bill Bullock** who's been the President of Evergreen for awhile he works for Memphis Light, Gas and Water and he's really involved in the neighborhood and they've been really nice to us and kept us informed. Evergreen has a newsletter that they send you in your e-mail every week which I really like.

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I mean it has stuff like, “Does anybody know a new carpenter? I need somebody that can help with some flood damage repair.” Okay, those are great things. I know – “I found a puppy. Anybody want a puppy.” Get rid – but then they'll say things like a police report that might be of interest to everybody or if there's something going on like Land Use Control Board – like our house when we had to go through Land Use Control Board when we were trying to put up a fence because there's rules about fencing in this neighborhood and when we wanted to put – build our garage we had to go through – we had to meet certain criteria. That was in the newsletter. “So if you're really interested you can go down there and put your two cents worth.” It can work with you or against you but I mean it was – it's nice to know that the neighborhood cares, that they're not just doing it because they're do-gooders.

- [0:40:00] They truly care about the neighborhood. So I really think that's a wonderful part of the neighborhood. So I'm definitely pro Evergreen.
- Holly McGlown:* All right, well I kind of want to bring it back to particular events in the – just during the '50s through '70s. So are there any events that stand out to you or that immediately come to your head when you think about kind of the Civil Rights Era in Memphis?
- Jan Coleman:* Well yeah. As we talked about earlier was the – the sanitation strike was a huge deal. This city could have been – it's been – it's still a continuing problem. I won't deny that but it's still so much better than it was. We could have been a seriously divided city.
- [0:41:00] That white flight to the county could have really destroyed the city and there are people like people here in Evergreen that stay in the city and we need people in the city because the city needs that tax base to keep it going. Obviously I would be one of those that's pro putting those two school systems together because you'd save a fortune. If I lived in the county I totally understand why they're against it but I don't think that's to the greater good and I think my heart goes to the greater good, not to special interest groups but to the greater good. Which like the Memphis Heritage Foundation I think that's one of the issues that they have in not wanting to tear down these old places like the church on the corner of Union and **Cooper** to put in a CVS Pharmacy. They're just adamantly against it and but the building is in such total disrepair. It's not feasible.
- [0:42:00] 19th Century Club is another one. It needs \$2 million worth of repair. Well they don't have \$2 million. How are you going to raise \$2 million? It's – for the kind of organization it is. I would want to see this city continue to do more and more with the county and unite the two because I think this is a beautiful city. When I happened to have the good fortune to go – I'm sorry. I'm segueing from the '50s to the '70s. To go to Tunisia for Memphis in May and I talked to some of the people who have been here when they came for Memphis in May from Tunisia and they all said, "It's so green. It is so green. It's beautiful. All these trees and it's so clean and it's so quiet." One of the – this one of those things about my mother. She was on the Memphis Beautiful Commission when I was a kid and she was just vehement about we had – we always had a litter box in our car. So you would – if you had paper napkins or Kleenex you always threw it away in the car.

[0:43:00] You didn't toss it out the window. It's where my mother lives in my head. So I would never throw trash out my window. My kids would never throw trash out their window. Of course you look at the backseat of their car and you can tell they never throw it out the window but I mean it's one of those things. Memphis has tried so hard to be known as a beautiful city and I – the things from the sanitation strike could have killed this city. The one thing that just makes me so sad is I've talked about the music earlier. I loved the soul music. We had **Sun Studios** and **Stacks** and some of the fantastic music that came out of that. You go back to things like Booker T and the MGs which was really the first recorded integrated band and it was right here and how all this music was blending cultures together.

[0:44:00] That was a time when it's like we could have – if we could have kept that going we could have been like a shining beacon for the United States. "This is what we can do." Instead after Martin Luther King was killed and of course we had Kennedy and – both Kennedys and that just – it was like the end. It was at that point those two studios just went [*vibrates her lips*]. It's – then the music changed. We lost that music, too. I bet if you went to Detroit who had the same kind of recordings going on you'd find the same thing happened. Of course they have other issues there, too. It's the car industry. I think that was the turning point for this city and it was a shame. Yes, good came out of it. I always like to think that when something bad happens something good comes out of it and so I do think there was some good things that came out of it but we ended up having to have the federal government get involved, solve the strike.

