



Terms and Guidelines for Use of Interview

This transcript is made available for non-commercial uses only, under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial ShareAlike 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/legalcode>).

For more information contact info@cambridgehistory.org or 617-547-4252

This oral history interview is a conversation between two people- interviewer and interviewee, both of whom have agreed to share and archive these recordings through the Cambridge Historical Society. Users of this interview understand that:

- The Cambridge Historical Society abides by the General Principles & Best Practices for Oral History as agreed upon by the Oral History Association (2018) and expects that users of this material will abide by these guidelines too.
- Every oral history relies on the memories, views and opinions of the interviewee and interviewer. Cambridge Historical Society preserves these views as recorded.
- This transcript is a nearly verbatim copy of the recorded interview, and was approved by the interviewee. It may contain the natural interjections, false starts,



or repetitions that are common in spoken conversation. Unless these verbal patterns are germane to your work, when quoting from this material, users are encouraged to correct the grammar and make other modifications maintaining the meaning, intent, and flavor of the interviewee's speech, while editing the material for the standards of print or other uses.

- All citations from this interview are to be attributed to Donnie Harding and the Cambridge Historical Society:

Donnie Harding oral history interview conducted by Katie Burke, October 1, 2019, "Sweet Souls, Voices from the Margaret Fuller Neighborhood House in Cambridge" oral history project; Cambridge Historical Society.



Sweet Souls, Voices from the Margaret Fuller Neighborhood House in Cambridge

Oral History Project

Interview with Donnie Harding, October 1, 2019

This interview is part of “Sweet Souls, Voices from the Margaret Fuller Neighborhood House in Cambridge,” an oral history project of the Cambridge Historical Society, in partnership with the Margaret Fuller Neighborhood House and The Loop Lab. This project was funded in part by Mass Humanities, which receives support from the Massachusetts Cultural Council and is an affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Interviewee: Donnie Harding

Interviewer: Katie Burke

Interview Date: October 1, 2019

Interview Location: Margaret Fuller Neighborhood House

Length of Interview: 178 minutes

Transcription: Katie Burke, December 20, 2020, 25,160 words

Note: The Loop Lab audio engineer Tevin Charles recorded this interview. Tevin asked Donnie questions and offered reflections toward the end of the interview.

Donnie Harding grew up in the Port and spent time at various programs and events at the Margaret Fuller Neighborhood House. He remained associated with Margaret Fuller Neighborhood House as an adult- through his work at the radio station housed there in the 1970s, and as a member of the board. Donnie worked at the MBTA for most of his career, while also coaching sports and working with young people. He currently lives in the Port and continues to be active in the Cambridge community.



Start of Interview

Katie Burke [00:00:00] My name's Katie Burke. I'm here with Donnie Harding and our audio engineer, Tevin Charles, at Margaret Fuller Neighborhood House in Cambridge, Massachusetts. It is Tuesday, October 1st, 2019. This interview is part of the Sweet Souls oral history project to explore Margaret Fuller House's role in the Port and Cambridge, in partnership with the Cambridge Historical Society. Donnie, do you agree to have this interview recorded?

Donnie Harding [00:00:23] Yes, I do.

KB [00:00:25] What is your date of birth?

DH [00:00:29] July 27, 1950.

KB [00:00:36] And where do you live?

DH [00:00:38] In Cambridge, on Windsor Street.

KB [00:00:40] Do you have kids?

SH [00:00:42] Yes, I do. I have two children.

KB [00:00:45] Can you tell me a little bit about them?

DH [00:00:48] Mmm.

KB [00:00:51] Where did you go to school?

DH [00:00:53] I went to Rindge Technical School.

KB [00:00:57] Can you tell me about some of the jobs that you've had?



DH [00:01:00] My first job I had coming out of college, I guess we'll start there. You don't want to know about my high school jobs, I would guess.

KB [00:01:10] I would actually love to hear about your high school jobs if you wanted to talk about them.

DH [00:01:11] No, you don't [laughs]. They were easy jobs. My first job coming out of college, I came and I worked for the city of Cambridge. They had a youth program, I can't remember what the name of it was, it was like Y.T.S., and it was a [youth enrichment] program where we worked with teenagers. I was given North Cambridge district and we were working out of Jefferson Park, and basically my job was just to work with the kids, get the kids on their feet, just trying to do the right thing. I had that for about six months. Then the job came, opened up at Roberts School -- Roberts Community School, which is an afterschool program, and I became the -- I applied and became the coordinator of Roberts Community School. That's where, even though I was born and raised out here in the Port, that's where my extended influence, or bit work, down here in the Port began. Doing the community school program, it was [an] after school [program]. I worked with the kids. A lot of the stuff we did was teaching them to play games because once you -- one of the things that kids don't do now is they don't know how to play [board] games so that's why a lot of times when people see kids walking around aimlessly, it's because they don't know what to do in their spare time, so they just walk around not doing anything. So, one of the things that I always made sure kids knew how to do was to play chess, checkers, hist, whatever [board] games there were, poker, but whatever games there were. That was one of -- that's probably my primary philosophy in life to get kids by, because, like I said, other than that, they're just walking around aimlessly. But besides that, we had the afterschool programs where the kids would come. We had organized basketball. Boys and girls, unfortunately, had to play together. I mean, fortunately, because there were a couple of girls who did good, got college scholarships, and the girls who were there were part of the last state championship team that we had in Cambridge. I was gone by then, but they were young kids, and they were seniors in high school, juniors and seniors. And the boys were the same. Boys were a lot different. We actually, our neighborhood team could actually beat the team that won the state championship when Patrick Ewing was there. Unfortunately, [many of] my kids ended up going to jail more than playing basketball [laughs], but they were legitimately good. It's just



that once they left me, life in the 19, late 1970s, early 1980s was just a lot different. Okay. Kids were a lot more aggressive and kids just got into a lot of different things. But -- and if I do have a regret -- and the kids who did do good, there were kids [who ended up] as judges, lawyers. If I did do -- if I did make a mistake, that was my mistake was, if I did it all over again, I would focus more on kids who were on the fence but on the fence for doing good, because kids who went to UMass Boston probably could have gotten into Tufts. Kids who went to Tufts probably could have gotten into Harvard. Different things like that. So, and those guys remind me of it all the time when I see them. They said, "You know, if he had spent as much time with us then as you did with so and so, life would be a lot different." But the squeaky wheel always gets the oil and those kids who were getting into trouble all the time were the squeaky wheel kids and I was just trying to keep them out. But in the end, that wasn't possible. It didn't happen. Couple of other things, at that time, we did have joint programs with the Margaret Fuller House and the [Community] Arts Center. Summer programs. So, we would have the summer programs we did. We would do art at the Arts Center. We'd come over here. There would be carpentry, woodworking, and sewing, other home economic type things here, and over at the school it was more recreational. We would go over to Senate Park or be in the school yard and get into the games. We had swimming classes that we'd take the kids to [at the Gold Star Pool in East Cambridge]. So, we were -- we had [summer] joint programs at that time. The final thing that we did was we had a radio station -- I know we'll probably get into that later -- and it was WRCS, and that was based here in the Margaret Fuller House. It was a good learning experience for me. I was the Director, obviously, of the whole program. There was a guy -- I couldn't remember his name before -- it was Bob Perkins¹ who was the Radio Director. He was the person in charge. You had to have a license. And one of the things that happened, everybody who came on the radio station before they did that had to get their FCC license. So that was part of the component that we had, was we were having regular classes here and Bob was a teacher at Graham Junior High. So, he was the person, he was qualified to teach the class and be able to give out, get the licenses for the kids. They didn't get the licenses here. They had to go downtown somewhere to pick up their licenses. But WRCS, it was a local station. You could only get it here in Cambridge. And they had rhythm and blues. They had jazz, and they had a lot of talk shows and, yeah, they had talk shows. The talk shows were very controversial because there were a lot of controversial people there. Unfortunately, I can't remember any of

¹ Bob Perkins had worked as a professor from Graham Junior College. (Footnote by Donnie Harding.)



their names. I wish I had written the names down. But we used to -- they had a lot of -- it was interesting conversations, a lot of controversy. I can't remember what the times were. Again, we're talking 1978, and in all times, from 1619 to present, one of the primary focuses, especially with African Americans, is African American equality and jobs and everything else that we do. And I know that that was one of the things that was premier in the conversations that we had was how can we improve the fate of African Americans and get things better? But that was, for the most part, a lot of the things that we did, and it was a good stepping stone for a lot of the other things that I got into doing after that. From there, I left, went to graduate school, went to Northeastern for a year -- business school -- but at the same time, my daughter was born, so I had a lot of pressures in trying to have money to support my family. So, I only stayed one year, went to the telephone company. I was a service operator. Customer service operator. So, whenever you called, that was what I did there. I stayed there, then I ended up going to the MBTA, which is where I stayed for -- well, I stayed there, I was there for five years, then left and then came back. When I was first there, I was an Affirmative Action Officer. My primary job was to make sure that minorities and businesses had jobs, so I would go to the job sites. First, I would sit in on consultant committees, I'd sit in on the opening of contracts. Whenever they had the opening of contracts, they had to make sure there was a certain percentage you had to have, and you made sure that those percentages were made. If those percentages weren't made -- and the people had to be certified businesses, so I learned that part of everything. So, they had to be certified. They got their certifications and from there, number one, I would go see who the businesses were, talk to the owners and find out what their responsibilities on the job were. A lot of times I went to visit them and found out that they were not legitimately, legitimately, minority-owned, but unfortunately, that was the game. And it was the same with women-owned businesses at the time. I'm talking 1980s when I'm saying all of this, so people were just starting out. So not everybody was legitimate, but they were trying to get by, and I gave them the benefit of the doubt a lot of times because I knew they had to learn the business before they could be the business, and I was just hoping that they had the courage inside of them to, after a few years, just say, "Okay, I'm going to do this on my own." A couple of people did it, one person ended up going to jail because of fraud and being a businessman, but that's how it went. And then from there, I ended -- I went to, got a promotion into the construction department, and from there, I was the personnel -- the title was different -- but I was the Personnel Coordinator for the construction department, and in that job I was in charge of



making sure positions were filled, hiring, firing, making sure disciplining was done. Everything, you know, making -- people had to be trained in their positions. People, again, had to be certified to do different things. They had to know if the concrete was the right concrete and different things like that, so they had to get licenses doing that and that was my responsibility, to make sure that when people came in that they had their licenses and [were] updated with their licenses. I retired there. The MBTA, you only have to work 25 years, so I did that. Left, started my own construction company. I didn't know anything about construction, but somebody gave me a tip that I could do this and be able to take off if I could get the right certification, but that person was not looked at positively in the unions, ice with the unions, so the union basically said to me, "You're with this guy? We're not giving you a chance." So, but I kept my persistence. I'm a person who has a little bit of persistence. And so, I kept the company going. I had three jobs completed, all three of the jobs, actually two, and then got a contract with the city of Chelsea and I thought everything was going to be alright. But by then, my accountant said, "Look, if you stay in business another two weeks, you're going to have to sell your house." So, it was a management decision, and I did that. So, after that, I retired and little odds and ends here and there. But that's basically the story.

KB [0015:29] Thank you.

DH [00:15:30] Okay. Not exciting, but that's the story.

KB [00:15:36] Yeah, it is really interesting. Can you tell me a bit about where you grew up?

DH [00:15:39] I grew up down here. Grew up down here in the Port. The Port at that time, I always say, was Utopia. Okay? It was really, really integrated at the time. It's funny because the housing projects, when I was growing up, were white and all the other streets, the Washington, Suffolk, Pine, they were all Black. So, the kids who lived in the projects, their parents were veterans of World War II, for the most part, so it wasn't all white, but 90 percent white, because there were Black kids there, but it was mostly white. And we all, everybody -- it was utopia. I wasn't -- and it's funny to say I wasn't conscious of race until [pause] late, after high school. When I got to college was when I was more conscious because I had a white roommate in college and everybody was like, "Why you hanging around with him?" I'm like, "What was



wrong with him?" [laughter]. Okay. But I was called "the Black Hippie" because I was hanging around with a lot of white dudes, you know? I mean, I hung around with Black kids, too, and just the nature of who I am was whatever, I was always accepted. Okay, I mean, I would try things other people wouldn't try, so I was accepted in what we did. But just growing up, I came here -- my younger days, I came here to the Margaret Fuller House. This is where everything was. It was more organized. My family -- I had, and my family, I lived over on Windsor Street, and I had an aunt who passed away and an uncle who passed away, and my grandmother lived above me, and she had -- so, she had taken them, so she had nine kids that -- she was there, and I, me and my two brothers were downstairs on the first floor with my mother and father. But I was always -- that was my life. I had all my cousins upstairs that I could hang around with and that's what I did. I have one cousin who was a professional basketball player. Bill Hewitt. He played -- he was the first-round pick of the Lakers in 1967, '68. Then he got traded for -- he went to Detroit and went around -- he was good. He was legit. Had he not gotten traded, you probably would've heard a lot more about him, but the politics of professional sports stopped him from being what he was. And he had a brother, George, and they both won the state tournament when they were in high school. 1962. And George was probably, George was smaller than me, but he had all the football records, scoring records back in the day. But I'm saying that -- and then they had an older brother, Sonny, and he was a track runner -- and I'm saying that just to say that they were all established athletes. Okay? Really big time in the city. And those were my house role models, okay, who kept me on my toes, who I saw all the time working out, doing the things that they did. And I can't leave out Chuckie. You'd need to find a historian to talk about Chuckie because Chuckie was an enigma amongst them so by himself. When you get into the history of what's going on here at the Margaret Fuller House, Chuckie would probably be on every third person's lips. Okay. Chuckie was no joke, but we were --.

KB [00:20:19] Is Chuckie your cousin?