[0:45:00] It wasn't done locally. We had to have federal people. Once the federal people got here it ended. Bam, done. It was over with. The city was really – the mayor, Loeb did – wanted everything to be calm. He didn't want to have violence. That was not bringing industry in the city. That was not making his citizens safe. He wanted it calm. So this is a totally different thing that affected things but Memphis State had the first collegiate production of *Hair* in 1970. *The Commercial Appeal* wrote about it and basically said it was trash; it was garbage. Of course there was a lot of foul language. At that point which we didn't have cable we didn't have profanity on TV. We didn't have off color jokes.

[0:46:00] We didn't have sex. We didn't have naked people. We didn't have any of that on TV. It was all Donna Reed and happy, perfect, lovely. So *Hair* coming right after the strike and violence and tanks going down the street it was a little unnerving to go to the

grocery store when there was a tank in the parking lot with guys with machine guns on their back. That was a little – that was when I was learning to drive. So it was a little spooky. Fortunately that didn't last real long but it was long enough. But anyway, back to the production. People – the president of the university was getting all kinds of letters and saying, "You can't have that smut. Get rid of it." *The Press Imager* came out and said they thought it was unique and different and a sign of the times and they thought it was really a good production. It absolutely was a good production. So they took out the nude scene. I think originally they may have had it. When I saw it they did not.

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They took out some of the language, not all of it. I remember – so naïve in high school; duh – leaning over to my boyfriend who is now my husband – he was in college then – and asked him what one of the words meant. He just kind of laughed. I had no idea. It was a song. I had no idea what the word meant. It was not a word that was going to be in my dictionary. Then when I found out what it was I just like, "Ew." It's now something that you would – but anyway, they cleaned it up and it was such a success they carried it over and had like another two weeks of it. It was done so well. The only reason we happened to go was my husband wasn't going to go buy a ticket. Someone of his fraternity brothers had two tickets and had to go to work and couldn't use them. So he's like, "Okay, it's free. It's a date. Okay, we'll go." We went and I – I mean I can even tell you what I had on.

[0:48:00]

Isn't that terrible. I can't imagine that I thought that was pretty either, but anyway. So we went to this and it was at the end. You know there's *[sings]* "Let the sun shine," you know everybody gets up and sings and dances and the actors and the audience they're all intermingling and hugging and no one wore wigs. So there was this really tall black kid that was in it had this huge afro, huge. I don't know how long it took him to grow it. I mean it was huge. When we had walked in they were in character and acting like part of the flower children. He had talked to me in character. I thought he was scary. I was not comfortable. At the end I'm hugging this guy. I mean it totally – just that one event totally changed my perspective. Kind of like don't judge people by the way they look but how they act.

[0:49:00]

It's kind of like if I get on an elevator and you've got a man in a suit I'm much more comfortable with a man in a suit than I am with a man with – needs to pull his pants up. That's not telling you what's in their head. It's just I'm judging by the way they look. So I think that began – that was the beginning of how something

changed but that was a huge deal in the city when that happened. Then a few years ago they had it at Playhouse on the Square. We went. Of course it was right after Katrina – I mean not Katrina, 9/11, there we go. Sorry. How can you forget that? Anyways, right after 9/11. So America was pro-America. Yea, America. Go Government. That kind of thing. Everybody felt that way. So they kind of changed the end of the play to adjust to those feelings because you didn't want to end up anti-government at the end of the play. It just – it was like – it was dated.

[0:50:00]

It just didn't work anymore. I thought it was so sad because I just – what it did to me when I was 17 and what it did to me when I was not 17 were totally different. There were actually people in the audience that had been in the original cast and I'm sure they felt the same way. They did have the nude scene and it was okay without the nude scene. It worked fine with me. I'm not a prude but I'm maybe a little bit. So it just – but that was something from high school that is very vivid in my mind that – and the fight with my mother about where my hem's going to be. That was always an issue because she wanted at least to above my knee and of course the style was cover your bottom and you have to sit there like this because they're tight. So fashion was kind of a big deal then.