DH [00:20:19] Chuckie's my cousin. Yeah. Me and Chuckie were a month apart in age, so me and Chuckie did everything together up until we were, like, six years old. Okay, and then school comes, and you just do different things. Not to say that we didn't stop. But yeah, Chuckie went down that avenue and I went down that avenue and, but when we came back together, I used to spend a lot of nights, up until we were probably fifteen, just staying me and him



upstairs in his house until the older guys came home because they all -- the boys had their room, and the girls had their room. So, yeah, when the guy, the older guys were gone, me and Chuckie would be there and we would run the roost and they would come home and say, "What's wrong? What happened in this room?" and start chasing us around. I could get away because I could go downstairs, but then the next day, "Oh yeah, Georgie --" [laughter]. So, I mean, but used to -- it was that way. It was that way. But yeah, Chuckie, in the end he was a bully. Okay, let's just put it that way, Okay? He would have taken Tevin's money [laughter]. Okay. Tevin, be nice, brother. He might -- he's gone now but he might be looking down saying, "Okay Tevin, I'm going to come, this is my house." But yeah, he was an interesting, very interesting person. Everybody who talks about Chuckie -- and it's not just down here, but city wide -- whenever I say something and, "Chuckie was your cousin?" "Oh, yeah." "Oh, yeah, Chuckie was a bad dude. Chuckie was a bad dude." So [pause] so yeah, and Chuckie had three sisters. My other cousins had two sisters. That's why when I said today's my oldest cousin, who is one of these people, today is her birthday, and that's when -- her name is Adelaide. And they were Hewett's. Just in case you're wondering, their last name was Hewitt. Chuckie's last name was Pina. Okay, so.

KB [00:23:02] Can you talk a little bit about the adults in your house, like your parents and your grandma?

DH [00:23:12] My parents, they -- where do I start? I should start with my -- I don't know. I lived with my great grandfather, my grandmother, grandfather. They were the ones upstairs. They're from Barbados. They came here in the -- about a hundred years ago. In the teens. Nineteen teens. My grandparents went to First Holiness Church over here on -- they started it on Columbia Street. That's where I grew up. I grew up going to Sunday school every -- up until I was, like, sixteen, and then I look to the right and look to the left and I notice I was the oldest one there. I said, "Oh okay, we have got to make a change" [laughter]. But I enjoyed it, okay? It broke my grandmother's heart that I'd stopped because my grandmother wanted me to be a minister. She thought I was -- I have uncles who were ministers, a couple of her sons were, and she thought I was going to be the next generation, but it didn't work out that way. There was too much of life that I experienced for me to stop and be that saintly, for lack of a better word. But my relationship with my grandmother, even though I was with my parents, my



grandmother formed my way of thinking, my way of being. My grandmother was my primary influence. A lot of that, as time has gone on, I realize I told you that my cousins lived with my grandmother, but they didn't come there until I was, like, three years old, that's when their parents passed, when I was about three. So, my grandmother, me and my grandmother, I realized because her kids were all grown, I was with her for, like, my first two and a half years, just me and her, because my mother went right back to work. My mother worked. So, I never, you know, you're a little kid, you're not thinking of that. But I always knew that there was a special relationship between us. With all the kids who were there, I was probably closer to my grandmother than anybody else, and upon reflecting, I realized that's what it was, was my early years it was just me and her. Okay, and then my aunt passed away and then the other cousins came. They were all older by the time they came. But she was a typical God-fearing grandparent going to church all the time. Had everybody going to church all the time. I was lucky because if I didn't feel like going to church, I'd just go down[stairs] and say, "Ma, what are we doing tonight?" And I could just go downstairs where Chuckie was in church and Chuckie would go, "Ah, I'm going to get you for not coming to church!" But I mean, I had other cousins who were there. I should mention that my grandmother had ten kids, and of the ten kids, I'm going to say six of them lived around here? So and I, well, I'm including the ones who lived upstairs, but I had family on Pine Street, Market Street, here, Columbia Street, so the whole family was in the neighborhood, okay, and when they say it takes a village, that's basically -- I understood that because if I felt a certain way, I could go to my Uncle Jim's house and he had two daughters who were my age. Everybody was about the same age. When I was in school, there were four of us in the same grade, four cousins, which is interesting. I mean, you're lucky to have four cousins in the same school now, but there were four of us who started kindergarten together. But, yeah, that also influenced a lot of my life, just having all of my cousins in and around where -- funny story, and you probably know if you live around here, and when I was two years old, I had a cousin who lived on Pine Street. I lived on Windsor Street, and I wanted to go to his house. My mother used to take me to his house all the time. This is another cousin like Chuckie. Chuckie is a month younger than me; this cousin is six months older, okay. So, we were all, like I said, intertwined. So, one day I just said, "I want to go by Walter's house". So, I left the house, walked down the street, took a left turn on Harvard Street and I'm walking, and all of a sudden, I get to the corner at Cherry. I knew I wasn't supposed to cross the street, so I'm just standing there saying, "Oh, what do I do now? What do I do?" This lady who lives in the



building right next to the school, Roberts School, saw me and she must of, she was like, "Oh, this kid must be lost." She came and got me, brought me in the house, gave me milk and cookies, and I was just, like, chilling [laughter]. Next thing, you know, a while later, I guess she saw everybody frantically just running around and then, "Hey, you looking for a little kid?" and yeah, so that was one. And, I mean, I vaguely remember being in her house, but I know that my mother used to talk about that all the time, about my walking out of the house, and I was just, like, two years old trying to get to my cousin's house to play, because they had more fun on Pine Street. They had kids who were right there on the street and they were all playing right there where my cousin lived. So, I know I always had fun being there. At that time, I couldn't cross the street to the Elms even though I lived right there but that happened soon after, I'm sure. After that experience I figured out how to cross the street. But yeah, so it was an interesting life because I did have that whole community. I was able, from a real young age, to explore the whole neighborhood, and I did. In older years I would go from -- I can't leave out the Greenidges because I told you about my neighborhood, my family connection, but my real mentor in life was this kid, Donald Greenidge. Donald was three years older than me. His -- did you have George Greenidge as a [teacher]? His older brother, George, was a phys-ed teacher. The Greenidges were all the best athletes in the neighborhood, and I don't know how I hooked up with Donald, but he adopted me when I -- he probably saw me that same day that the lady got me because he lived in the house right next door to the lady. But he adopted me as a little brother when I was, like, four years old. So, I'm four years old and I'm hanging out with kids seven, eight, nine. They had a group called the Five Ds. The oldest Five D was this guy, well, Dennis Dottin, and he had to be, like, five years older than Donald, but it was Dennis Dottin, Duncan Elder, David Greenidge, Donald Greenidge, and me, Donnie. But it seemed like whenever we were together, they'd say, "Oh, the Five D's are together," and, I mean, it was an honor that they included me. These guys are teenagers and I'm, like, four years old and they are including me in the Five D's. So, but yeah, I've always, from that time on, I was always around older kids. I was never -- very, very seldom was I with people my age until I probably got into my [teen years] -- well, actually, what happened was when Donald got into high school, and started chasing girls, he started saying, "You've got to go, [laughter] okay? You're impeding my progress. The girls are asking 'who is a little kid with you?'" Okay, so that was, I mean, [background talking] yeah, no, it is, I understood. I didn't understand then, but I understand it now. But yeah, so he was my mentor. He was why, how I got into playing sports. He



emphasized toughness. I emphasized toughness whenever somebody is playing. My philosophy is, when you're playing something, the toughest one wins, okay? If you're playing basketball and there's a loose ball, when I was coaching and you didn't fight for the loose ball, it meant that you just wanted to sit next to me. That was how I looked at it. But he just emphasized if somebody wanted to fight and I hesitated, he'd look at me and say, "Donnie, what you gonna do? What you gonna do?" That just meant that I was going to fight, okay? I wasn't going to disappoint Donald, okay, of all the things. As a matter of fact, in high school, they had two high schools and I was one of the smartest kids in my class, and my high school teacher² wanted me to go to Cambridge Latin. And the football coach at Cambridge Latin wanted me to go to Cambridge Latin, he would go, "Ah, come to Latin." So, I was going to Latin. I remember saying to Donald, "Yeah, I'm going to Latin." You know, "What do you want to do?" "Oh, he's recruiting me and --". He said, "Well, you go to Latin, don't ever talk to me again." Where do you think I went to high school?

Tevin Charles [00:34:16] [Background talking] Latin.

DH [00:34:16] I went to Rindge. What, are you crazy? And not talk to Donald? What?! So, I wasn't taking the chance. Rindge and Latin, you must have gone to Rindge and Latin. It was a big difference back in the day. Okay. Yeah, no, it wasn't -- if you were a Rindge guy, they didn't really talk to kids in Latin. I mean, by the time I came around, we started being friendlier, but before that, if you went to Latin, no, you were ostracized. So, no, I ended up going to Rindge. It was, and it was the best thing I could have done, really. The difference is, compared to now, when you went to Rindge, it was an all-boys school, and you were allowed more years to grow up, okay? Boys being with girls at a younger age in high school, you tended to want to impress the girls. And one of my high school teachers who was at the school and went to -- was still a teacher when they combined the schools, he said that's what the difference was. He said when it was an all-boys school, you could talk to boys any way you wanted. People would be ragging each other and cracking on each other, but he said once it became coed and you said those things to the boys, the boys would be upset because, you know, "I like that girl over there and you dissed me in front of her?" And it just created a problem. So in all, the main difference between coed and all boys' schools is you gave boys four more years to grow up without the

² Correction: grammar school teacher. (Correction by Donnie Harding.)



influence of worrying about who was saying what to you or anything else, and I never forget that. So, I guess that was my childhood. I mean, there are other things that were included in that. I don't think we need to know a lot of the other things that happened in those days. So, we did good.

KB [00:36:38] Okay.

DH [00:36:38] Okay.

KB [00:36:39] Thank you. That was great.

DH [00:36:41] That's the halo side. Let's keep the halo side [laughter].

KB [00:36:45] What are some places that you spend time at besides home? Like, what were some important places to you growing up besides your house?

DH [00:37:01] Like the Margaret Fuller House and Neighborhood House? Okay, yeah. Margaret Fuller House, like I said, my early years was here at the Margaret Fuller House. When I first came around with Donald Greenidge, this is where everybody was. All the kids were -- I won't say all the kids, I'll say the kids from Roberts School were over here at the Margaret Fuller House. The kids who went to St. Mary's -- St. Mary's was the parochial school -- were more at the Neighborhood House, even though I did go to the Neighborhood House. And the kids from Washington Elms, even if they went to the Roberts, would still go over to the Neighborhood House because my mother was a part of the parent group, the mothers, they had a mother's club over there. I forgot about that. But my early years were here at the Margaret Fuller House. They -- we had, always had a program. They had carpentry programs, they would just do different [things] -- everything was organized. If there was a big difference between then and now, it's that whatever we did was organized. You'd come in at a certain time, all the programs that we had, there would be mentors who were working with young people doing the different programs that we had. It didn't matter what we were doing. Obviously, at that time, I was not in the same group as my older friends, so I'd be in here and we would be playing kickball, or baseball, catch, or whatever we were doing. It's not a big facility, but this is where we came and



everything we did was done with a purpose. Everything we did was done teaching us what to do and how to get along in life. Some of -- two of the main things: number one, in the summer we had a summer camp, and it was called Camp Newton. It was in New Hampshire, I'm not really sure, but it was affiliated with the Margaret Fuller House. So, all of the kids from the Margaret Fuller House, for two weeks, would go to Camp Newton, and we just did the activities. They taught us to swim. We'd learn about the woods. We'd learn to hike. Just different things that you would learn and get the philosophy of life, how to live together, how to cooperate with each other, because everybody had chores, they had all of the hands, so somebody had to get the eggs and the different things they did. I was the youngest one, again, because they let me in special cause I was always around these other kids, and I petitioned and they said, "Okay, we'll let him come, we'll let him go." So I was basically with the cook, you know, it was like being with my grandmother at home when she was cooking, and I would just be there, and I would be running errands in the kitchen with the cook while everybody else was doing the things that they were doing. But the counselors were the George Greenidges, my cousin, Sonny, Buzzy Mitchell, the older kids did the counseling and then the next group would counsel the younger kids. So it was, like, three different groups of counseling, but it just taught responsibility, it just taught how to work with different people in leadership [positions], different aspects of that, but the best part about it was getting us off the streets for those couple of weeks in the summer and you came back with a totally different perspective of what you were, and who you were and what you were going to do. Again, like I said, they had organized programs, but the other thing that they had was they had clubs that -- we had boys clubs and there was a group that those other guys were in, my older cousins, called the Dukes, okay, and then we formed a group called the Junior Dukes. So, and the Junior -- I mean, again, it was just a thing that was run by two guys. One was Mr. Lambert, and the other person was Mr. Ford. Louis Ford. You know Louis Ford? Louis Ford's father. Okay. They were the two people who were in charge of the Junior Dukes and they just did different things, took us on different trips over to, like, Bunker Hill, have us play basketball games against kids in Boston, the Norfolk House and the Shelbourne Center, which wasn't there, but just for relevance. But those were different things that we did, and the Junior Dukes, they had, we had jackets -- I wish I still had my Junior Dukes jacket -- and, but we just did different things together. The Junior Dukes were always together doing things, just as the Dukes were always together. Now, the Dukes didn't let us any place near them. They were older kids, and they would be like, "Oh, get out of here," and



we'd say, "Hey, I'm a Junior Duke!" And he'd said, "you ain't us. You ain't us. You ain't as bad as us!" So, there was never any competition. They were too old for there to be competition with us. But that was basically the unity of the neighborhood. And that was -- the neighborhood around here was having the Dukes and the Junior Dukes and just doing the different things that we did as the Dukes and Junior Dukes. And then after that, as I got older, I started playing basketball more. I became more the athlete. And the more I started playing sports, I started going more over to the Neighborhood House because the kids who were more serious about sports, especially basketball, we used to go to the Neighborhood House. The Neighborhood House was over there on Harvard Street, Harvard and Moore Street used to be a building. They're both settlement houses. I don't know if you know what a settlement house is, but they used to have this -- Margaret Fuller and Neighborhood House were Red Feather Settlement Houses. I guess it was some special designation where they would get money all the, every year from some organization. But it was called the Red Feather Settlement Houses. But I started going over to the Neighborhood House probably when I was seventh, eighth grade, and, like I said, became more serious in playing sports, especially basketball and basically, the same thing happened. The difference was that was more of an integrated society over at the Neighborhood House, Okay? There were a lot more white kids that I was hanging around with and kids from St. Mary's, other kids from here. But I, from there, I joined a group called the Dynamo's. That was a club over there. Okay, so I was in that. But, and it was the same thing. It was just all older kids, but it was just a bunch of guys who basically hung around together and had -- I never got a Dynamo jacket. That was the difference. I came later than all the other kids who were members of the Dynamo's, but I was, when they had their meetings and they did everything, I was a part of the group. Again, I was probably the youngest one, but [pause] that's just how life was. They also did a lot of different things. The Neighborhood House was also, I won't say different because they were probably doing it over here at the Margaret Fuller, but when I was at the Neighborhood House, it was when I -- I was there even when I was going to college, interested in going to college, and I don't know why, but it seemed like I'd be in the middle of a basketball game or doing something, and then the director would call and say, or the head of the Dynamo's, his name was Barry something, I know it was B.B., but he'd call me, "Donnie, come in!" And I was constantly being tested. To this day, I don't know what I was being tested for. I don't know if it was IQ, but they would just give me these different puzzles and different things. In the end, and probably one of the biggest mistakes, because I didn't know, I didn't



consult my mother, was they wanted me to go to prep school and then go to Yale. Yale would accept me if I went to prep school. But by then, when I graduated, and I was thinking about it, but by when I graduated was the year Martin Luther King died and everybody was going after Black students. Everybody, actually even before that, I could have gone to the school Lake Forest in Illinois. That was where I was going. And then Martin Luther King died and everybody, you know, so I ended up going to UMass Amherst, and basically it was like, I don't want to do another year of school. Where do I want to go to school? I didn't realize going to Yale put you on another level when you came out, the influences, the people that you would have met would have been like that. But the Neighborhood House was unique in its own way. Before Head Start, they used to have a preschool program. My brother went to that preschool program and he graduated. He was there for, like, two years, they would have a graduation. But it just introduced kids to school life, to doing schoolwork and just the different things. They also had a Mother's Club -- I think I mentioned that before -- and the mothers would just get together, they'd organize, make sure that we had whatever programs they wanted to have, they would have. They would be the chaperons for the parties that they had. Can you imagine your mother chaperoning your party [laughs]? And they would do their own little field trips. They would go on field trips together. They would go to see different groups playing, a lot of the things they did. Again, there were quite a few, like I said, the people from the Elms and Newtowne Court were widows or wives of veterans, so whether the veterans came home and went off to war, in hindsight makes people a lot different. So, they may have been with each other, came home, but then the perils or the afterthoughts of war, they didn't stay together. There were a lot of single parents out there. And so, yeah, the mothers used to do a lot of activities together, go different places and do different things. I always remember that Mothers Club and the different people who were there. So, but they basically had the same kind of programs we had at the Margaret Fuller House. And the Neighborhood House burnt down, I'm going to say, in the late 70s? Maybe mid 80s. And the Margaret Fuller House took upon the name Margaret Fuller Neighborhood House at that time, and all the programs that they were doing over at the Margaret Fuller House, they brought over here to the Neighborhood House. I just looked at this and saw that I didn't even realize that it was there.

KB [00:50:27] The Neighborhood House?



DH [00:50:27] Yeah, Margaret Fuller Neighborhood House. I didn't realize that it was still there. I knew -- I thought that they had dropped that name. But that's what happened. They had a big fire over there and the Neighborhood House burnt down. And I know that they brought everything over here to the Margaret Fuller House and continued from there. But the kids from both places went both places, okay? The guys that I'm talking about who were here at the Margaret Fuller House, they would go to the Neighborhood House, too. I mean, but it was more, like I said, when we wanted to get into doing something organized, playing sports and all the things that we did, it was more serious over there at the Neighborhood House. I would still come over here because my cousins and a lot of the kids I was younger with were here. So, I was always torn when I came out of the house. "Well, do I want to go to the Marga or do I want to go --?" okay, "Do I want to play basketball, or do I want to hang out?" Okay, it was one of those things, and depending on the day, the mood, what was going on. I was constantly coming over here to the Margaret Fuller house, just doing what we did over here.

KB [00:52:01] Was there someone from Margaret Fuller house that you remember from when you were a kid that was an influence for you?

DH [00:52:07] There was, I can't remember his first name, but Mr. Gould. Mr. Gould was the Director. I'll assume he was the Director here, or at least if he wasn't the Director, he was the Youth Director. I know that there was somebody who was over him, but I wasn't paying attention to that person. Yeah, but Mr. Gould was really, really influential in the things that I did. He was the person in charge of when we went to Camp Newton. He was the person there in charge of Camp Newton, and he actually had his whole family there. I remember his son was Jody. I remember he had a daughter, and his wife used to make this thing one time a year called Blushing Bunny. It was rabbit stew, but they called it Blushing Bunny. But, yeah, Mr. Gould was, he was in charge here and he just kept things in order. Everything happened when Mr. Gould said, "Okay, we're going to do A, B and C." Things happened that way. So, he was the first person that I ever came across in that setting who showed me that things work better when everything is in order. When people are doing what they're supposed to do, we open up the gates "Two, four, six, eight, open up the Marga gates!" is what we used to say. It'd be like two minutes of eight, and the gates opened up at eight o'clock, and we'd say "Two, four, six, eight, open up the Marga gates!" But, and so -- but those were the things, and then exactly at eight



o'clock, he would open the gates over here, and that's when we would start doing whatever it was that we did. But yeah, Mr. Gould, he was here for a long time. I don't know how long. Again, you'd have to ask somebody older than I am, but he was a calming influence. Probably the first male grown person outside of my house who had an influence over who I was and what I did and how I acted. Okay? Again, difference between then and now was everybody expected you, you automatically respected adults for who they were, and they did it, but the adults did the things that they were supposed to do to get that respect. They ran the programs. They did what they were supposed to do. They were responsible. And Mr. Gould was that first person who I met who influenced a lot of how I was and things that I did.

KB [00:55:16] Do you know how your parents, like, how your parents talked about Margaret Fuller House? Or did they have any interactions here?

DH [00:55:26] Not really. I mean, they probably did. One of my problems was, like I told you, I walked away when I was two years old. I was very, very independent. Okay, I had my big brother, who was three years older than me, and he would come knocking on my door at 7:30 in the morning, "Is Donnie ready to go?" And my mother said, "Yeah, he's ready," and I'd be gone. So, it's not like she did not care, or whatever it was, it's just that I gained independence at a very, very young age. I had the whole neighborhood from here to Central Square. I tell my grandson that I was going down to Donnelly Field by myself because I was playing Little League Baseball when I was six years old and by then I could cross, like, four blocks [laughter]. It wasn't just one. I mean, my parents were always supportive. My mother believed in education. She didn't play around with that. I knew how to read before I went to school, okay? And that's a combination, I didn't talk about Sunday school that much, but the Sunday school I went to, they emphasized that you knew how to read and write and do the things that you had to do. But my mother used to sit us down, I remember her sitting me down when I was a little kid and writing. When I got into kindergarten and the teachers were saying, okay, "Donald, your name is 'D'. You know what a 'D' is?" And I sat down, and I was like shhh [writing], I wrote the whole name out, sat back, put my foot up [laughter]. But yeah, so my mother was always, and to this day is very strict on education, on etiquette, on all of that stuff. She's somebody you should interview because she said she came here when she was growing up too. So, but no. I mean, as far as where I went and what I did, I was very, very independent. I wasn't



doing anything to get into trouble, so it wasn't like she ever had to restrict me on doing anything. Maybe if I got into trouble, I probably would have had more conversations with my parents about what I was doing. But as long as I was coming out, obviously she had to sign up for things. And I really don't remember if she, if they had things over here at the Margaret Fuller House, but, like I said, things were structured in such a different way. I don't -- the Neighborhood House was not structured. I mean, they may have had programs, but I just know this place was a lot more structured programs for the kids at that time. When I went to the Neighborhood House, and again, most of the time was when I was older, we just played. The basketball's out and we just played. I was in that club and they did different things, but I just remember here we had shops, the day was planned out a lot more. But then again, this is where I was. Maybe if I went over there in the summer, days would have been planned out, structured the same way but I don't know. My mother, as long as I didn't get into trouble, she never really bothered me about what I was doing and where I was going, and my father was the same way. I mean, my father worked at General Motors. He worked, he came home. He got his Narragansett beer and he sat down and took the TV for the night. Did I say what I wanted to say when he took my TV from me? But I mean, he was -- it was a nice...I had a nice loving family. I talked about my grandmother and being upstairs, but my house was very calming. I had me, I was the oldest of three boys. We all did good in school. My youngest brother's a doctor, as we speak. My other brother should have been a lawyer. Things happen in life, so he didn't get there, but he's probably the most brilliant of all three of us. Okay, by far, he's probably the most brilliant of all three of us. But yeah, my parents were very nurturing. We would regularly on Sunday's go to different beaches, amusement parks, different things. So, it was a regular family life, once we got into the different things that we're doing. It was a very easy time for me, where I grew up and how things were, but my home life was very, very stable. Everything happened the way that it was supposed to happen. Of course, I'm on the first floor and my grandmother's on the second floor, so it's not like we missed a step, but unlike my cousins on the second floor whose parents had passed away, I still had a regular, "Okay, we're going here. We're going to go this place." My biggest fight was "Can Chuckie come?" Okay, but then if Chuckie came, then his sisters had to come half the time. If his sisters weren't around, then Chuckie could come, so that was the biggest battle that we had, could Chuckie come? And it used to hurt to see me go and Chuckie's just standing there with nothing to do. It hurt. So, but yeah, it was -- both my parents worked. Everything was -- I wasn't lacking for anything the way



that they say people are now. My father was, like, the first one in the neighborhood to have a car. We were the first ones to have TV. I'm watching Howdy Doody and I'm going to the kids across the street, these are even both Black and white, "Yeah, I was watching Howdy Doody!" "What's a Howdy Doody?" They didn't even know who he was. But, so yeah, we had a lot of different things that -- which meant I had to learn to be humble at a very young age, too, because I had things that a lot of kids didn't have. I couldn't run out of the house and talk about the Lone Ranger and Roy Rogers with kids who didn't have TV, so those were things that I would keep to myself or find out who else had a TV. My friend, Richie DeMarco, who was my best friend from day one in kindergarten till even now, his family was richer than ours because he -- his father owned the company, a business. So, we could talk about Howdy Doody and the Lone Ranger and all those shows together, where I couldn't talk about it with everybody else. So, as far as them coming over and doing the things they did here, no, they did not do that, but they -- but my house growing up was very stable. It was very loving. Me and my brothers were always very close, you know, as long as they listened to me. But we were -- it was a regular household, regular, for lack of a better word -- [to Tevin] I don't know if you know this, brother -- Leave it to Beaver household. You know Leave It to Beaver?

KB [01:04:19] Yeah.

DH [01:04:19] Oh you know, okay. So, there was a Leave It to Beaver household, okay? I mean, my [parents] -- they weren't dressed in suits and stuff like that, but it was a very comfortable, easy lifestyle house.

KB [01:04:38] When I've talked to other people for the project, a lot of people have mentioned that, like, the people in the neighborhood kind of all looked after each other. Like I've heard a bit about other people's moms, like, telling kids what to do and things like that. Did you kind of feel like that, too, when you were growing up, that everyone was sort of looking out for each other?

DH [01:04:58] Yeah, well, again, wherever we went, we would go into the different houses. Some people would let me in their houses, some people didn't, but wherever I went, yeah, that would happen. You respected the parents. The parents knew who you were. Parents, again,



they had the Mother's Club, and if they didn't have the Mother's Club, everybody knew who each other was. So, and the kids would respect the parents. If they saw them and they were doing something, they -- we wouldn't do things in front of adults. I don't really know how it is now, but yeah, somebody's parent could tell you not to do something and you did not do it. I mean, it's not -- I don't know if it was so much the fear that they might come tell your parents, or if it was just the nature of how life was, but yeah. Especially if you knew them. Now, if I didn't know somebody's parent and they said something to me, or the parent didn't really know who I was and said something, yeah, I'd be that same old fresh guy that everybody was, but -- even if I knew the kid. If I knew the kid but didn't go into his house then, and their parents said something, I might not do it in front of them, but I'm not going to -- I didn't give them the same props that I would give to somebody whose parent I knew, whose house I went into or the different things that I did. I remember when I was in the eighth grade, I wanted to hook school and, "I ain't going to school," there's a test or something was going on. I don't know why I hooked school, but I just wanted to do it. I hooked school, and I saw this lady, her name was Mrs. Quick, and Mrs. Quick's looking, and I just circled around and went into my back yard so that she would think I was going home. I ended up the whole day, just sitting under the porch saying to myself, "Why didn't you go to school?" [laughter] Okay, so, but that was how [it was], but I say that just because, and it's not like she ever talked to my mother or anything, but her son was one of my best friends. Her son was a kid who was in the Dynamo's, okay, and I would go by his house all the time and we'd do things, and I just didn't want her to question me or mess with me about, "Why didn't you go to school? Was it you that I saw?" So it was different in those days, and not just that, but even kids who knew my mother, or knew that she was my mother would not do things in front of her. It was -- parents did get that respect. And yeah, if any parent said something to me or questioned, or challenged, or anything like that, we would look up to her or to them, men and women, it was more -- the fathers were actually worse than us, so we didn't have to worry about the fathers. The fathers were all fired up when we saw them, but the mothers would be there, and we would listen to the mothers.

KB [01:08:43] What were your interactions with other neighborhoods in Cambridge when you were growing up?