[0:51:00]

Long stringy hair. I had that. Go-go boots and white ones. I didn't have those. My mother wouldn't buy me those. When I changed from private school to public school in private school it was okay to wear bobby socks and saddle oxfords. In public school the only people who wore bobby socks were cheerleaders and it was okay to wear saddle oxfords as long as you wore knee socks. I remember – you know how you have to adjust to where you are and going to White Station and having on my bobby socks and saddle oxfords and having some girl tell me, says, "Who do you think you are a cheerleader?" Well I was crushed. I was like, "Oh I don't fit in." I was talking about that earlier, that importance to fit in when you're in high school.

[0:52:00]

So I quite wearing the bobby socks and started wearing _____. When I was writing my story and I was writing about when King was killed I ended the story that I went – because we had a snow and then they had the strike and snow in March. We had 16 inches of snow which is bizarre in March. So we were out of school which is why King didn't come the first time he was supposed to come. He came a month later or a few weeks later. The end of the story after the strike was over I went back to school. The idea of trying to fit in and I wore no socks and penny loafers, not even

knee socks. Just – I was fitting in. I think that’s the American teenager. They all want to fit in. To break away from that which is what Midtown was good for. You can be something different in Midtown and people just accept it because you’re from Midtown [laughs].

[0:53:00]

So anyway that would probably – those three things, the deal with fashion and *Hair* and I cannot tell you. I mean that night I loved everybody. I could have – it wouldn’t have mattered who it was. It was one of those things. It hit me so hard. It wore off but I mean that night I loved everybody. I didn’t care how you looked, how you acted and – because we were coming off of the all the boys had crew cuts and everybody wore a tie, a little, skinny tie and button down collar and girls all wore their nice, little a-line dresses with the gathers that made you look 12 pounds heavier than you were and all of a sudden people were wearing – looking different and acting different. Not everybody was the same.

[0:54:00]

Just because you looked different didn’t mean you were some kind of drug pusher or – it just – I think that was a real turning point when we went from – after the ‘50s we – of course I’m a baby-boomer obviously and everybody was coming in and they were getting the American dream, buy a house, have a dog and a picket fence and a car and a little money to spare, have a good time. Everybody was getting that. There was a shortage of housing because everybody was getting that. So everybody was the same because their goals were all the same. In the ‘60s we’re beginning to have the issues of integration and again, not everybody being the same and trying to get along with that. So I think those things all affected – there was a huge change and maybe even not only anti-establishment but anti-parent a little bit and that I probably was very fortunate that I had parents that continued to stay really involved in my life and put a conscious in my head and said, “This is the way.”

[0:55:00]

You know what? There were – I was never a bad kid. I remember one time my mom – I was walking down the street, just taking a walk with my boyfriend, my husband. He had his arm around me just hanging on my shoulder like this. I mean we weren’t groping. It was just hanging and my mother drives by. We eventually get back to the house and he leaves because he had to go to work. My mother who never, ever lost her temper just exploded. “That looks so cheap. I hope none of my friends saw you.” I was just like, “Whoa!” I mean she really got upset. That was when – I saw nothing wrong with it. I mean we weren’t – we were walking. We

were in the middle of public. He's not doing anything. We were just walking with his arm around me.

[0:56:00]

But to her any kind of public display of affection was tacky. So I never did that again not where she was going to see it. But see I didn't think it was bad and I wouldn't think anything of my children having somebody's arm around me. I just didn't – not like I was making out in front of the world or anything. He just had his arm around me. But anyway, I do think my parents were very involved in my life and my brother's life and definite teaching of right and wrong and behavior which is why I think my mother – like I said my mother lives in my head and that hospitality thing. You're always polite and kind and you can grit your teeth as you smile but you're going to be nice. So I kind of led a pretty idyllic life as a kid. I was really lucky. I had the dogs and the picket fence. I didn't get a car.

[0:57:00]

I really wanted one. I didn't get a car but that was pretty much what life was like for me as a kid. Just very – I had the long stringy hair and the braces and like everybody else.