DH [01:08:53] I mean, I was fortunate because my family, I'm from down here, but I had family up what they call the Coast, which is Western Ave, and, as a matter of fact, they used to have this place called Donnell's. And Donnell's was a place that they let teenagers go to, and I remember going up the Coast -- now first, you have to understand, Cambridge is parochial. Okay, like I said, I was here at the Neighborhood House and there -- I mean, at the Margaret Fuller and then there was the Neighborhood House. They weren't -- kids from the Margaret Fuller were not just welcomed with open arms at the Neighborhood House and vice versa. This is when I was older. This is, I'm going to say, when I was high school, so -- but what happened was -- but, so when I was younger, I remember my first time going up the Coast and I went there and one of my cousins saw me and she said -- she was older, again, older -- and she said, "Oh, what are you doing?" I said, "Oh, I'm just up here. I wanted to see what it was like coming up the Coast. Donald's up here somewhere, and I had to find Donald." She's like, "Oh, Okay." So, I'm not really doing anything. You had to be thirteen to go into this place, Donnell's, which was owned by my aunt, my -- she wasn't an aunt, she was my father's first cousin, and she brought me in there. So, I'm sitting in Donnell's and these other guys who were a couple of years older than me who, in the end I played high school basketball with, they're looking at me saying, "What's this dude doing in Donnell's?" And I'm looking at them, standing on the corner, and one of them said, "When you come out, we're going to get you. You shouldn't be in here." Okay, [to Tevin], you grew up in Cambridge? You know Port Coast? Oh, okay. Okay, so I'm sitting there and all of a sudden, I'm like, "Well, what am I going to do?" [laughter]. But as time went on, I was there. They fed me hot dogs and I was playing pool, and I'm doing all of that stuff. Those guys ended up leaving. I saw that they were gone. I'm a fast runner [laughter]. I booked to Central Square, but as I got older, just like I said from Margaret Fuller over here, because this was my base, this is where my cousins were. Over there was when I played basketball, I was pretty good in sports. So, I could go there, there. Then, when I got into high school, I started in football when I was a sophomore, so, because I was a good athlete and then I was on the basketball team, I was probably the only one from down here who could go up the Coast without being -- and I was picked on, I shouldn't say not being picked on because I was the only one not there, so I was able to go down there. I shouldn't say this story, even before that, the other incident that I had was I remember I was probably seventh grade and we wanted -- the kids down here wanted to play the kids up the Coast in basketball. So, we came down, the kids from down here, and we went up there. I can't say the guy's name because you probably



know who he is, but he was what I'll call a basketball bully. Okay, in high school, we were like this. But we played this game, and this guy was doing everything dirty to everybody, you know? And one time I did something, and he gave me a little shiver. Donald Greenidge was there, Donald, "Hold up. Hold up. You guys can play your game. You can do everything you want," and these were, the older kids were there, too. But the Greenidges were -- you didn't mess with the Greenidges. Okay, I don't have that rep. I didn't have the Greenidge rep. Okay, but he, Donald said, "You can do anything you want to, to these guys. If he gets hurt, okay, you're coming to me." And that [guy] -- his brother was there, older cousins, guys who were older than them. He said, "You're accountable to me if he gets hurt." The rest of the game was clean. I don't think we won. But that was the end of that guy being dirty to the rest of us, okay, but yeah, so, because I played sports, I wandered through the city doing, you know, playing basketball, playing there. When I was in high school, I used to organize games against kids from all over. So we would go to -- these would be my friends -- we'd go to West Cambridge, which they called Strawberry Hill, we'd go to East Cambridge, North Cambridge, Russell Field, we would just go -- kids, because I was in that homeroom where the different -- I was friendly with the kids in my homeroom so we would start talking about, "Oh, our friends can beat, my friends can beat yours," so we just started a nice, friendly rivalry of basketball games going from one neighborhood to the other. We won, except for when we went up the Coast, we couldn't beat the Coast kids, okay? But they were -- the kids from the Coast were the kids who were on the varsity basketball team, for the most part. Again, there were two schools. A lot of the kids from down here did go to Cambridge Latin, and I would say of the five starters on Latin, my last three years, at least three of them were from this neighborhood. So, but yeah, so those were some of the things that we did. The Coast and the Port was always, always a rivalry. But because of my athleticism, I was able to go -- I went every place. I used to go to St. Mary's, and at that time, St. Mary's High School was there. So it was all the kids, as they got older, they were down at St. Mary's, but a lot of the kids were kids I grew up with over here, Newtowne Court were there, so I had that benefit, and the lack of fear, probably, I don't know how much it's lack of fear, but to just go wherever I wanted to go, and people knew who I was. A lot of them knew who I was because I was with Donald, who was older. A lot of them knew who I was because when I got into high school, because of my athleticism and I was probably one of the smartest Black kids in the school, up at the high school. Male, male. I don't want to get it mixed up, the girls were smarter. Even when I sit over here being one of the smarter ones, the girls were



smarter, so I had that benefit of walking through the city and doing the different things that I wanted to do in the city and without any repercussions, where Cambridge is a serious, parochial city. When I say parochial, if you're not from a certain area, then you couldn't come down there. Now, if I was over there and people came, my cousins were coming over there, it's not that they would stop them because they'd get beaten up [laughs] if they said, "No, you can't come over here." They weren't telling Chuckie, "You can't come over here," okay? But life was a lot easier for me. A lot of people, even if people came from outside and came here. But, yeah, I had the luxury of doing that. One time in North Cambridge -- and I mentioned a book that you should read. A friend of mine wrote it. He wrote South Boston, that it happened in South Boston, because South Boston would get the notoriety. But we were younger, we went to a high school football game up at Russell Field, and when we were at the football field after the game, we're going home. There's like five Black kids just walking through, so, of course, we see somebody, and he calls us a name. We're like, "What?!" They were a group of kids, and so we went and -- these kids were more our age. Next thing you know, somebody called for his older brother. We see these older kids coming in a car, so we just dashed and ran away. I'm not sure if they caught the kid who wrote the book, and I know we all went home together, so, and that was North Cambridge. We probably met someplace on Mass Ave, and I'm sure we turned around and said, "Okay, if you're going to beat one of us up, you're going to beat all of us up." Chuckie was with us, okay [laughter]. Again, these guys were driving, and we weren't even in high school, twelve, thirteen, at that time. So that was, like, the worst fear that I had with these older guys coming, getting ready to beat us up because that their younger brothers, or whomever they were, called us the n-name. And we said, "No, you can't do that to us." But yeah, I had access to -- I was fortunate to have access to the whole city as I was growing up.

KB [01:20:17] When we met last time you talked a little bit about the dances that you would go to Margaret Fuller House. You told me to watch Cooley High, which I did [laughs], so I think I have a better sense of it now, but I was just wondering -- you don't have to get into it too much, but if you can tell us a little bit about that?

DH [01:20:34] No, that's how they were. You came to parties here, the parties were in the basement here, the lights were off, and you just sat down and had a good time. We were there. Everybody -- some people had girlfriends, some didn't have girlfriends, but we danced. That



was the midst of the Motown sound. Okay, that was the midst of Sam and Dave. That's when all of that -- it was heavy in all of that. And we -- yeah, no, I mean, when it was -- when we were here, it was like that. That's when the parochialism came out, okay? Because when kids came from the Coast down here, okay, we didn't mind the *girls* coming, but when the guys came, it'd be like, "What are you doing here?" you know, "My girlfriend is here," "Okay, that's good for you. You got to go back." But, consequently, most parents from -- whose kids weren't from down here and half of the parents whose kids were here, were, you know, didn't care for them to come down here, because, like I said, the lights were -- and we had a good time. We weren't fighting. I mean, we didn't fight among ourselves. We might threaten the kids from other places. The kids from Boston, we had cousins and if we knew somebody, it wasn't that bad. Okay, it was when the kids came and we weren't -- we might know them, but somebody might like their girlfriend. So, if they came to protect their girlfriend being there, then, "Yeah, she can stay. You got to go." [laughter] Okay. But, yeah, it was just regular dance parties, and we danced. We partied. We used to have a real good time doing the things that we did. Kids, there would be kids who came in from outside doing whatever, but it was our neighborhood. Like I said, you would see couples here, couples there, people dancing, but when I said Cooley High, it was more for the atmosphere. It was just a nice 60s atmosphere of kids partying, kids having a good time. Yeah, the dude in the durag was Chuckie. Okay [laughter]. And everybody got along. It was just a good, wholesome, time of partying. It was a good, wholesome time of kids in the neighborhood getting to know each other and doing the things that we did together. And that's why -- that's more than anything, when I think of my -- the older years being here, that's what I think of is the parties that we had at the Marga. The parties here at the Marga were -- they were fun. But again, by that time, in the older years as time went on, a lot of parents from other parts of the city weren't comfortable with their kids coming down here. *Really* weren't comfortable with their daughters coming down here, okay? Because the kids down here were [pause] what's the right word? They were who they were, it was -- women, mothers don't want their daughters with the bad kids, okay, or the tough kids. I won't even say they were bad because most of the kids ended up doing good. Like I said, when I went to college, a lot of those kids went to college. A lot of kids went to jail, too. But the kids just acted tougher. When we talk about the Coast, the Coast had the center in the mission where they could go and play basketball. We didn't have any indoor basketball places, so we tended to be less athletic. Even at the Neighborhood House, there was no indoor basketball place. Even the kids, I said St. Mary's.



St. Mary's had a gym, indoor gym that we didn't go to because at that time, the Catholics -- Catholics separated themselves from the Protestants, okay? When they came down the street and, because St. Mary's was down Harvard Street and they came home here, it wasn't just Black and white. The Catholic kids just looked at the white kids and said, "Oh, you go to a parochial school," you know, "you're a parochial." So we, even though St. Mary's Gym was in our neighborhood, we didn't go there. So, we had a certain -- there was a certain edge that we had down here. I'm not saying that it was a mean edge. It was just an edge that we had that, for the most part, and I've always felt that the Port was the Port. Okay, I think we had more pride in the Port -- I can't say that, they probably had a lot of pride in the Coast, I can't say that -- but yeah, there was a pride down here that we had that we were glad to be from here and, sort of liked the reputation we had [in the Port]. I mean, I'm not going to say that that reputation was something that was not appreciated. But some of the kids, especially in that 60s era, liked the reputation that we had, that kids weren't going to come from someplace else and mess with us down here. Even those guys I talked about when I went to the Coast, they wouldn't come down here and start any trouble down here. They did what they did in their neighborhood, but they would never think of coming down here and saying, "Okay, we're from our neighborhood, we're going to do this." But, for the most part, we didn't go up there either. I was probably, like I said, because of my athleticism, the only one who went up there. But the parties were just the parties. They were good times. There was everybody doing different things, we wouldn't -- There were no lights for them to do any kind of gambling, so if they wanted to roll dice they would have to be outside, but yeah, that's how it was. The first time I drank, I drank at one of the parties. It was a day before I had a football game, of course, and I was with older kids, I was a junior in high school and all these kids who were out of high school were around. So, I'm there and, like I said, my family had money and they wanted something to drink. So, "Donnie, you got any money? You got any money," so I said, "Yeah, okay, I got something." And somebody went and got -- and it was Tango, vodka and orange juice. So, of course, I bought it, so they said, "Okay, you've got to take the first swig." I never drank before, never even thought about drinking. So, I ended up taking the first swig. I was a junior, and I said, "Oh, it's just orange juice! I couldn't taste any vodka." So, they passed the bottle, and I passed the bottle with them [motions drinking]. So, later that night -- and that's the party. There was a party here at the Marga -- later that night when we went home, my brother was at the party also, and my mother had some guests at the house when we came home. So, all of a sudden, I'm like, "Oh,



this don't feel good." So, I got up and went to the bathroom, came out. About ten minutes later, my brother went to the bathroom. So, it may have happened where we, a couple of times we did that, and my mother came and said, "What's the matter? What happened?" And I said, "Well, I think we had some bad cookies at the Marga." So, after that, when I had to go again, I just had to open my window, and I just hoped it didn't go on the window below, but just had to upchuck outside the window [laughter]. But that was, yeah, that was funny. That was my first drink, and I don't even think I ended up coming inside. I remember being, doing the drinking on the side, you know where the gate is right there? I remember us being out there. I don't even know if I got inside that night, but that was my first drinking experience. The first time that I ever had anything to drink. And, like I said, I didn't taste the vodka. All I could taste was the orange juice, so I didn't know the effects of alcohol. The next day, I still played in the football game. We played Boston English. It was just a regular game. We ended up losing, actually Boston English had not been scored on the whole year, and we were the first team -- they were undefeated, unscored on, and we were winning twelve to nothing going into the last quarter and ended up losing fourteen to twelve. So, I didn't play my best game, but I had -- nothing was on me that made us lose the game so, but yeah. So, that was the Marga, the Marga and the Marga parties. But it was more just the innocence, the fun, the dancing, just how it was back in those days. But when I saw that movie, when I see that movie, it reminds me because we were partying in the basement, and so many of the parties were in the basement, so that's what it reminded me of when I said that. That, and the atmosphere of how it was, you know, good kids there, kids dancing, kids in the corner with their girlfriends. It was just the whole gamut of how the parties were here. And it was basically the parties in the basement here because basement parties, when you had the party in the basement, you just felt like you could get away with a little bit more, and be a little bit more sinister.

KB [01:32:39] Thank you. That was really fun to listen to.

DH [01:32:44] Oh, okay.

KB [01:32:44] So, I know you spent some time living outside of Cambridge, and I was just wondering, like, how you kind of stay connected to the area and if you were still connected to the Margaret Fuller House during that time?



DH [01:32:57] I -- when we had the radio station, and even after that, I was on the board of the Margaret Fuller House. I was on the board in and out. Like I said, I worked at the Community School Program and working at the Community School Program always gave me a connection here. I coached basketball from the time I got out, starting with the kids at the community schools and throughout the years I coached. This was my base. I always knew the kids around here, so the first place I would go would be to coach and work with the kids in the neighborhood. We always put kids -- we always had tournaments, and I would -- at first, I would exclusively have kids from here. What stopped me from exclusively having kids from here was one time we were playing in a tournament in East Somerville and we made the finals. We're in the finals and we were playing against the team from Matignon. Matignon had just won the state championship and my kids were basically kids from here. It was the year Pat Ewing had finished. Pat was a senior and was graduating. We're playing Matignon in the finals. At the same time, Rindge was playing -- the Rindge team was in a tournament in Waltham, the Waltham tournament. So, and it was the same day. And I remember the kids telling the high school coach, "We're playing on Donnie's team and the championship of the tournament out there." And the coach just saying to them, "Look, you can play in that tournament, but you remember you played in that tournament the first day of practice. When I'm making my cuts and making my decisions, you remember that you decided to play with Donnie." Okay? So, when they told me that, even though they wanted to, I had to tell them, "Nope," you know, "this is all about you playing varsity basketball." But that's the last time that I had an all-Cambridge team. I lived in Boston. I actually coached in Boston also. They had a basketball league in my name at the park where I was a few years ago because I used to coach the kids and BNBL over there also. But yeah, from that time on, whenever I had teams, I would get kids I knew from Boston, as well as kids from Cambridge. It was never exclusively Cambridge. I mean, there was a point where I was doing more Boston and then brought Cambridge kids in and it was just to never have that conflict again. But yeah, coaching basketball is what kept me connected here and having kids in tournaments and just working with the kids in the different tournaments that we had. When I talk about it, and I'll go back to when I was at Roberts School, I remembered I had a team from Cambridge in the BNBL, and we were playing over in Brighton, and the team from Boston English, who was supposed to be really good, was also in that league, and I guess they had -- they were over there, and they got on that so that they



would be automatic to go into the citywide tournament. Didn't work out that way. We were there. So, what ended up happening was we made the championship and we went over to Northeastern. It was probably the first time I had my full contingent of kids. Kids came out of jail. Kids came, you know, they weren't doing any of the crazy things they did because we were going to be playing in the playoffs of the BNBL. The thing was, I had to have [Boston] addresses for all the kids. Okay. So, I got addresses from the people on my street -- sorry I had to cheat like that -- the kids were the right age. Okay, so I didn't cheat on the age. They were the legitimate age, and I had new, different people who owned houses, so different neighbors. I got a letter from them saying that -- I'm not giving real names because half of these kids went to jail. So, Michael Smith had something, and Johnny Jones, I had addresses for all of these kids. Legitimate. I also had three white kids on the team, and they had family in Boston. Dorchester, Mission Hill, South Boston. So, we were set. I knew I had to have these addresses, went to the championship, and the guy called -- the managers called me over and they said, "Where you guys from?" And I said, well, I lived on Julian Street in Boston. "I'm from Julian Street. But these guys know these other kids from here, there and everywhere." And they said, "You can't play." And I said, "Here's my addresses," you know, "look!" The kids who needed to had family, and what ended up happening was the white guy said -- this is Boston, 1980, '85 -- and they said, "There is no way these kids -- we've seen these white kids play. There is no way that these white kids are on your team. We don't know anything about them. Anybody that good we are going to know. So, you're not from Boston." The Black kids I could've got away with, okay, because where my neighborhood was a little secluded, nobody ever came around there. But just having them, the white kids -- boy, were those guys upset. I had to stop them from just tearing in that place up and getting out of there. But yeah, we would've had a legitimate opportunity but, so I'm saying that just to say that's where I started, and I always maintained my athletic relationship with the city, having the kids in different tournaments. The summer league they have, I actually started with -- years ago, they didn't have any summer league for the kids, and me, Tony Bizzell, who's the third person? I don't want to say Billy. But there were three of us. They worked with me over here at Community Schools and they said, "Hey, the kid should have --" Tony was from New York and where he was from, they used to have a basketball league in the summer. So, we started the first basketball league for the kids in the summer. So, it just stayed, that relationship responsibility just stayed with me. In the 80s, again, I left, got jobs. When my son was about nine years old, he wanted to play football. So when football season



came, he was, "Hey, can I play football?" And there was no football in Boston in our neighborhood, they had Pop Warner, but there was no Pop Warner -- Cambridge didn't have Pop Warner. So, I told him, "Okay, I'm going to take you to --" was it Hyde Park? It may have been -- oh, Brookline. I was going to take him to Brookline because Brookline was the closest place to play. And I said, "Okay, tomorrow I'll take you to Brookline. Today --" because I was refereeing basketball for the city league and it was a championship game. Championship game comes, game's over. Team lost. Kid kicked the ball. We were playing up at Rindge Field, kid kicked the ball into the tennis court. I turned around, I said to him, "You going to get the ball?" He said, "No." I said, "You'll never play in the Cambridge League again. Never play in this league again." I turned to get the ball. the next thing I knew [smacking sound], he hit me from behind. Sucker punched me. Broke my jaw. I'm in the hospital. Well, I just went. They looked, they said, "Oh, nothing's wrong." But I'm sitting down [at home] for a week. I couldn't take him. My wife ended up taking him, and they said, "No." I mean, I may have been able to convince them, but they told her, "No." He couldn't play because the way it went, Brookline touches Roxbury but it didn't touch Dorchester, and I lived one block away from Roxbury, so they told them he couldn't play. So, I'm recovering in the hospital. Long story short, they said it wasn't broken. I'm sitting in pain. Went to somebody else [for a second opinion] the next day. He looked at the x-rays, "No, it's all right." Sitting now for a couple -- for another week, then went back to the hospital, "It's fine." Went back to the other doctor in Newton. He said, "Nothing's wrong," and I said, "Doc, somebody told me you were the best one around," I said, "You're telling me it is not broken. I know something's wrong. Okay, if it's not you, if you're not the man, send me to the man so that I can get my jaw broken." So, he ended up taking a scan, and what happened was, not only was it broken, but to compensate for the pain or the discomfort, I ended up breaking both, both of them were broken. So, I ended up going to the hospital. I was in Boston City -- oh, what he said was, "Look, the best doctor I know is at Boston City," you know, "Do you mind going there?" "No." I don't know what Boston City was like, so, yeah, I went. Best care that I could have gotten. It was the time of the West Indian Carnival, and I just remember how they arrested these different guys who were there, and they're on different sides of the bed, and I'm just sitting there and one guy I got along with. We talked. But there was this other Spanish guy. Every time I opened my eyes, this dude was staring at me, and finally I said, "Look, you got to get me out of here. I don't know what he's going to do because I know I'm going to fall asleep." So, in the end, my son didn't play. I lost a promotion that my boss had



promised me, and then my boss had retired while I was out, so -- in its own way, it was good. And I say all of that to say, the next year I started Cambridge Pop Warner football. I told my son, I promised him he'd be able to play, so as soon as I [got healthy] -- my mouth was wired for three months. Well, I look back at my high school football practices, I had Brigham Frappes every day. Okay. That was my diet, was a Brigham Frappe. Milkshake to people who aren't from Cambridge. So, right after that, I got in touch with the Pop Warner people, asked them how to start a football program. They gave me the [basics], you have to do A, B and C. Not only A, B and C, but if you have football, you have to have cheerleading. It's not just football, but football and cheerleading. I'm like, "Cheerleading?! Cheerleading?!" But they'd need -- they want the girls and, which was good. I learned a lot. Cheerleading is very competitive. I don't care what anybody says. They have those cheerleading competitions and the cheerleading competitions, they had to be more precise and more whatever [disciplined] than the football teams. So, I had meetings and found different guys who were interested in coaching and thought that I was set for the year. But what all of that basically taught me was, okay, yeah, you have the coaches, and all of this is here, but I learned as I was going on, you have to organize parents to do everything that happens, so that was my lesson there, was that wasn't a one-man operation. That [it] wasn't [just] a bunch of guys. That was where you had to -- and I learned, and it wasn't me, so to speak, I just gained the confidence of a couple of mothers, and the mothers were the ones who organized the program and put the whole program together. And it was a learning experience. It was fun. I learned that concession [stand was important], no matter what you're doing, you have to have concession [to sell food/clothing]. I don't care, that's where you make your money, and when I say concession, whether it's food, sweaters, jackets, you just do those things just to make money. So, yeah. So, that started, I stayed there for five years. In our third year, we won enough to go to Florida -- maybe the fourth year -- we, one of our teams was good enough. We went down to Florida. We played a team from Texas. You never want to play a team from Texas [laughs]. Okay, so that team [beat us], but it was a great, great experience. And then after that, I stopped. My son got into high school and I -- basically, the same thing happened. In the high school, and I go to games and I would see -- especially [teams like] Wakefield, Wakefield I was envious of because the Wakefield parents would always have their kid's shirts on, and you'd go places, and they did concessions. So, when I got into, my son got into high school, he went to Rindge, my daughter didn't go to school in Cambridge. He formed all of his friendships here, especially sports. So, he wanted to go to



Cambridge. So, from there, I started the high school booster club, and I was the president of that for about five years until I could get out of there, basically. And the booster club was just making sure that all the [teams] -- trying to get parents involved in all of the sports teams. So we'd have fundraisers, in the fall there was a fundraiser, Winter fundraiser, Spring fundraiser, but parents from each of the teams would have to participate in that and we would try to get them to do different things, and with the money, they would be able to -- football could get assistant coaches. The track team always got uniforms and tents and different accessories, and the different teams would do that, but more than anything else, parents were around the kids and the teams a lot more, so those are things that kept me close to the city, and then I ran -- one of the things that happened, why I stopped being the president of Pop Warner was it was the end of rent control and when rent control ended and everybody was leaving, I was like, "Oh, what are you doing?" So, by then, I was living back here, okay, for my son to go to school, I had to move back here. So, me in my wisdom, I said, "I'm running for City Council because we're going to get this straight." I ended up coming in tenth place out of nine people [elected]. Then, somebody whose name I won't mention, again, because they're political. The next time I was going to run for City Council again and this person asked me, said, look, "I've been doing this, I've been on the council all these years. I want to be on the City Council, but if you run from the same neighborhood --," da-da-da-dee, I said, "Okay, I'll run for school committee. You run for City Council." In the end, the person ran for School Committee again instead of running for City Council. So, we ran, I came in -- there were six people. I came in eighth place. I didn't just miss out. I just missed out on the council. I came in eighth place. And after that, I was going to do it again, and my nephew, Richard, we talked and he was up and coming, working in the state house and everything, and he mentioned running. So, by then I was just doing it because I was like -- so, I passed the baton on to him and he was successful. He was able to form a better organization than I was because most of his friends and contemporaries were around. By then, my friends were gone, so he ended up winning and being on the School Committee, and it ended my political days.

KB [01:52:57] I just want to go back a little bit to talk about the radio station again, because I know that was another way, like, you were not living in Cambridge at the time but were staying connected. Can you talk about what the thought process was behind starting that? Like, how did it start out?



DH [01:52:58] It started before me. It started with Howard Hughes. Howard Hughes was the coordinator of the Roberts -- of the Community Schools before I was, and I don't know what it was. Howard was an innovative thinking person. I don't know who gave him the idea or how the idea started, but he was the person. I just inherited the program, the radio station. I had to build it up a little bit more and hire the people and do a lot of the things that happened, but the actual idea of that came from my predecessor, Howard Hughes. And I'm sure it was more just to get young people, get the word out. Like I said, people of color have always needed an avenue to express who they were and to get from one, you know, this is who we are and to get the message out that we could and should be doing more. And I think that had a lot to do with it, because Howard did not impress me as somebody who was musically oriented. He was more community, he was more, I don't want to say revolutionary, but he was more community thinking. So, I think his idea of having the radio station was more just so that people would have an avenue to express themselves and just to let people know these things are happening and you should be more involved. I have a feeling there was more of a history with the Margaret Fuller in his doing it because it was here at the Margaret Fuller the whole time. I'm not even sure of who the coordinator of the Marg -- the director of the Margaret Fuller was at the time. I can't remember. I'm sure I knew back then, but I can't remember who it was. But -- and it was innovative. I mean, Howard, it was a very innovative idea. It taught me a lot of the importance of having licenses and certifications, because for most things that you want to do, you have to learn and you have to have a license and/or certification for the programs that you're doing, so --.

KB [01:55:36] And how did people get involved, like, having their own radio shows and things like that? Were they younger people, or was it --?

DH [01:55:44] No, most of the people were older than I was, which made life more difficult for me [laughs]. I'm what, 24, 25 at the time, and everybody who was coming in there -- there were more people [who] came in from Boston who knew about it than Cantabrigians. Very, very, you know, there may have been Cambridge kids there and the guys ended up living here, so I won't say -- they were Boston people, but they lived in and around here. Okay, had moved in from Boston and must have known about the radio station. But yeah, so but that's how that was. It



was -- the characters of the radio station, again, I wish that I had known because it was controversial. They were controversial, not only here, but they were controversial in and around the neighborhood. They were -- Cambridge people are a more laid-back group of people. Very, very laid-back group of people, despite all the things that I'm saying about how life was here in the 60s and how the kids were and all the different things that happened, even with that, everybody was very, very laid -- Chuckie was laid back, Okay. And people who came in from other places, came in from Boston more had an edge to them than the people who are from here, and that's what made a big difference as far as that radio station, but they brought a lot to the radio station. They brought a lot of that verve and controversy and things to think about as far as what's going on in life and what we should be doing and could be doing. I know that we, and I don't know that much about the Panthers, but I tend to think that the Panthers being here could have influenced Howard's doing that because Howard was the coordinator of the schools, of the Community Schools, like in 1968, '69, whenever they started, Howard was the first coordinator of the Community Schools Program. And he wasn't one to run away, or shy away from controversy or anything like that. He was more the type who would have embraced it and, in his own way, enhanced it. And I think that's where the idea of the radio station may have come from, but I really don't know what the source or the original thought or intent of the radio station was, so.

KB [01:58:57] What was the reception of the radio station by people living in the neighborhood? Was it a really big deal that --?

DH [01:59:06] Oh, it was a big deal, yeah. I know people liked it. People enjoyed -- I mean, it's nice, especially when the deejays, or whoever was on the radio, was somebody who they knew, but the music was good. It brought a good atmosphere to the neighborhood because in those days we had WILD, which was the local radio station, and WILD went off at sunset. It was one of those stations that went off at sunset. And our station came on at sunset, after sunset, because the reception was better at that time. So, for the neighborhood, it just brought the young people here. It just brought a joy to them to know that they could one: hear local music, two: come visit the radio station, so they knew who the cast of characters were, and they appreciated knowing who the cast of characters were. But again, the cast of characters also had that edge to them, so it did bring some apprehension to the things that were going on because [pause] they were on all



night long. At two o'clock in the morning, sometimes, they were doing things that shouldn't be done [laughs], okay? I know I got called out in my bed a couple of times to have to come down and quell some kind of issues that were going on here. I really don't remember the police ever coming. They may have come. I'm, you know, if I had to get out of my bed one time, they may have come, but it was probably more for things being said on the radio that people would have had an issue with because they were very militant at the time. Much more militant than for the ears of the laid-back Cantabrigians, okay? And when I say that, they may not have been saying anything that didn't need to be said, but they were just saying things that were, things that Black men, Black people had to -- wanted to say. To basically say, "Wake up, Black man. Life is going on without you." Okay. And in all times, people might not want to hear that. They, like they would say in the South, we're going to go at all deliberate speed, okay? Yeah, we're going to make progress, but it's at all deliberate speed. We're making progress. Martin, we know you want it to be like that, okay? But where you want it to be at a kangaroo's pace, we're going to go at a snail's pace, but we're going to, eventually it's going to get better. And those were things that people did not want to, a lot of people didn't want to hear. Even Black parents didn't want their kids getting caught up in a lot of things like that. Even though it was necessary, even though they probably appreciate it now and those parents now were probably more provocateurs than not, they appreciate whatever progress was made. But at that time, it was something that was like, oh, well, the turbulent 60s, turbulent 70s. That's the era that that was in. So, yeah, so that probably happened. A lot of things that were being said were said -- but on the other side, yeah, it was nice to have -- I remember Ray Jackson, and Ray was a younger kid, but he just did the music. Okay, the older guys who came were more the talk show, you know, Black power, let's do this, let's do that. The younger guys who came wanted to do the music. And that's the one thing that I remember was if the young kids around here got their deejay license, they were about the music. They weren't about that, but the older guys, and there were always older guys knocking on the door [laughs], wanting to be on the radio, and they were more about uplifting our cause and doing what we need to do.

KB [02:03:56] Why did the radio station, kind of, shut down and when was that?