Holly McGlown:

Well earlier you were telling us a little bit about right after Martin Luther King was assassinated. Can you tell us a little bit more about that like how it affected you and _____ -

[Crosstalk]

Jan Coleman:

Well yeah. We – like I said I wanted – I changed to public school because I wanted the prom and the social life and all that and when the strike started we had a curfew and it – I mean it started early in the day. I mean like – I don't remember what time but I mean you weren't out at dark. You were home. Because my father was a physician and was on call would have to drive downtown to the hospital I – that was when I was beginning to think, "Oh somebody might – that's not supposed to be out might shoot my dad on the way to work."

[0:58:00]

That to me was frightening. There were no – there was no social life after school. I mean like I said I was real active in my little high school sorority and I mean if we got to meet we were done by 4:00 and home. We still managed – the – we were lucky in that our senior prom that the sorority did was after everything calmed down and the curfew was lifted. So we still got to have it. But we didn't know if we were going to be able to or not because it really affected what you could do. I mean there were no club meetings after school. Baseball season was cancelled. I'm sure for kids that

were trying to get baseball scholarships to college that was a big deal, not that I went to baseball but I remember thinking – it was one of those things.

[0:59:00]

I didn't want to go anyway but it's like, "How dare they say we can't do that?" I mean it was very selfish on my part. I wanted to see – I didn't like my privileges taken away and – but we were all in the same boat. There was no borrowing my mother's car at night to go over to a friend's house. You stayed home and watched TV which went off at midnight. It played the National Anthem and then the color Indian came on. Do you know what that is, the – okay.

Holly McGlown:

Mmm-hmm.

Jan Coleman:

My daughter didn't. She was like, "What are you talking about?" But anyway those were the kinds of things that affected me. I was learning to drive that spring. I turned 16 and you only got your permit for three months and I hadn't driven that much.

[1:00:00]

So I was a very nervous driver. So after school my mother would pick me up and we'd drive the three or four blocks to the grocery store and there was the tank sitting there in the parking lot. I mean this is very vivid in my mind. Drove up and my mother says, "I'm driving," and I'm already – I drive like two miles an hour. I'm like a little old lady I'm so nervous. My mother's like, "I don't know if I want to go in if there's a tank in the parking lot." I was like – then she said, "Well I guess we're safe if they're here." I'm looking at this tank and the guy and the machine gun and everything. I'm like, "Uh, hmm." I – we eventually go in and get our few little things and it was like dash in, dash out really quick because my mother's in the back of her mind I'm sure is thinking, "I think we need to be home."

[1:01:00]

So she hands me the keys when we come back out and I was so nervous I said – I look at her and she says, "Do you want me to drive?" I said, "Yes, please." I was so nervous. But I did get my license done and then I did get to drive. So it was okay but – I was 10th grade? Yeah, 10th grade. Then right after that the federal government came in and the strike was over. The city really calmed down. Once the curfew was lifted kind of life went back to normal. Things really didn't change a whole lot. I wasn't an active news watcher. I wasn't a newspaper reader except for the society page that had all the teenage social news that they used to put in the paper which they don't do anymore. What was it called? *Ask Penny* I think or something like that.

[1:02:00] So it really – yes, things changed but they didn’t even begin busing students into White Station until after I graduated. So I – for the next two years it was still the same kids. We didn’t change but we still never had a prom. It was just a real odd time. But I think that was when it really hit everybody that this is not an idyllic little world, that it – this is a scary world and we need to grow up and face what the problem is rather than saying, “Look, it’s an all white world. Everybody’s going to act like us.” Once again, that’s why you come back to Midtown because nobody looks like anybody in Midtown [laughter].

Holly McGlown: Well is there anything that you would like to add that we haven’t covered?

Jan Coleman: No.

Holly McGlown: You’ve told us some really interesting stories.

Jan Coleman: I’m sure I have some more but you’d have to ask me specific questions before I can tell you one.

[Laughter]

[1:03:00]

Holly McGlown: Well we would really like to thank you for participating in this.

Jan Coleman: Absolutely.

Holly McGlown: We’ve learned a lot about this area and Memphis. So thank you so much.

Jan Coleman: Absolutely. Have you had some other people in the area that you’ve talked to?

Holly McGlown: Last week we talked to the Patterson’s who live on Autumn.

Caroline Mulloy: Yeah, Autumn.

Holly McGlown: Robert Patterson was a professor at Rhode’s.

[End of Audio]