DH [02:04:01] It shut down after I left. I was only here for, like, five years. When I left, the radio station was still going. But, like I said, and I can't remember who succeeded me, but it was a



task to have to manage the personalities that you had to manage, okay? And I just know that two or three years after I was gone, I heard that the radio equipment went up to the high school and I thought the high school was going to continue the radio station. It was there, they had the signal, they had the time, they had everything that you needed to have to have a radio station. And maybe they did have it at the time, because once I left, like I said, I worked for the phone company, went to the T. I was more -- my family was there, so I was more focused on life outside of Cambridge. I didn't concentrate on what was going on, with a young family and new job and everything else. But, yeah, it ended, the radio station ended a few years after I stopped working at the Community School Program.

KB [02:05:27] How did it feel for you to move back to Cambridge after living in a different part of the city for so long?

DH [02:05:36] It was different. I mean, Boston has its -- I guess I was feeling like I was coming back to Beaverland [laughs]. It's just different. I mean, when I was in Boston I was active, too. Like I said, I had the basketball leagues. I was doing things with the kids in my neighborhood. It's not like I just said, "Okay, I'm over here, I'm not going to do what I do." Okay? I knew all the kids on the street, and they had their little Julian Street posse, okay, like everybody does. They didn't get into trouble. It was more an athletic thing because I'd have them playing little league baseball and basketball and different things like that. But coming back, it was -- well, I came back when my son wanted to go to [high] school, so that's what brought me here. I had, I was already doing the football, okay? So I was already reestablished here in the city, or my name was known because I did the Pop Warner when I was in Boston, or started it and that was probably, like, the third or fourth year that I moved back to the city. So, it wasn't that much of a stretch. I mean, I was always hanging out, doing things with my friends, because even if my friends weren't living here, we still had our places that we would go. But I can't say that it was that much -- that I changed that much when I came back. It was just a change from Boston to Cambridge. But, like I said, mentally, I had never really left Cambridge, okay? Physically, I was gone. Mentally, I didn't leave, and even after I came back, I was still doing things in my neighborhood over there in Boston. I was still getting the kids in the leagues and doing the things that I was doing, because those were -- by that time, I had established a relationship with



the kids over there, so, if nothing else, it just, you know, both ways. But then when I ran for council is when I entrenched myself back into the city.

KB [02:08:23] How has the Port changed since you were a kid?

DH [02:08:28] How his Cambridge changed since I was a kid, okay? The projects, at one time, were predominantly white, then went predominantly Black, then went predominantly Puerto Rican, Hispanic, and now I guess it's -- I don't know what it is [laughs]. I know that I can go over there and not see anybody that I know. The attitude, the pride of the Port is still the same, okay? That's the one thing that I will say about it. It's probably even more enhanced now than when I was growing up, okay? People really have pride in being from the Port, and you hear about that. Back then we were from the Port, but it wasn't, like, something you mentioned all the time. This is where we lived and yeah, I'm a Port boy, but it was not -- now it just seems to be a more prideful existence. People talking about it. We never, it was never talked about that you were here [from the Port], we were just here, okay? The only time that it was talked about, me being from the Port, was when I went someplace else. If I went for -- went up the Coast, they'd say, "Oh, this Port boy is here. Why is this Port boy up here?" You know, or North Cambridge, "Why is this Port boy chasing our girlfriends up here?" The North Cambridge kids I didn't worry about that much. I became friendly with them. The Coast kids were more of a unit [and hung out at the Cambridge Community Center]. But I would say that that's the difference is we lost the influence of the settlement houses [Margaret Fuller House and the Neighborhood House], okay, in the lives of the kids. Okay, we lost the influence -- oh, no, no, no, no, you hit me on something. When I ran for School Committee, it hit me. We lost the influence of the school. There's a big difference in what's going on, not just here, but especially in the Port and every place else, and I mentioned a couple of my friends, when I came out of [Roberts Elementary] school, I knew who I was going to be with. I knew who my friends were. Okay, whether I was playing sports or whether I was going to Richie's house, or whether I was coming over here, we knew each other and we knew each other because we all went to either the -- what's called Fletcher Maynard or we went to [inaudible] that was Roberts, or we went to Fletcher, or we went to St. Mary's. Everybody in the neighborhood was there. Now, somebody could be living here, and somebody could be right above them [at Washington Elms or Newtowne Court], and one person's going to Fletcher Maynard and somebody is going to Tobin



and they don't know each other. That's the big, big difference. That's the negative of Cambridge as we speak. You can live right next door to somebody and not have slight -- and the same age. He could have been born two days before you or two days after you, okay, and you don't even know who he is. Okay? You can't knock on his door and say, "Hey, is Kate coming out today?" Because you don't know that person, okay? That's the worst part of this city right now, you know, not Port, not Coast, not North Cambridge, is the fact that you can live right next -- same age, same grade, same everything and not know them. I would've never known Donald Greenidge if this city was like this back then. Okay? This city has no personality at all. This city has -- it's a transient city -- has no personality. None whatsoever. Once you graduate from high school, if your parents don't own or have anything, guess what? You're gone. How do you have a community when the people who have been there and doing all the things they do can't even live there one day after they graduate, you know? So, it's not just the Port that I'm talking about. It's the city. It's a transient city. The city officials have allowed people to come from other places and dictate where their kids go to school. They've started three new schools because they didn't want their kids going to schools with people who look like me and Tevin. Okay? "Okay, wait a second. I don't want you at that school. I don't want you at that school." So, they formed three new schools, two new schools. Okay? That's the difference. Cambridge still has the reputation of being a premier city because kids still have access to the whole city. Okay, when you're young, when you get into high school, you can still live down here and go to North Cambridge and go different places, and it's still a city atmosphere. But the bonds, the friends, nothing like that in this city anymore. There is no reason for me to be living in door nine of Newtowne Court, okay, and there's six apartments in door nine, and I don't know who lives above me and who lives down, who lives under me. When I was living over there, everybody -- some kids went to St. Mary's, some kids went to wherever they were from, but everybody knew each other. Everybody, you know, it was that. Now, and you did that because there may have been one kid who went to St. Mary's and another kid who went to Roberts who lived in the same doorway, so they would know each other because they were there, and then they would meet somebody else who went to Roberts, and St. Mary's in another doorway. So, yeah, they got to know each other. But, this city is -- Cambridge has no personality at all, not like it did before. Cambridge was a place, it was great culture, and when I say great culture, when I say utopia, it was because there was a West Indian influence in this city. There was an Irish influence in this city. There was an Italian influence in this city. You knew you could go different places and you



could feel the influence. You could feel the influence. When I went to Billy Blanchard's house, or Richie DiMarco's house, there was a feel. They'd come to my house. It was just a feel. My grandmother knew their grandmothers because they were here together and that's true. Now, none of that is here. I don't even know a grandmother who lives in Cambridge. Okay, I can't even tell you a grandmother, and I'm sitting here and I'm thinking about it, if they don't own -- and I say that because a lot of the grandmothers have passed away, but there's no -- you ask about kids and the influence or the other parents saying something or doing something and me hiding. Now, I could be there and knock on the lady's door and say, "Hey, can I have some water?" And she wouldn't know who I was. Okay, that's just the difference, but that's not just relegated to the Port. That's the city. I notice it more down here because I'm here. I notice it more down here because I don't know the people who are across the street from me or next door to me, mostly because they've only been there for, like, three years and they're going to be gone in two, but that's the big difference. This was -- if you were here in the days that I'm talking, in the 70s and 80s and early 90s, you would have felt a difference just walking into the Margaret Fuller House. You would have known that you were in a place where people knew each other, and I'm not saying they don't because it might still have that culture, but people knew each other. People cared about each other. People did things. When I was at Community Schools, one of the things we used to do is on Sundays, the mothers used to have -- I'd provide the bus -- and they used to go to state parks every weekend. They'd go to the state park in Plymouth one week, Breakheart Reservation another week, every -- for eight weeks in the summer, whoever wanted to go could do that. You couldn't do that now. They wouldn't know who each other is. If the person who's here said, "Okay, we're going to do a trip to Breakheart Res --" maybe they'd do it, but whoever those families were would be meeting each other for the first time, you know? Oh, don't get me started. And that started with the end of rent control. Okay? Once rent control ended, that was the end of the culture of Cambridge, okay? Landlords, they let landlords come in, developers come in and they just said, "We don't care." Okay? I lived where I lived. My grandmother was upstairs. We were downstairs. The DiMarco's, the uncle was on -- the family was on the first floor, their cousins were upstairs. All over the city, any place you went, there were three-deckers and guaranteed that at least one of those three-deckers, there was another family member. Now they're all condos. They're all condos with somebody coming from Kansas living on the first floor, somebody from Washington State on the second floor, somebody from Cambodia on the third floor. You know, no, [laughs] no



neighborhood at all. And that's the -- boy, I even got an "Amen" from him! Okay, but yeah, no, there is no sense of neighborhood in this city, okay? There's a reputation of neighborhood because it was so strong back in the day. It was *very* strong, okay? Very. But, and that may -- and that reputation has kept Cambridge the way Cambridge is, but you can't just have people finishing high school and doing that. I am talking about trying to do sports, start a sports program, I can't do it because he doesn't -- [to Tevin] do you live in Cambridge?

Tevin Charles [02:20:35] Yeah

DH [02:20:36] Oh, okay. I can't count him, but you just can't find people, second generation or who get older, who can come back and help culture come back and do things because they're gone. They can't stay here. And, yeah, so that's the difference. That's the big -- and it's a passionate difference. I mean, it hurts me to see the city that I grew up in, the city that I revered so much and think so much of not being not even a semblance, not even a whatever of what I grew up in. I mean, there is nothing that I've talked about that you could grab anybody here in the last fifteen years and say, "Do you identify with what this man is saying?" Not at all. Maybe 25 years ago you could have. But yeah, no, since the end of rent control, they sold this city to the developers. They, you know, they sold this city to the devil as far as I'm concerned. Okay.

KB [02:22:01] It's really interesting to hear all of this and also that you commented that pride in the neighborhood is even more than when it was when you were growing up. Do you think that is, like, part of people just trying to sort of hold on to that legacy that's going away?

DH [02:22:17] It's people who don't live here who still come around. Okay, yeah. It's not necessarily the people who are living here who do it, but it's people who might come here to the Margaret Fuller House. It's people who might go over to the Elks Lodge. They just have their -- the friendships that they had. Especially the guys who are in their forties, they've maintained, and they're basically the last generation of the guys who were here and had family, who could establish family, they may have finished high school and were able to stay here after they finished high school, okay? They graduated in, like, 1990, 1991. So, they finished high school, they were still here before the end of rent control. So, they maintained that. They may not be here now, but just being able to get out of school, come back home, be with their friends, do the



things that they did. Those are the guys who have maintained that spirit of the Port. Okay, more than anything else. I don't think they had that any place else. East Cambridge was probably more prideful than us back in the day. If you were from East Cambridge, that was a big deal that -- the guys from East Cambridge. There's nobody from East Cambridge there. I was at a golf tournament yesterday and there were a bunch of North Cambridge guys there, older guys, and they were bragging about, yeah, North Cambridge and the French club and everything else, and "Oh yeah, the French club might have to close down." That's an institution in North Cambridge, the French club is, because most of the guys from North Cambridge were French Canadian, so they had their French Club and now they're talking about everybody's gone, living here, there and everywhere, so they're talking about -- but that's what I mean when I say that the personality of the city is gone. Okay? The Mafia used to be here, the Mafia was -- we were proud of the people over at the Deuce of clubs over here on the corner of Cherry and Main Street because that's where our mafia guys were. Okay [laughs]. The Mafia is gone anyways, just in general, but that was part of the neighborhood. That was a fun part to know that the bookies were there playing your numbers, playing the horses, if you wanted to, you couldn't get to the track, but you still wanted to play, you knew where to go. And, I mean, that sense of community is gone, there's not -- I mean, now you play the regular state numbers, the lottery and everything else but it's just bland. It's just like going from one strip mall to another and seeing McDonald's, Marshalls and Stop and Shop. And then you go to -- you'll have that in Cambridge, and then you go to Stoughton and you see McDonald's, Marshalls, and Stop and Shop and you go to Wakefield and that's what it is. But that's all over, you know, the personality of this city -- and I think I may have told you before, one of the differences, what happened with Cambridge, it was somebody I was saying it to, was -- oh, we were asking why people leave the city and people's wives didn't want them here because they thought that they would be -- it was a bad influence for them. Okay? They thought it was going to be like Chelsea if you stayed here. If they realized that it was going to be what it is, I'm sure they would have said, "Oh, no, no, no, we're staying. We've got this three-family, let's stay here, rent out the top two floors for 2,500 or 3,000 dollars a month," but that's not what happened. But yeah. No, there is no -- what you see now, there is a pride in Cambridge, I don't think they have that pride -- in the Port, where in 1990, that pride was East Cambridge, North Cambridge, the Coast, every place. I don't think that it's any place else. It's, like I said, the kids from around here have built up and just maintained that pride in the Port, and this is the only place it's probably left. I mean,



I never hear -- I know people from all over, but I never hear it expressed the way that I hear the Port. You know, 40 years ago, you wouldn't be here because you'd be here, and then you'd hear somebody say, "Well, East Cambridge, we do this, that and the other in East Cambridge," you know, "why aren't you doing the East End House? Or North Cambridge? How come you're not up at the Gately Center because we do this, that, and the other," or Jefferson Park, or, you know, and that's what it is. The Port, those guys in their forties have maintained their friendship, just maintain that Port pride. Okay? Where those guys in the other places did not, and maybe they did, I'm not living there, but I know when I hear of Cambridge now, I hear more Port than I do Coast. Especially, you never hear of anybody, of them talking about the pride of the Coast where, back in the day, yeah, they had just as much, if not more pride than us. [Tevin talking about pride in the Coast, inaudible] Huh? Oh, are they out there still?

TC [02:28:52] Yeah.

DH [02:28:53] Yeah, but that was, you know, they had just as much, if not more pride than we did down here in the Port, okay? They had things, they were more of a community, they were more middle class than what we were. Okay? But that's lost. Big part of Cambridge is lost, and if they wanted to ever do anything to bring the city back together, forget those people coming from Kansas, Washington, and Cambodia and bring the kids back into their schools so that they'll know each other, so that they can appreciate life a lot more. Okay? You can't have this place here growing when the kids aren't here all the time. Okay, change the subject, I'm going to start --

KB [02:29:53] I have one more question about this, but if you don't want to answer --

DH [02:29:56] Oh no, no, go on. I'm okay.

KB [02:29:57] It's just about Margaret Fuller House specifically. Like, how do you feel like Margaret Fuller House is fitting into the neighborhood as things are changing so much?

DH [02:30:05] Again, it's the same thing. It's hard to fit in when you -- it's had to develop community. It's hard to fit in when the parents don't know each other, you know? When Susie's



going to the Amigos School and Jane is going to the Tobin School and Martha is going to the Fletcher Maynard School and they don't come together, there's no reason [opportunity] for them to know each other, it's really hard to develop and get people to participate the way you would like people to participate. There has to be some kind of bond that brings people together for them to do that. And if it's not there. I mean, back in the day, it was African American. It was the Catholic school. It was the Irish kids or the Italian kids, but those things, whatever it was, brought everybody together. It's great that we have the cosmopolitan, everybody is -- there is no anybody anymore. But for a place like here, and especially if you don't have -- the only, the last bastion that could do that is to have a neighborhood school, to have the Cambridgeport School be kids who live in that neighborhood, because half of the kids came from Columbia Street, which is the Cambridgeport School. It used to be the Fletcher School. Or the kids from over here, the Roberts School and the people knowing each other, and the people being able to say to each other, "Hey, we should have these programs for our kids. What can we do to have these programs?" Margaret Fuller, I'm sure they would be glad if people came to them and knocked on their door and said, "Hey, can we do these programs? Can we do this, that or the other?" They would be *more* than happy. It's harder -- it's easier for people to come in and you give them programs than for people to go out and say, "Hey, you want these programs?" Okay? Because when you go out and you say, "Do you want these programs?" then people will put their feet back and say, "Yeah, take my kids. I'll see you later," you know? And it's if parents aren't participating the way that parents should participate, you're not going to get that. Even if the parents are those guys who are running the clubs, at least they're parents interacting with young kids, but when you don't have that bond for people to want to join, or to do something, or to ask, Okay, when we had those family trips, I didn't go to them and say, "Hey, do you want to have these family trips on Sunday?" The parents came to me and said, "Look, we're not doing anything on Sunday. Can you get us busses so that we can go to these state parks on Sundays and get our kids out of the city?" And that's what it is. That could never happen now because I'd be willing to bet that you could go into the different hallways and nobody would know each other. They'll know each other if, say it's two Ethiopian families or two Spanish families, okay, or two Black families. Then they might get to know each other, but with everybody's kids going someplace else, they -- it's less likely for them to know that, and even in those relationships, the fact that the kids are going to different schools changes the dynamic of working together. Okay.



So, I don't know if that's what you wanted to hear, but -- if that's what you want to be here, then.

KB [02:34:12] I want to hear whatever you have to say [laughter] but I think that's pretty much the end of my questions. Do you have anything else you want to say before we wrap up?

DH [02:34:24] Yeah, I thought this is about the Margaret Fuller. I thought there was going to be [inaudible].

KB [02:34:27] Oh, no not -- I mean, we got a lot of good memories that you have of Margaret Fuller House. But, yeah, it is interesting to kind of talk about what is going to happen to Margaret Fuller House, because it seems like -- I don't know. I know that some of the people that they serve now don't live in Cambridge, and it just seems like it's changed a lot.

DH [02:34:47] And that probably people who grew up around here who have a love for the Marga, for the Port, for their neighborhood and want to keep their kids here. I coached Little League a couple of years ago, and this is after rent control. This is -- I just stopped, like, four or five years ago, and the interesting dynamic there was the kids who played, their parents were from Cambridge. They may have been living in Chelmsford, Somerville. Revere, but they brought their kids here. There were very few kids from Cambridge playing. Very few kids. Okay, and that's probably what's happening here at the Margaret Fuller House. A lot of the people who --

KB [02:35:51] Tevin, I was just going to ask before we finish if you have any questions or comments about --.

TC [02:35:51] Yeah, so we have, like, listening to your story it's kind of similar to me growing up in a sense. I was wandering and doing my own thing in situations. But I was wondering, what was Columbia Park when you were there, like, did the Margaret Fuller House use Columbia Park for any events like [Port] Pride Day that we have now?

DH [02:36:11] Where is Columbia Park?



TC [02:36:19] Clement Morgan Park, that's what they call it.

DH [02:36:19] That wasn't a park. That was -- right here when you come in from Pine Street, was just a big open field, and on Columbia Street, there were houses there. So, there was no park. I remember there on the corner there was a motorcycle shop. But, yeah, that park wasn't here. That park probably came around 1990. Yeah. So, it wasn't around when I was growing up. So, there was nothing there. Yeah.

TC [02:37:16] What struck me too was, I didn't know Cambridge had two high schools. It had *three*. I didn't know that, I feel like that's a big thing in the city where there's only one high school, so there's less opportunities for kids. Kind of explain how having multiple high schools --

DH [02:37:17] Cambridge had five high schools counting -- they had St. Mary's High School. They had St. John's, which is now -- used to be North Cambridge Catholic, Matignon, they had Rindge and they had Latin.

TC [02:37:34] Matignon's a part of Cambridge?

DH [02:37:34] Matignon is in Cambridge, yes. Matignon is on the last street of Cambridge, but it's in Cambridge, in North Cambridge. Yeah. The differences -- the schools were right next to each other. You know where Rindge is now, and you know where the gym is now, the tennis court.

TC [02:37:54] Yeah.

DH [02:37:55] Okay. Where the tennis court is and the library, that used to be Cambridge Latin. So that was a building all of itself, a school all of itself, and Rindge was where Rindge is.

TC [02:38:08] That's great.



DH [02:38:09] And, but Rindge was an all-boys school and Latin was coed. Okay. In Rindge it was basically like R.S.T.A. You learn the trades, okay, you learn -- they focused on math, science and the trades, okay, so you could come out and everybody was introduced to everything. So, my first year I might have my history, math, science, but then we would also have where we worked on machines. They used to have plastic machines, you did carpentry, you did auto mechanics. So, I mean, I was -- not that I was good with everything, but I have a good idea of how all of that stuff works, okay, I was introduced to that. They used to have what they would call mechanical drawing, and mechanical drawing was what an engineer would have to know. Okay, so they would give me something where I would have to design this room and there are some things in this room you can see, and that would be a straight line, but if there was something that you couldn't see, trying to see something, what you couldn't see would be a dotted line, and that just means that there's something there, but you can't see it. Okay, so it was like an introduction. It was a technical school. It was an introduction to engineering, the sciences, manual labor, auto mechanic, all of that stuff. A lot of kids -- I was in the college course, so it was a -- they had the college prep program also. I mean, college prep just meant that we took harder classes or more, I mean, I took algebra, geometry. Yeah, basically, I was in that honors class group. They wouldn't call it honors but the class I was in was the honors group. That was -- so, yeah, so that's what the big difference was, okay, and like I said, the other difference was that you were in a school where kids could act like knuckleheads, and it's only the teachers. You didn't worry about girls looking at you. Now, once we got out of school, the girls from Latin liked the boys from Rindge, okay? The boys from Latin would go there because they said, "Oh yeah, the girls are there. The girls are there." But, guess what? The girls didn't want them [laughter]. They used to get mad because all the girls wanted to, you know, they knew them, and there were so many girls, they got theirs too, but the girls liked the boys from Rindge, not seeing them every day. They just had their perception of who we were, okay? And our perception was a little bit cooler than the kids that they saw every day walking through the school, okay? And the Rindge kids had the reputation of being tougher kids and the whole nine yards. But, so we would be on the bus together, going up to school from down here, we'd get off the same place, go to Angelo's, get kicked out of Angelo's the same way that they're doing now, so everything was -- it was similar in that way. It was just different in there being two schools. And, like I said, we got a chance to grow up a lot more than what they do now with the two schools, okay? By the -- you were a knucklehead when you were a freshman halfway through



your sophomore year, at some point, the light went off and you became a lot more responsible. So by the time you were a senior you acted like a senior, but you weren't, again, you weren't worried about doing things -- I mean, when we went to Angelo's, it's not like the girls were over there because they weren't getting out the same way the kids and Rindge were, it was a different dynamic of a school where boys, they let boys be boys a lot more and they could allow the boys to be boys a lot more. Not to say that they weren't doing everything, but the girls were not -- they probably were not as adventurous because those boys weren't in the school with them. Okay, now that everybody is in the school together, if you had a girlfriend, you'd say, "Hey, meet me at Angelo's at 11:15," and even though she knows she shouldn't be doing it, she'd be sitting there saying, "Oh, well," you know, "he wants me to meet here, so I'm going to have to take this chance and sneak out of school." We didn't have, that stuff wasn't happening, so.

TC [02:43:35] That started in, like, seventh grade for me.

DH [02:43:35] Oh, okay, oh you -- ahhh [laughter]. I got my first kiss at 35. I'm only kidding [laughter]. I'm only kidding. Kate, I'm only kidding [background talking, laughter]. But yeah, so that's the biggest difference between the two is that, yeah, the whole dynamic of the high school was just so different. And to be honest with you, they should promote R.S.T.A. a lot more. Okay, R.S.T.A. should be that thing that -- everybody, when they come out of school, should know how to handle the -- I mean, at that time, and those were the old days, all the, and you don't need it anymore, but they had Home Ec. in the high school, so they -- at Cambridge Latin. So, I mean, back then everybody, they had the typing classes because people were secretaries. There was -- those days are over, okay? I don't know what else they taught in Home Ec, but they taught them skills, yeah, how to sew. I mean, I know that that might be a thing, but damn, they need tailors nowadays. You can't find the tailor. Okay [laughs], so people need stuff like that even these days, okay? When I'm going to a -- when I want to get my stuff done, I have to go in Boston to get my suits altered because they don't have tailors like they did. But they worked on a lot of life skills a lot more, okay? There were probably tougher, you know, we didn't have to worry about MCAS and stuff. So, yeah, I read Hamlet and Macbeth and Tale of Two Cities and all of those books because that's what we had to do, where now, half of the time, they're probably saying, "Okay, take your book out, because we think that they're going to talk to you about whatever is going to be on this test." And it takes away from it because I got to



open my mind a lot more. But, yeah, the difference between the two, in having the two schools and the atmosphere, I mean, Rindge played Latin on Thanksgiving.

TC [02:46:12] I would love to see Rindge just have two high schools right now. Just have -- whoever doesn't make one team could make the other team and that would be beautiful right now.

DH [02:46:22] Yeah. Yeah. Well, 1963, they had -- St. Mary's was Division III champion. Okay, Cambridge Latin went to the Division I finals. Rindge won Division II, because we were a smaller school. They won Division II. St Mary's won Division III, Matignon won Division IV, in basketball.

TC [02:46:50] That's why they need Cambridge [laughs].

DH [02:46:52] Okay. That was how it was in 1973. That's when my brother graduated. He was on the state championship team. Okay, Latin had this kid, Pat Ryan, they called the Rifle Man, and he played big time. He's probably a coach in Sweden right now, but yeah. You know. Huh? [background talking, inaudible]. He was the Rifle Man. He was, he used to -- he didn't believe in passing [laughter]. Okay? Passing was not his forte [laughter]. Okay, but I mean, we all played in the summer league with each other. They used to have the men's summer league, so we would be doing all that.

TC [02:47:37] [inaudible] Summer leagues and stuff.

DH [02:47:37] That's high school, though.

TC [02:47:39] Yeah.

DH [02:47:40] They don't have the men's league. They used to have a men's league. [background talking, inaudible] and you know what it is? In those days, like I told you, they had the different clubs and bars and everything. They sponsored them. So the Deuce of Clubs would sponsor a team, Third Street Café would sponsor a men's team, but people would be,



you'd go in there and they'd say, "Oh yeah, this is our neighborhood team." We might have two or three from a neighborhood. Okay, and you would do that. The Ebony Club and Candlelight, they have the different bars. Those are gone. How many bars are there? I mean, and I guess it's good people aren't drinking now, but how many neighborhood bars? Growing up, we had the Original, which was over here, where the -- what's the name of that place is -- where Bertucci's is, across the street we had the Deuce of Clubs. That was the Mafia place. We had [background talking] huh? On Columbia Street, we had this place that was like a little cowboy saloon that used to have the dirt on the floor, and I used -- and they had the saloon doors. And I used to, oh man, I was twelve years old. I said, "When I get 21, I'm going in there [laughter]. I'm partying in that bad boy." But they had bars and that's what it was. They had people, and now I'm talking adults, they just had places where people went and congregated and hung out.

TC [02:49:19] Were those businesses more Black-owned?

DH [02:49:19] Nope, no, no. This was, no, it was all white owned. I just found out yesterday that the Original, which was on this side where Bertucci's is, was a Greek owned place. At the golf tournament I was at I was talking to somebody and he said, "Yeah, the Greeks owned that," and the Italians owned the other place and Irish owned the place on the corner of Portland and Harvard. I remember that because that was another crazy place. But no, Blacks didn't -- the Black people owned, had The Ebony. Did you --.

TC [02:49:54] I've never even heard of that.

DH [02:49:55] Where did you grow up?

TC [02:49:59] I live right on Brookline Street.

DH [02:49:59] Okay, the Ebony just closed up maybe a half dozen years ago? That was up the Coast.

TC [02:50:04] Oh, you're talking about right by -- on Western Ave?



DH [02:50:06] Yeah.

TC [02:50:08] Okay, now I know what you're talking about.

DH [02:50:10] Okay, yeah.

TC [02:50:10] They just opened up something else there though. It's, like, a jazz club or something.

DH [02:50:14] Well, there's Western Front, they had the Western Front, which was on the corner of Western Ave and Putnam Ave. That was Black-owned, that was Gilmore. Gilmore [background talking, inaudible], oh, okay [laughter]. And then they had the Ebony Club, which was closer, coming towards Central Square. They had the Candlelight which was over there where the pizza shop is on Howard Street. They had Jim Brown's, which was at the opening going into the Moore Center. So, they had Godey's, which was further down, so they had like five places that were owned by Black people, but they were all up the Coast. Okay.

KB [02:51:02] You know that place that's on Putnam Ave across from Whole Foods, and half of it is a pizza place and --.

DH [02:51:02] Riverside?

KB [02:51:05] Yeah. Is that pretty old?

DH [02:51:05] Yeah, Riverside's been there, that's been there for a long time. But across from Riverside, directly across from where the store was, was a bar, club called Max's. And Max's was where the hippies, basically, I won't say hippies, but it was a nice old-time place. They used to have -- Central Square was partying, because on Norfolk Street, where the parking lot is, where Santana Bank is, there used to be -- what did we used to call those places? Not folk music, but, you know. I can't remember what we called it, but, yeah. This was a big party, big party time. I mean, it still is with the -- what's the name of the place? Middle East, and Rendezvous, and different places. But yeah, no, we had our share of clubs and different things



that we did back in the day. But yeah, down here was predominantly, was white owned. Up the Coast was Black-owned. French Canadians had North Cambridge. They still have Paddy's, I don't know if you know where Paddy's is on Walden Street. That's probably the last one. They still have the French Club. French Club, you're supposed to know somebody to get in there. Okay. But that's right next to Frank's Steakhouse, right above Frank's Steakhouse, if you know where Frank's is up in North Cambridge. But yeah, but all of those places sponsored sports teams, whether they were softball, or basketball or whatever you were doing, so they would have men's adult league sponsored by these people. And, I mean, unfortunately, they don't even have the men living in the city to have the leagues anymore [laughs]. Okay, so you don't even have to worry about that. But that was how the communities went. That's how the communities existed with the bars in the neighborhood, different neighborhood people, even if it was Paul's Sub sponsoring.

TC [02:53:34] I miss Paul's.

DH [02:53:34] Huh?

TC [02:53:34] I miss Paul's.

DH [02:53:34] Yeah. I miss Paul's too. But yeah, even they sponsored teams back in the day, but that's just how it was. And it would -- and some things were adults and some -- Paul's would probably be more sponsoring kids' programs than he would -- the bars were the ones where the guys could come after the game. And yeah.

TC [02:53:59] [Unclear, laughter]. There was just one last thing that caught my ear. Strawberry Hill. Explain, how did you get that name, and why was it named Strawberry Hill in West Cambridge?

DH [02:54:08] I don't know how it got named, but Strawberry Hill is Little Italy. They have Strawberry Hill in Little Italy and that's Corcoran Park. You know the Corcoran Park neighborhood?



TC [02:54:20] Yeah.

DH [02:54:22] Yeah, that's -- I don't know why it's Strawberry Hill. You'd have to ask somebody from there.

TC [02:54:28] Yeah that's [inaudible].

DH [02:54:28] Have you ever heard of it before?

TC [02:54:30] Yeah, that's what I'm saying. That's the first time I'm hearing it. I'm like, Strawberry Hill?

DH [02:54:32] Oh, yeah, that's Corcoran, that's that whole Corcoran Park area. Okay. I don't know, I think it's a city designation. And then whereas the people came -- there's a lot of Italians there. So, they also call it Little Italy. Okay, yeah. So it's, yeah, it's a combination of the two. It's no more, it's not, you know, it's just a regular Cambridge neighborhood now. But yeah, it's -- I think it was a -- Strawberry Hill may have been a designation that the city gave it, and then as people came and moved in, they just started calling it Little --.

TC [02:55:19] To be honest, that's even better if the city named it Strawberry Hill.

DH [02:55:19] Oh. Well, this neighborhood, the city want -- and everybody else started calling it Area 4.

TC [02:55:26] Yeah.

DH [02:55:26] Okay, Area 4 came in the 60s and they had this program called Model Cities and Model Cities was a program that was part of the Poverty -- what is that? The War on Poverty or whatever you want to call it, and Lyndon Johnson was the president, and they just designated different areas. So, every area in the city had a number. Okay, East Cambridge was Area 1. I know around the Donnelly Field, Harrington School, whatever the school is there now. The



middle school. Roosevelt Towers, East Cam -- well, right down the street. That was Area 3, we were Area 4.

TC [02:56:19] Central was what, like 7?

DH [02:56:19] I think they were 6 or 7, the Coast was either -- I think one part, Cambridgeport was 6 and the Coast was 7, or 5 and 6. But yeah, so they had different things, but that's when they, instead of us being the Port, they were saying, "Oh yeah, Area 4, Area --," so if you saw a lot of different Area 4 things, we were also Area 4, and it's just been in the last couple of years -- more than the last couple -- that we started reclaiming the Port, because we were always Port boys. We even had the Port whistle [does that Port whistle, laughter]. Okay? We even had a Port whistle [laughter]. If you were doing something and people wanted to get to you, you would -- I can't whistle anymore, but it was [does the Port whistle]. Okay. That's the Port -- if you do that and you're around a lot of older guys, if you're at a Cambridge game, you'll see a lot of heads going like that. "Who's that? Who's that?"

TC [02:57:22] I'm going to try that on Selvin.

DH [02:57:22] Huh?

TC [02:57:24] I'm going to try that one with Selvin.

DH [02:57:24] Oh, yeah. I don't know if Selvin knows it. I know we did it when we were little. Selvin would probably still know it. I'll be surprised if Selvin didn't know that. So. But yeah, so but yeah, no, there were quite a few high schools in the city. Selvin was on a basketball team. If they didn't win the state, they came close.

TC [02:57:49] [inaudible].

DH [02:57:50] Yeah, yeah, yeah. And he played at St Mary's. So, you knew there was a St Mary's?



TC [02:57:55] Yeah, that's what I'm saying, I know St Mary's. I just didn't -- I thought that was, like, outside of Cambridge. I didn't know, I thought that was considered suburbs, like Arlington.

DH [02:58:04] Oh, no, Saint -- you know where St. Mary's High School was?

TC [02:58:07] Wasn't that --.

DH [02:58:08] Yeah, where the charter school is OK.

TC [02:58:15] Yeah. My brother went there, he went to [inaudible] and then he went to St. Mary's

DH [02:58:18] Okay

KB [02:59:22] I have to head into work for a bit, but if you guys want to keep talking that's totally cool.

DH [02:58:23] Yeah, no, no, no.

End of Interview

Addendum

by Donnie Harding, for additional information and clarity, November 2020

They were easy jobs. My first job coming out of college was with the City of Cambridge. It was called the Youth Enrichment Program. I worked with teenagers in North Cambridge's Jefferson Park Housing Development. My job was to encourage the teens to be productive in their activities. To try to do better in school, look for work, and just stay out of trouble. The kids who



just wanted easy encouragement I worked with. The teens I was encouraged to work with avoided me at all costs.

After six months, a job as Coordinator of the Roberts School in the Community Schools Department opened up. The Community Schools was an afterschool program the City had in each of the fourteen elementary schools in the city. The program was designed such that each community had a council, and the programs were to suit the needs of each community.

Roberts School had many needs. Many of the programs were in existence from the previous coordinator Howard Hughes. They were Summer Family Outings to State Beaches, and a Community Radio Station. Those programs were maintained, but when I became coordinator, I put my focus on Youth Development.

I was born and raised in the Roberts School neighborhood (the Port) and knew my influence would be accepted a lot faster. It was my philosophy that kids work with the fundamentals of whatever they were doing. My first goal was to get them to play board games and/or card games. I wanted them to have some positive activities to do when away from the school in their spare time. They were taught Chess, Checkers, Dominoes, as well as Whist and Poker card games without the money.

We worked with them doing homework if requested, and just talked about life in general. I was there with an assistant coordinator. There were two that I worked with: Joanie Geltman and Hazel Conway. They were both excellent working with the girls and the younger kids. But what attracted the boys and girls of all ages to come around was basketball. We had a tiny gym, so the boys and girls had to play together. The basketball was always organized. If I saw them clowning around, I would end the game and have them do something else. The coed basketball was good for the girls as many of them played for Cambridge's last state championship girls basketball team.

The boys were a little different. Our neighborhood team competed very strongly with the high school team led by Pat Ewing. In fact, we could beat them before Pat became a part of the team. (Two kids were on that team). Unfortunately many of the kids ended up going to jail instead of



playing, but they were legitimately outstanding ballplayers. Problem was that life in the late 1970s early '80s was a lot different. The kids were a lot more aggressive and got into a lot of different things.

There were many who did good, though. In fact if I could do it all over again, I would focus more on the kids living on the fence, but the fence for doing good. I failed the kids who went to UMass Boston who perhaps could have gone to Tufts, or the kid who went to Tufts who was a candidate for Harvard. Many of those kids remind me of that when I see them. They'll say, "You know if you had spent more time with us than you did with so-and-so life could have been a lot different." But the squeaky wheel gets the oil, and I was just trying to keep them out of jail.

In the end that just didn't happen.

We also had joint summer programs with the Community Art Center and the Margaret Fuller House. This was primarily for the elementary school kids. We would do art at the Art Center. At the Margaret Fuller House, we had woodworking and home economic activities. The school was the recreational center. We would take them to Sennott Park with more running room, or they had swimming lessons at the Gold Star Pool in East Cambridge.

Sundays in the summer were family outing days. Any family in the community could get on the bus to go to a designated state park for the day. It had to be families with children. Parents packed lunches and all were free to run, romp, and swim as they pleased.

Then there was the radio station WRCS (Roberts Community School). The primary reason for the radio station was to give the community their own musical pleasure and to encourage community members to get an FCC license. The station was based in the Margaret Fuller basement. The director of the radio station, Robert Perkins, was a professor at Graham Junior College in Boston. To get the license he had instruction on the basics of radio, TV and other FCC components. The classes were held at the MFH, but the test was at a downtown Boston location.

WRCS was a local station. The DJs played jazz, R and B, and talk shows, lots of talk shows. Many controversial people came from Boston to participate in the program. Much of the



conversation was about race. They would discuss issues from 1619 to the present (1978), African American equality issues, lack of jobs. There was some race baiting that irritated many of the parents whose kids were being influenced by the conversation. They were older guys (much older than me), many of whom had an agenda and found a platform to get it out. It got me called into my boss's office a few times and when I left the job for graduate school the program was ended, and the equipment was sent to the high school for their opportunity to start one.

In 1978, I left Community Schools to go to graduate business school at Northeastern. The timing was terrible because my daughter was born just before graduate school began. I stayed only one year as the family finances became a priority. I went to work for AT&T as a service operator. Customer service operator (411). It was an interesting job, hectic. Every half hour you were challenged on how many calls you took. Customers had to get their information and get off. The beginning was tough, but it became a competitive challenge once I got the hang of it.

I left the phone company after two years. I went to the MBTA, working in the affirmative action office as an A/A officer. My primary responsibility was to ensure minority/women businesses were getting contracts (mostly as subcontractors) and minority/women were getting hired on construction jobs.

I first would participate in the consultant selection committee meetings to notify the consulting team of the minority requirements. Then when the construction bids were read, I would study the contractors' minority participation goals. If the goals weren't met, the contractor would not be awarded the job. (The second-place bidder was more aggressive than I to see the minority participation section.) Minority contractors had to be certified with either the State or the federal government. I would meet with the contractors to determine their legitimacy. In the 1980s many businesses were just starting out, so not everybody who was certified was legitimate. But they were hustling so I gave most the benefit of the doubt, hoping with time they would have the courage to go out on their own. Many did, one person was so egregious that he ended up going to jail.

After three years I left to work with a private consulting firm. A great experience learning the federal game from the other side. It was Kendall Sq. Consulting Group. We had a contract with



the federal government to make sure minority/women businesses in New England were getting contracts with the Department of Transportation agencies. Great experience teaching agencies from the entire region how to organize minority programs, but after getting caught in a snowstorm on my way from Vermont I heeded the call from my boss in the A/A department and returned (to a much higher salary) to the MBTA.

Five years later I applied and got a promotion to the construction department, hiring, training, Workman's' Comp disciplining, etc. Employees had to be certified and have licenses for many parts of the job. It was my job to make sure the department was running efficiently.

From there after 25 years, I retired. I started my own construction company. It was started because a former contractor was desperately trying to find a contractor for the telephone company for whom he had previously worked. To work for them I had to be a union outfit. Unfortunately for me the local union was not happy with my mentor ("You're with this guy? We're not giving you a chance.") in the business and would not grant me union status, thus disallowing me from working with the phone company.

I persisted on and kept the company going. Three jobs were completed successfully, but the first job was bid to make me a loser from the start. It was a going-away present from my mentor bid at cost. That meant that I was getting money to buy the products I needed to do the job but nothing for wages or profit. I had a great construction team, but when my accountant asked your property or your business, the property won out.

I grew up in this neighborhood, the Port. The Port to me was Utopia. It was totally integrated at that time. Integrated during the baby boom years. Quite unique. The interesting part is that the housing projects were mostly white and the other streets, Washington, Pine, Suffolk, Worcester were predominately Black. The parents of the kids living in the projects were veterans of World War II. We all got along. It's funny to say, but I was not conscious of race until after high school. When I got to college, I had a white (Jewish) roommate. We would often hang out together with his friends. My Black friends always asked, "Why you hanging out with them?" I'd ask, "What's wrong with him?" I was often called the Black Hippie because of the association. I was



comfortable with whomever I was with. Others had the problem. (My naivety was really big. I asked my roommate what was Jewish?)

Growing up, in my younger years I came to the Margaret Fuller House. This is where everything was happening. It was very organized. Youth programs, teen programs, adult programs. Parents were invested to have activities for their kids.

I lived on Windsor Street. My grandparents were upstairs, my great grandfather lived next door. I had an aunt and uncle who passed away at a young age, so my grandmother was raising nine children. My parents, two brothers and I lived downstairs. There was never a dull moment. Always had someone to talk with, fight with.

When I was young my closest cousin was Chucky (Pina, sisters Dianne, June and Vivian). Chucky was a legend in the neighborhood. We were a month apart in age and until the age of six we did almost everything together. When we began school, we went separate ways when outside the house. When home, until fourteen I would spend many nights just me and him playing. When the older boys came home, there was a boys' room and a girls' room, they would be upset at the condition of the room, yelling "What happened to this room?" Punching us to clean the room. When I could make my getaway, I went home downstairs, but Chucky would have to finish. Chucky was an enigma, considered a bully by some and flamboyant by others. Often, I would be in other neighborhoods and I'd say Chucky was my cousin. I'd become an instant celebrity. "Chucky's your cousin?" "He's a bad dude." In discussing the Margaret Fuller House in the late '60s he is probably on every third person's lips. He really was no joke!

The other boy cousin's last name was Hewitt. (Sisters Adelaide and Hilda) Sonny was a track star in the late 50s. George was a football star (had the Rindge Tech record for most touchdowns in a game and season for years). He and brother Bill were on the State champion basketball team in 1962.

Bill played professional basketball. He was drafted by the Los Angeles Lakers in the '67/'68 draft. He was a legitimately good player. He got traded to Detroit, but the coach who wanted



him got fired and he became an also-ran. The politics of the league stopped his potential. They were my role models and were all fixtures at the Margaret Fuller House.

End of Addendum

This interview is part of “Sweet Souls, Voices from the Margaret Fuller Neighborhood House in Cambridge,” an oral history project of the Cambridge Historical Society, in partnership with the Margaret Fuller Neighborhood House and The Loop Lab. This project was funded in part by Mass Humanities, which receives support from the Massachusetts Cultural Council and is an affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities.