

Interview Log

Interviewee: Ray Langston
Jean Langston
Carol Foster Sydney
John Leek
N t^{Spc} +4w Langston

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Ceres Bainbridge

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Corresponding Photography Log #:

Comments: The tape is clear, but it is sometimes quite difficult to identify the speakers.

BEGIN SIDE A

K.F.: Okay.

R.L.: My name is Raymond Langston, and I'm the current Mayor of Highland Beach.

K.F.: Okay.

J.L.: I'm Jean Langston, Director of the Frederick Douglas Museum and Cultural Center.

K.F.: All right.

J.LEEK: I'm John Leek, a resident of Highland Beach.

C. S.: Carol Foster Sydney, a resident of Venice Beach.

K.F.: Well let me ask all of you when you first came to Highland Beach or Venice Beach.

R.L.: Want to start with me? I came as a teenager, I mean we came much earlier, but I really remember, my earliest real memories of Highland Beach were, I guess, 12, 13 years old. Somewhere in that neighborhood, those years. And from then till today, I obviously have fond memories.

K.F.: And what decade was this, Mr. Langston?

R.L.: Decade?

K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).

(Laughter.)

R.L.: We're talking 1950's. In the 1950's.

K.F.: All right. Ms. Langston?

J.L.: I started coming around 1959, 1960.

K.F.: Okay. As a teenager then too?

J.L.: I guess late teens.

J.LEEK: I came in 1928 in my mother's womb. I was born in August, and she came down for the summer. So I've been here since birth. (Laughter.)

K.F.: Well that leads me to another question then. Did they have midwives that would come around?

J.LEEK: No, I was born in Washington, she went back to Washington, and I was born there.

K.F.: Okay.

C. S.: My earliest recollection is around the age of six, we came down for the summers, and that would've been in the mid-1930's.

K.F.: Okay. Well let me start with John and Carol then. Can you tell me what Highland Beach was like in the 30's?

J.LEEK: Go ahead, Carol.

(Laughter.)

C. S.: Well I think Highland Beach, to the mothers who came down with their children, was a very safe place to bring children. The bay at that time was very clean, and has always been very shallow, and so mothers could feel free about bringing children down or letting the children go down to the beach and play and not be fearful that they would drown themselves, because you could walk out a great distance, and the water was just up to your waist. And it was a very, very safe place. And this is where we spent our

summers, got to know people. John and I were children, we played together, our families, and I think it was just considered a safe, lovely escape from the heat of Washington, D.C.

K.F.: And that's where you were coming from, was D.C.?

C. S.: Yes. Uh-huh (Affirmative).

K.F.: Okay. And what was D.C. like at that time?

C. S.: Hot and segregated.

K.F.: Okay. And, John?

J.LEEK: Well my grandfather came down and bought in 1919, so my family's been around for quite a while. I lived over in Venice Beach at first because my father built his house in Venice Beach, and my grandfather's house is in Highland Beach, but they were almost indistinguishable, because there's only - there was no marker to say this is Highland, this is Venice. It was all one big community. And so every time we got out of school, and my mother was a teacher, and many of the ladies were teachers, and when school let out, the kids and mothers came down, and we were free to run around. The thing that was most traumatic was after Labor Day when we had to put our shoes on and go back up to town to school. And, oh, that was a trauma because my feet had been bare all summer (Laughter), and here I'm trying to squeeze back into shoes. So to me, it was a freedom that then I had to go back into the closet, which was Washington, back into an enclosed area, go to school. And most of my memories are in the summer, because that was my enjoyable time.

K.F.: Right, right. That's a good question. How did you get here at that time?

J.LEEK: How did we come time?

K.F.: I don't even know what the roads were at that time.

J.LEEK: Oh, we'd come down, my father had an old Buick. It was a new Buick, but it was an old car. And so we would come down and essentially stay the summer, my mother, but my father had to go back to work, so many of the men were back in town while the mothers were with their children, and they stayed most of the time. They would go up to town once in a while, get the mail, do a few things they had to do in town, but basically, they spent the whole summer down here.

C.B.: Did you have a house?

J.LEEK: Yes, we had a house my father built in 1932 over in Venice Beach, and it was right on the bay, facing the bay. It was - later, the erosion eroded the beach to the point where it was right up to the front steps. So my mother had to move the house back to another lot which was back in further inland. But Venice Beach was a farm when Highland Beach was founded in the late 1800's, and in 1919, my grandfather came down, and his house is in Highland Beach, but he went next door, which was a farm, 13 acres, bought that, subdivided it and called it Venice Beach. So he was the founder of Venice Beach. And my father got several lots there built in '32, and that was where we lived, my grandparents' house was here in Highland Beach, my father and mother's house was over in Venice Beach.

K.F.: Well let me ask you guys, I love the contrast of being here in the summer and then having to go back to segregated D.C. for winter and school year. Now did you know people in D.C.? Would you see each other in D.C. when you were there? Did these relationships continue when you had to go back to D.C., or were they strictly here at the beach?

J.LEEK: Well the school children, as children -

C. S.: It was the same schools.

J.LEEK: Yeah, we would see them the next term. Travel in the same social circles.

C. S.: Yeah, yeah.

K.F.: *Yeah. But I was just wondering if S.: If that continued.*

K.F.: -- the social circle continued in Washington.

C. S.: Not to the extent that it existed here at the beach, I would think. And you see I said the beach. We never distinguished between Highland Beach and Venice Beach. This was the beach. And I can tell you as a child, I didn't even know there was such a place as Venice Beach. We came to Highland Beach, or the beach. And that was the only way we identified it.

C.B.: Did you have brothers and sisters? Were you a big family?

C. S.: Yeah, there were four of us, and I was the baby. So when I was - I was around six when I first remember coming here, my brother, older brother would've been around 14, he was already a teenager. But he loved it. He was a great crabber with his crab net down at the beach. But the others of us, I just remember spending the days on the beach, or running up and down the streets. And there were not many cars, and the few people who had bicycles were riding those, but there were so few cars down here that when my father came down on Friday evening, and we were staying in your grandfather's house that summer, we could hear the motor of my father's car, we knew it, and we could identify it, and we'd go running up the road to the little entrance, which nobody else could see but the people who lived here because there were no signs, it was not a paved road. And that was a great experience to know that Friday'd come, daddy came with the food and the supplies for the coming week, and it was very peaceful and lovely.

K.F.: That's great. While you all are talking about 1932, and that date always makes me think of the 1933 storm. Were you all, was the beach affected by that at all?

J.LEEK: I can remember as a child the house being right down by the bay. I think it was a '38 storm that I recall. At that time, the whole house was surrounded by water, and my aunt, who lived up the road in her house, came down in her car, and they waded, carried me out and waded through the water and to her car, and she drove us and we stayed at her house. But I recall, I wanted to go up on the - we had an upstairs attic, and I went up and looked out the window and see the water around. I wanted to climb on the roof and dive into the water. (Laughter.) That was a strange thing. (Laughter.)

K.F.: Yeah. Kids. (Laughter.) How about you, Carol? Do you remember that storm?

C. S.: Well the '38 storm, I know I was not here. That was the first year I went away to a summer camp in Massachusetts. And we ran into the storm there, and I remember my father having to pull over to the side of the road at a - they didn't have motels. They called them tourist cabins, and we sought shelter. And so I was not here at that time of the storm, but I remember it.

K.F.: That '38 storm really hit New England hard.

C.S.: Yes, yeah. Oh, yeah.

K.F.: And did you make it to summer camp?

C. S.: We made it, yes, made it to summer camp. And I spent my summers up there.

K.F.: And now was that - would that be all summer?

C. S.: No. A month. For one month.

K.F.: And then you're back -

C.S.: Then you're back down here. Yeah. Yeah.

K.F.: Okay. I have to ask. How was summer camp different than the beach?

C. S.: Well, it was structured. You know, it was up in the morning with the bugle call and around the flag pole, and running around, and saluting the flag, and everything regimented. But I loved it. It was great fun, great experience. And it was a camp that was founded for African American children from the Springfield, Massachusetts area. But again, because we didn't have the options of going anywhere we wanted to, people from all over the country went to that camp, and it still exists today after - this is their 80^t year. I compare it with Highland Beach in the sense that this beach was founded because people were turned away from Bay Ridge, and the beach was founded to serve the people who didn't have options of going anywhere they wanted. And you talked about the beaches that have - or the resorts that don't exist. I think that as time went on and people did have options, people didn't continue to go. There was a period here when people weren't coming to the beach as often because you can go anywhere now. Segregation had ended, integration had begun, and there was this little period when people stopped. But now people have turned -- children of people who were here, grandchildren of people who were here are seeing what a wonderful place this has always been. And they're coming back. People are restoring families' houses, they're building houses, they want to come back to the beach. And I think it's beautiful to see that happen, to see this community remain as strong as it was 60 years ago.

C.B.: Is Highland Beach still predominantly African American, or entirely? Or the new people, are they mixed?

J.LEEK: Predominantly still African American. But, yeah, there are interracial marriages, and there are also whites who have bought into Highland Beach. The thing that you have to think about in that regard is that 80 percent of the properties, the houses in Highland Beach are still in the hands of relatives or very close friends of the original owners. So there is very little opportunity for someone who is not related to somebody in Highland Beach to acquire a piece of property here. There's very little property that's left that can be built upon to be developed. We have our own planning and zoning law here, which is much stricter than the states or Anne Arundel County. You have to have two lots to build a single house in Highland Beach. And that's the reason once you get off of Bay Highland Drive and come through the gate, you see large spaces between each house, and that's the reason why, as opposed to outside the community where they are building right next to each other.

C.B.: And when did that ordinance become -

J.LEEK: We were incorporated in 1922. It wasn't until 19 -- I want to say sometime in the late 60's that we took over our own planning and zoning. Prior to that time, people were restricted to building summer homes who could afford them. And as you can imagine in those early days, I mean we're talking less than 30 years after slavery, there were only so many African Americans who could afford a summer home. So that kind of restricted the number of the amount of building that was going on at that time.

C.B.: So by putting them on double lots, do you feel that that retains the character that it was originally -

J.LEEK: Yes. That was the purpose of the zoning ordinance was to maintain the character of the community. From a historical standpoint, we wanted Highland Beach to remain as it had as close as we could. And that holds true right till today.

C.B.: Does that keep it elitist?

J.LEEK: Elitist in the sense that the residents have precedent over anything and everybody else. It is elitist, whether you design it to be or not by virtue of the fact that there are no public accommodations. There are no public facilities in Highland Beach. There are no stores. We have no on-street parking. Even the residents are not allowed to park on the street. They have to park on their own property. So I mean, I guess in that sense, you do sort of restrict public access. But having said that, we've had as many as 3,000 people here to visit this house, to visit the beach, to visit the community. And you can see by all of the news and TV shows that have been done on the history of this place that we're quite open and accessible to those who want to come and visit.

K.F.: Okay. Let's move on a little forward in everybody's lives here. And how about in the 1940's, you guys would've been in your teens. What was it like as a teenager here in the 40's, late 40's, early 50's?

J.LEEK: Okay, I'll take that. I was more of a loner than perhaps many of the children because for some reason, I would get on my boat, I had a wooden boat, and I'd go out in the bay. I'd get up very early dawn and go out and catch crabs and come back in, particularly near the weekend, and I'd take my bushel basket of crabs on my wagon and go around and sell them to people that were here. Many people were just weekend people. There were those that were all summer, but a number of them were also just weekend people. So near the weekend was the biggest time for selling crabs. And I would have a boat full of crabs, all in the bottom. I mean I barefooted, and the crabs were crawling all over the place. (Laughter.) That was the way I was. And so I enjoyed the outdoors, and I was outdoors most of the day. I'd come in for dinner, and that was, you know, I'd eat early and get out, and then come in back for dinner. So I was gone all day outdoors. And that was my life that I enjoyed, and I missed so in the winter. But they did have a number of activities. They had a pavilion, which was on the beach. They had various activities there. They had movies, the kids, they had dances. There was a place we called the hotel, which was on Douglas Avenue. And it was - they had meals there, they also had a room which the kids would use, and they had a jute box, and they would dance, and they had soda pop and this sort of thing. So those were activities that were here during the summer. The Walls were the name of the people that ran the hotel, as we called it. And they did rent out some rooms to people that would stay several days, or maybe up to a week, and they would have meals, and I know mother would go over sometimes for dinner over at the hotel. And others in the community would eat out once in a while. So that was what I recall as I was growing up. After I finished high school in Washington, I went away to college, and I was gone most after that, for many, many years. So I left at the end of the 40's, practically, and I was gone, went to college in the 40's in Vermont. Then I went to Midwest, the University of Illinois. Then I went to work out in California, and I was gone until about '76 when I came back to Washington for a job, and mother said well why don't you stay in the summer place till you find a place up close. I was working in Rockville. Well I never did find a place. I stayed there until I built here in Highland Beach. This was - the house was in Venice Beach. I built a house

in '90, and then was here living year-round, first in the summer place from '76 to '90, and then in my new house from '90 to today.

K.F.: That's a long drive to Rockville from here.

J.LEEK: Yeah, it was. So when I finally retired, I was so happy not to have to.
(Laughter.)

C.B.: You've never been back. Well to the mayor story.

K.F.: Yeah.

C.B.: How did you all get here?

R.L.: Well my dad and my stepmother, Mary Church Turrell, who was - Phyllis Church Turrell, who was Mary Church Turrell's daughter, were here. And I used to come during the summer. The house in which we live was the house they built in 1919. Mary Church Turrell purchased the land to build the house from Charles Douglas in 1893. And she and Frederick Douglas were very good friends. And so they summered here. And in those days, there were only three or four houses. So you sort of were the guest of somebody when you came. As John mentioned, later there was this guest house which was called the hotel. The purpose of that building was to handle the overflow guests of residents who didn't have adequate space for them to spend the night, and so they would have a place to stay. But when I first started coming to Highland Beach, we still had segregation, and particularly here in Maryland and Annapolis. It was horrendous once we went outside of that gate. We had to be very careful to - we had to be very careful to not stray too close to the restricted areas. And we had to be careful to be mindful of the people that we were coming into contact with. I can remember an incidence at a store just outside of Highland Beach called La Shapel (phonetic). It's no longer - the store's still there, but it's under a different ownership and a different name now, in which I was going to get some bread. And as I walked in, I was standing there and this lady came in, and she took the door, and she slammed it right into me, and I turned around, and she looked at me, and I said, gee, some people just don't have any manners, and she called the police and said I had attacked her, I had attacked her. And they tried to - in fact, they chased me back here to the beach. Fortunately, Sheriff Walls was the sheriff then, and Highland Beach being a municipality, the police could not come in without permission of the officials here of Highland Beach. So I was, that was a case where the beach literally protected me from what could've been a very bad situation. But we came here to get away from that kind of thing.

So once we got through the gate at Highland Beach, it was like, you know, heaven. You didn't have to think about that. You didn't have to deal with it. You put it aside. You just went on and enjoyed yourself as teenagers. As we said earlier, has been said earlier, many of us were close friends, we went to school together. Our parents, in some cases, were school mates before we were even born. And we sort of traveled in that same - and the circle just kept getting bigger, and bigger, and bigger as we would bring more and more people into the circle as we would make, you know, acquaintances with them. But coming here in the summer was, you know, everybody looked forward to it. I mean this was the place to meet, to meet girls if you were a boy, and the girls liked to meet the guys. (Laughter.) And we stayed on the beach at night, and have fires, and swim, and just have a wonderful time together. We used to go to each other's houses and put on records and

dance. So there was always a wholesome activity. We had boat races. Always something to do.

C.B.: What kind of boats did you race?

R.L.: We had powerboats. Many of the parents and teenagers had their own boats growing up here. They had racing boats, small, small racing boats, not the big ocean-going kind, but very sleek, Chris Craft. You know, very good. And then we had some who were ingenious enough to make their own, build their own boats and install motors in them and race them.

C.B.: Did you do that?

R.L.: I raced boats. I didn't build one. (Laughter.)

C.B.: What kind of boat did you have?

R.L.: I had a - that was a - my father had a, I think it was about an 18-footer with an outboard motor on it, with a power motor. Yeah. Big motor.

C.B.: How did you do?

R.L.: I never won any races. (Laughter.) It wasn't really, it really wasn't the kind of boat to race against some of the more, you know, sleek racing boat. But it was for the fun of it. It wasn't just for -

C.B.: Did you get the girls with that boat?

R.L.: If you had a boat, you always had girls around. (Laughter.)

C. S.: We have our regatta on the 4th of July. We have sailboats. They have several classes depending on the size of your boat. Maybe two people in this class, one person in that class, three in another -

R.L.: Yeah.

C. S.: They have a wonderful race.

R.L.: It's called the Watermelon Race. Every 4th of July. And we have tee shirts with the watermelon, the watermelon is in the shape of a sailboat with a sail and a mast, and the shirts all have this symbol on it, so it's sort of a spoof of -

C.S.: And the first prize is a watermelon. (Laughter.)

R.L.: Yeah.

C.S.: The second prize is a honeydew. (Laughter.) The third prize is a cantaloupe. (Laughter.)

R.L.: The last person gets a lemon. (Laughter.)

C.S.: And some boats never come in. (Laughter.)

R.L.: And as Carol mentioned, starting I guess in the 1960's, early 70's was the period of time when folks started going off to Europe, and going to different places, to the Caribbean for summer, and the teenagers, including my own kids, got to the point, oh, do we have to go to the beach again this summer? I'd rather go somewhere else, and they wanted to do that. So they did. So we were fearful for a while there that the next generation was going to let it get away. So in 19, I guess '87, '88, '89, somewhere around there, we started what is called the Highland Beach Historical Commission. And that has just really snowballed into a renewed interest far beyond this community of people who want to live here, including our own kids. And many of them will inherit these properties and carry on the tradition, hopefully, for another 100 years.

K.F.: Well let me back up, back up to your story about the encounter in town.

RL.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).

K.F.: How did the surrounding towns and communities feel about Highland Beach being here, incorporated? I mean that's a certain kind of power you guys had.

R.L.: Yeah.

K.F.: The sheriff couldn't come in without permission.

R.L.: Right.

K.F.: That's an unheard of thing at that time.

R.L.: We maintained a very low-key existence. They left us alone, and we left them alone. So there were really very few incidences where we had to be confronted by them. As Carol mentioned earlier, we had an entrance into this community. It was all but hidden. I mean you had to know where you were going to go down that road. It looked like you were going into the woods to nowhere and here we were. So that was done by design. And it's been until very, very, very recently that folks here in Highland Beach have been comfortable with the publicity we've been getting. Many folks are still very, very cautious about it. They're so afraid that some big developer is going to come in here and try to take us over, or this is a prime piece of real estate. But, fortunately, we have the support of the governor and all of the state legislators who want to see this maintained for its historical significance as the first African American township in the State of Maryland. So we have people who are bending over backwards to help us. This building that we're sitting in right now, the Frederick Douglas Summer Home, has been completely restored and purchased and is now deeded to the Town of Highland Beach. And it was the state legislators and the county legislators who helped us raise the money to do this, \$500,000 it took to get this piece of property. We've just recently, our current County Exec., Janet Owens, and our current legislators have just approved a \$300,000 grant for Highland Beach to restore the town hall, the little town hall that you - to expand it and restore it. So that's the kind of interest and concern that everybody has. They want to see this place maintained. They don't want to do anything to disrupt it.

C.B.: Is the Chesapeake Bay Foundation part of Highland Beach?

R.L.: No.

J.LEEK: No. No, the creek essentially separates them from us.

C. S.: That's Bay Ridge.

J.LEEK: That's Bay Ridge. In the old days, the entrance was across the creek. There was a bridge.

R.L.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).

J.LEEK: And the people came in that way. Then, of course, the entrance was later changed up here. But in the old days, there was a bridge across the creek, and people would come in, horse and buggies that way.

R.L.: We have a picture showing.

C.B.: Picture on the table there.

R.L.: On the table, and you can see the bridge and a horse and buggy coming across this creek.

J.LEEK: When my grandmother and grandfather built this house in 1919, this house is built entirely out of the lumber that came out of the old Bay Ridge Hotel when it burned down in 1915. And the salvageable lumber was purchased and put in a horse-drawn wagon, brought across the creek and built this house, which is a bit ironic in view of the fact that Highland Beach would never have existed if it had not been for the segregation

laws of the time which refused to serve Charles and Laura Douglas at the Bay Ridge Inn. So we have two houses here in Highland Beach that are built out of the lumber of that building, which is a little unique story, I think.

K.F.: That's really amazing.

J.LEEK: And you mentioned the Chesapeake Bay Foundation which is there now. It's only been since they've been there that we no longer have a fence dividing us. (Laughter.) There was a fence that they erected on the other side of the creek so that people from Highland Beach couldn't come into Bay Ridge, and Bay Ridge couldn't come into Highland Beach. And it was left there even in recent years because when Bay Ridge became a public beach, they wanted people to come in through the gate and have to pay to get in as opposed to being able to sneak in across the creek and come this way. So Chesapeake Bay Foundation moved in last year and they said we don't need a fence between us, do we? We said no. So down came the fence for the first time.

C.B.: Good will ambassadors.

J.LEEK: Yes, yes.

K.F.: Well I want to ask you all about some of the food, and the sounds, and the smell. I want you to use some of your other senses now to trigger some memories. Summertime on the bay always has some of the best food ever. So if you guys could tell me about some of those summer meals, those family meals.

C.S.: Well John caught crabs all the time, but John doesn't eat seafood. (Laughter.)

R.L.: So he sold it.

C.S.: That's right, he was the catcher.

K.F.: Not eating his profits, that's for sure, right? (Laughter.)

C.S.: There's nothing better than a good crab cake, and we certainly had our fill of those because if John wasn't catching it for us, my brother was down there catching crabs, and that was a great thing. And my father was a great fisherman from the pier. I'm trying to remember the names of the fish. Perch.

J.LEEK: Uh-huh (Affirmative).

C. S.: What's the one -

J.LEEK: Blues.

R.L.: Spots.

J.LEEK: Blues.

C. S.: Yeah, Blues. Is it -

J.LEEK: Rock.

C. S.: -- the one that has sharp teeth.

J.LEEK: And the rockfish. Yeah.

C. S.: Yes. He had to have a special metal line so that he could catch the Blues, which are sharp teeth and are very dangerous.

J.LEEK: Yeah.

C. S.: And my mother loved fish. My father would bring fish home, and the deal was she'd cook them, but he had to clean them. So she said I will not clean the fish. And my father would bring those fish because he loved - he'd spend the night out there on the pier, and he'd come with his catch, and he'd sit on the back porch and clean the fish, and for breakfast the next day, there would be fried fish dipped in cornmeal or whatever. So the smells of the fish cooking, that was a nice thing.

K.F.: And that was a breakfast meal sometimes?

C. S.: Sometimes it was a breakfast meal, yes. If it was a rockfish, then that could be a dinner meal. Rock stuffed with crab.

J.LEEK: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Yes, yes. That's what I remember. I remember the crab cakes, the crab salad, salads, shrimp salad, the oysters, fried oysters, oyster stew. I mean anyway you could imagine seafood that is - that was pretty local could be prepared, that's the way it was prepared. And we had a gentleman who, African American, who owned a store in Annapolis that would - his daughter would come here once a week and take everybody's order. And then the next day, the son would drive the truck and bring the groceries. So again, it was to limit the contact that people had to have with the local merchants. So that's how we got food, and ice, and all the - other than the men going home on the weekends and coming back - I mean during the week and coming back, would bring provisions from the city. But during the week, that's how you got your groceries. And there was also a fish truck that came through. If you didn't catch your own fish, or oysters, or clams, you had, you know, it was right here. You could get them.

K.F.: And the truck would drive through the town?

J.LEEK: Yeah, come through the town to take people's orders and sell fish and -

K.F.: Did he have a call that he -

J.LEEK: Well, yeah, that's right. They came through. They would holler fish, fish, fresh fish, and folks would hear him coming and just come out. And then there were those who he knew almost always bought food like Mary Church Turrell and Phyllis used to just tell him to stop every time he came because they would always buy something.

C. S.: And then there was the Good Humor man.

J.LEEK: Yes.

C. S.: And you could hear his little bell the moment he turned into the road, and we would go running down the road to meet him the way we met my father. And the Good Humor man got to know the families, and he would let us get on the running board of his little truck, and we would select something because he knew that the parents would pay for it by the time we got to the house, and they did. But that was one of the highlights of our day. I don't know how often he came, but we would hear the bell, and go running down to meet him and have a nice treat. A nice, simple life.

R.L.: I can say this too. You were asking about the - when Jean and I, my wife and I first met, this was the first place I brought her, the very first date that we went on -

K.F.: Oh, that's nice.

R.L.: I brought her here to Highland Beach.

C.B.: Why was that?

R.L.: Well this is where my friends were. At that time, she had been on a date with a very close friend of mine, a guy that I had grown up with, and his mother and my mother had been good friends for many years. And it was sort of traditional when we went out on a date with a new girl to show her off to all our friends. And they were all here at Highland Beach that weekend. So here we came that night down to the beach to be seen together with, among our friends. (Laughter.)

C.B.: Well you must've been impressed. (Laughter.)

J.L.: And the ironic part is the friend that he's talking about is - I had gone to elementary school with him. So our relationship had been many years. Plus his mother

was one of my teachers in elementary school. So I knew him before I met Raymond. As a matter of fact, he introduced me.

C.B.: Had you been to Highland Beach before?

J.L.: That was my first time, that was in '59.

C.B.: And were you more impressed with your date or where he took you?

J.L.: It was late at night, and I remember (Laughter), it was about 10:00, we had been at friends' houses playing ping-pong.

R.L.: Ping-pong.

J.L.: And then we came to the beach. And I was just being introduced to some of the friends. I didn't know, I knew half of them, but I didn't know all of them. And I can remember this person coming down on the beach with this massive flashlight, and Ray says, oh my God, that's my dad. (Laughter.) And he was coming down, don't you realize what time it is? I had never met him before, you know. So anyway, that was my introduction to Mr. Langston. (Laughter.)

C.B.: New beginning. (Laughter.) You mentioned something, Mayor, earlier that I was actually thinking about, how Highland Beach originally was open to people, African Americans who could build their own home.

R.L.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).

C.B.: Who were those people?

R.L.: Very good question.

C.B.: What kinds of people were they?

R.L.: Yeah. That's part of why what we're doing here is so important because our history books are not complete. These were all educated people. The majority were physicians, school teachers, lawyers, judges, professional. They all had finished college, many of them had PhD's, master's degrees, they were writers, like Paul Lawrence Dunbar, they were Thurgood Marshall, they were Judge Turrell -

J.L.: Paul Robson.

R.L.: Paul Robson, Booker T. Washington -

J.L.: Charles Chestnut.

R.L.: Charles Chestnut, Conte Carlin, Alex Haley, later on. You can just go, starting back to early 1900's and come forward, and who - I guess you could say the most prominent educated African American of those eras were here at some point in time during the summer, or many of them. And, of course, their families, and their friends, and their offsprings would come.

C.B.: Did Highland Beach play any role in the civil rights movement? When you have these kinds of minds coming together, it reminds me of the founding fathers of the country. Great minds, great sophisticated people hanging out at this tiny village.

R.L.: Yeah.

C.B.: What did they talk about, great things?

R.L.: Well that's exactly, that's exactly what happened here during the summer months. People of like minds got together, and they discussed current events and what was going on beyond here, but more importantly, they left here and went out and made a huge difference wherever they went in whatever society they were traveling in. Dr. Charles Drew, which we just had an exhibit on, spent his summers here, and he was the founder of the -

J.L.: Blood plasma.

R.L.: Blood plasma technique to preserve plasma. Everybody benefits from that, not just African Americans. Many of these people were the first of their kind. Robin Weaver, first African American appointed to a position in the White House. I mean we can go down the line, and you can look virtually everybody who was here in those days and still till today, the president of Howard University lives here now, has just purchased a house here. The current president of Howard University. So -

J.LEEK: Back in my Grandfather's time, the president of Howard University at that time and my grandfather donated their time to the YMCA. And they would bring kids down for the - to the beach. The house that my grandfather bought belonged originally to he president of Howard University. And he left and went to New York, and my grandfather and his daughters bought that house in 1919. So that's how he settled here. But he had been down before, my mother even before she was married would come down and stay at the Wormly's. There was that newspaper that we have a copy of which was written by somebody who lived here and wrote an article and, essentially, told about who did what during the summer. And it mentioned many of the families, and my parents. One article I read, my parents stayed here in the Douglas House one summer, of course before my grandfather bought -

R.L.: I would say that over the years, right till today, virtually everybody who lived here and owned property here were involved in the Civil Rights movement at some point in time in some way or fashion. I remember Dr. Eddie Mazik was so astounded during the poor people's march on Washington, he set up a little hospital down on the monument ground and donated, he and a bunch of doctors donated their time free to these poor people who hadn't seen a doctor, many of them in, you know, in years, and here they were marching to Washington with feet bleeding and all kinds of health conditions, poor health conditions. And he rallied a group of physicians, and many of them from Highland Beach or summered here, and dentists to give these people some health care while they were here. So, yeah, they've always been involved in the civil rights movement.

J.L.: And Mary Church Turrell was a very close friend of Susan -

J.LEEK: B. Anthony.

J.L.: B. Anthony, and marched along with her in the suffragette movement. She was also the first African American to serve on Washington, D.C., woman to serve on the D.C. School Board. And probably the first one in the United States. That was 1895.

R.L.: She - I just looked here, and she received her Doctorate of Humane Letters, degreed from Overland in 1948.

J.L.: That's doctorate, and her-

R.L.: Her doctorate. She graduated in 1884.

J.L.: '84.

R.L.: So that is quite a few years before Highland Beach was even founded in 1993. So we're talking about citizens of Highland Beach who would actually finish college in the late 1800's.

J.L.: And before the Civil Rights Movement with television in the 60's, which got the publicity, Mary Church Turrell was part of a group of people in Washington who were helping to end segregation in the stores, at the lunch counters, in the five and ten cent stores in the 50's. In the late 40's -

R.L.: That's right.

J.L.: And that wasn't getting television coverage, you see. But she was doing things long before the Civil Rights Movement - yeah, a lot of people think it started in the 60's, and much was done by people like her and others all over.

R.L.: That's a picture of her there where she's still walking the picket line at 80 -

J.L.: Ninety.

R.L.: Ninety years old. And she was still picketing, protesting the desegregation of the department stores in Washington, D.C. The Thompson Restaurant case was a result of her insisting that the restaurants be desegregated in Washington, D.C. So, yeah, that's -

J.L.: Hecht's Department Store.

R.L.: Hecht's Department Store, that's right.

J.L.: Lansburg's, Can's.

R.L.: Can's. Yeah.

J.L.: All of those up and down 7th Street in Washington.

C.S.: And she says now we have, we've completed this one. Now we're moving onto the next store. And she was -

R.L.: Her father was the first black millionaire in the United States, Memphis, Tennessee. And I think that's part of what you're doing here with this information that we're sharing with you, and we're going to be disseminating it to others is getting out a part of history that's never been told. Not all African Americans came out of slavery. Not all African Americans come from relatives or descendants who were slaves. Many were not. Many were freed. And Highland Beach probably represented a fairly high percentage in this area of the country of those who came from that or similar backgrounds. And because the jobs were here in the Washington area, government jobs, and the best opportunity for educated African Americans was here at that time.

C.B.: So Highland Beach folded up for the winter? Because you made me think of school when you said jobs, so -

J.LEEK: There was one caretaker that stayed down year-round. But other than that -

J.L.: Labor Day.

J.LEEK: Labor Day, things closed up. Water was drained from all of the -

R.L.: Pipes.

J.LEEK: Pipes. Houses were boarded up.

C.B.: Saddest day, wasn't it?

J.LEEK: Yeah, yeah, it was.

K.F.: Describe that day. I mean - everybody's leaving town, what was that day like?

J.L.: It's like a change, you know.

C. S.: A big change.

R.L.: The end of the fishing.

C. S.: The end of a season, and you know that work is coming.

R.L.: It's just like if you take a vacation, and then all of the sudden, you have to come home, right? You know how that is. I've got to go back to work. Nobody wants to leave. So that's the idea.

J.LEEK: There's not very much joy in town that day. Everybody's busy packing up.

C.B.: Is there a celebration, or a party, or end of the season dance or -

J.LEEK: That would usually have already taken place that weekend, the Labor Day weekend -

(END SIDE A)

(BEGIN SIDE B)

C.B.: -- do people stay longer?

J.LEEK: Yes. Well there are many year-round people here too.

C.B.: When did it move to be year-round?

J.LEEK: Gradually, but -

J.L.: Gradually. I think in '76 -

J.LEEK: Seventies, yeah.

J.L.: -- there were about seven or eight families here. And now we have -

J.LEEK: I moved down permanently in '76. I came, I was working in California. Then I came east to work in Rockville, and I said mother, let me use the summer place. And that was the start of my year -

R.L.: Dad moved here '65, '65 year round. And then we moved year-round in '88?

J.L.: No, '90.

R.L.: '90?

J.L.: 1990.

R.L.: 1990. Okay. And, Carol, you came down in --

C. S.: Well, I built a house next to my family's house and moved in 1990, same year that John's house -

J.LEEK: But you were staying in your family's house.

C. S.: I stayed in the family house for two years while my house was, while I was getting a job here and getting my house built. And my family's house was not winterized. It was a summer house. And I experienced two winters with a heater in my bedroom, a heater in the bathroom, and a stove in the kitchen. All the other rooms were closed off. And, but in those two years, I learned to love it here all year round. (Laughter.) When my house was built, of course, and the air condition. But that was in 1990.

J.LEEK: Many of us have winterized these homes, obviously, to live here year-round. So it's about 45, close to 50 percent of us living year-round now. And it's increasing each summer, each year. It's more and more coming.

C.B.: Someone doesn't leave.

J.LEEK: Yeah, that's right. Yeah. So we have year-round activities. We have year-round get-togethers. We have events. For example, we have concerts, which we put up a huge tent. Every two years, we have family reunion here on the beach where all the families from back all the way back from many, many years and friends of the beach come back every two years, and we can have as many as 500 people here for that event, and they come from as far away as, Carol's family -

C. S.: From Norway.

J.LEEK: -- from Norway to come back for that event. So folks are still in touch with each other. And we still get together even though many of us have traveled to the far ends of the earth. So -

K.F.: Well let me ask you guys, when I was standing outside earlier, I can't help but notice the Bay Bridge just right there. And in a lot of the interviews we've been doing, of course, folks on the Eastern Shore site the building of that bridge as, you know, the end of

the small resorts on the Eastern Shore. Everybody headed to Ocean City. A complete change to economic and recreation on the bay. Now you guys must've seen this thing go up. Can you remember that, and what that time was like in the early 50's for the bridge to go up? And what were your thoughts as it was going up?

J.LEEK: I remember it being built -

C. S.: Just one span first.

J.LEEK: And we thought it was just there. I mean it didn't mean anything to us. We had no interest in going on the Eastern Shore. We had no interest in going across that bridge. We didn't have - in the 50's, we had very little interest in going anywhere in this area, and certainly not Ocean City.

C.S.: Right. (Laughter.)

J.LEEK: So we came to Highland Beach where it was safe, and we knew we could survive the weekend and go home. We weren't sure if we went to Ocean City, we'd ever get back or not. So, you know, the bridge itself did not open up any type of horizons for us. It didn't, I don't think it meant anything to my parents. I don't even remember them being the least bit curious until in the 80's. My mom liked to go over to St. Michaels for the restaurant and take the boat ride over and people began to do those kind of things.

1965 I was working for a major pharmaceutical company in the United States, and I was a sales manager for all of the State of Maryland, Pennsylvania, Delaware, West Virginia, Virginia, Northern Virginia. And I traveled quite a bit. And one of the places that was my responsibility were all the hospitals, and all the physicians and drugstores on the Eastern Shore. In 1965, the only place an African American could stay on the Eastern Shore was the Shoals Restaurant in right outside of Cambridge. And the only other place you could stay was Bobby Baker's Carousel in Ocean City. There was nothing in between. And even when I stayed at the Shoals, I was asked not to use the swimming pool. So I would tell the manger the first time she said to me you won't be using the swimming pool, I said heavens, no. Golly knows what I would catch if I got in that water. (Laughter.) And she laughed, and laughed, and she said it is silly, isn't it? (Laughter.) But you have to remember, this was right after H. Rap Brown and Gloria Richardson had incited the riots and the town was burned. So it was still a lot of hostility even in the 60's, so I think that kind of conveys why too many of us were not going across that bridge. (Laughter.)

C.B.: So as children, you felt safe here, and you were safe from a harsh world.

J.LEEK: Yeah.

C.B.: Harsh world. Segregation, and mean spirited -

J.LEEK: Degradation. I mean you didn't have to - yeah, you didn't have to be subjected to that kind of stuff, you know. We were intelligent people. We, you know, just -

C.S.: I remember in Annapolis, right at City Dock, there's a circle. There used to be a comfort station there, and it had -

R.L.: Two doors.

C. S.: Yes. There were white ladies and colored women. And I don't know what the men's side said.

R.L.: No, there were only two, I think. There was one white, and one was colored.

C.S.: I think they were called ladies and women, unless I'm making this up.

R.L.: Oh, maybe. I remember two doors.

C. S.: Whichever it was, that was the tone of the town.

R.L.: Yeah.

C.S.: And so we had no cause to want to go into Annapolis. There was a Safeway or an A&P there once. I think we'd sometimes run in there to get some groceries. But, generally, there was nothing for us in Annapolis.

J.L.: And even St. Mary's Church was segregated. You went, you sat up in the loft.

R.L.: Yeah.

J.L.: You couldn't just sit down on the main -

R.L.: The Catholic Church, African Americans going to mass on Sunday, I remember we had to sit up in that sweltering attic. But you were not allowed to sit in the main body of the church. But we still went to church. But we had to sit - Catholic Church -

C.B.: People picked you or - I wouldn't even have thought, to be honest, that three people in this room were African American. Wouldn't even have entered my mind. But you felt -

C. S.: Well we know what the situation - relatives of every color there is.

R.L.: Yeah, sure.

C. S.: So I know what my racial background is, even if somebody else didn't.

R.L.: And we were not about passing.

C. S.: No.

R.L.: We were not interested in trying to pretend or to get away with, you know, passing as we called it. We wanted to be treated with the same dignity and respect as everybody else. And quite frankly, the people who were perpetuating this kind of environment were far less cultured and far less educated than the people it was directed toward. So we did not react. I never saw my parents react in kind. I never heard them say a curse word, I never heard them call somebody a name. They found other ways, through changing the law, through protesting to the government to effect change. So that's the way we were taught to do it.

C.B.: Highland Beach bred dignity and encouraged you to be yourselves.

R.L.: Absolutely.

J.LEEK: I recall you were asking about the fact that the people here right now don't necessarily look too Negroid. The interesting thing was when I was in high school, I would get one of these passes to ride on the busses and streetcars for a week. You know, you could buy a weekly pass. And at time that I was on vacation or something, I would get on a bus, ride to the end of the line and ride back and so forth. And one day, I got on the bus which was going into Virginia. And the man normally - as I say, I had straight hair, I was light skinned and everything, and I didn't really think of race at the time, you know. I was me. But the bus driver says you have to sit in the back. I said huh? Why? Well we're going into Virginia. He didn't say that -

R.L.: You're colored. He just -

J.LEEK: You just have to sit in the back. I said I don't want to sit in the back. I mean, it's a seat right here. He said nope, you can't sit there. So I got off the bus and left. But that was the first time that I had really been approached in that manner. I mean I just went as a person -

C.B.: Did you feel that he was protecting you?

J.LEEK: Huh?

C.B.: Did you feel that he was protecting you in -

J.LEEK: I don't know what it was, but I was sort of upset about the fact that he's telling me what to - I mean this is a public bus.

C.B.: Yeah.

J.LEEK: I was insulted just by being told what I had to do. I mean it was racial feeling, it was just insult. What are you telling me? There's a seat here. Why can't I sit here. And so I got off the bus. Said if you don't want me to sit there - I got off the bus and didn't ride on your darn bus. (Laughter.)

C.B.: You were allowed to sit there until you went into Virginia through.

J.LEEK: Yeah - no, huh-uh (negative). When I first boarded the bus and got ready to sit down on the seat.

C.B.: Oh, okay.

J.LEEK: And he said you can't sit there.

C.B.: I thought -

J.LEEK: He said you can't sit there.

C.B.: I thought -

R.L.: He used the excuse -

C.B.: -- he asked you to move before you went into Virginia.

R.L.: -- going into Virginia, that's the reason, but that was just an excuse.

J.LEEK: Yeah.

R.L.: One of the things that I, you know, we can talk about it a little bit here, we've got my granddaughter, Lisa Langston, here who's a resident of this community by virtue of the fact that my son and his three daughters live just outside of the gate of Highland Beach on the road leading in here, so obviously they've spent a lot of time here. But here is a good example of the next generation that's coming along and still able to be treated the way we were when we grew up. These children today, we have one of the safest places in the world, as Carol has mentioned, literally, literally parents tell children get out of the house and go to the beach. Go play. Come back for lunch around such and such a time, or be back home. And you don't have to worry about them. Somebody's got their eye on every child in this community when that child is out and about. You'll see little children down here by themselves with no parents, and you would think oh, my goodness, that's dangerous. It isn't. That child's being watched by somebody. And there are very few places I know of in this country today where you can do that.

C.B.: Any children of any color would be watched.

R.L.: Yeah. That's right, that's right. Yeah.

C.B.: You're a lucky man. (Laughter.) It's an old-fashioned experience.

R.L.: So that's the type of thing that we take pride in is that we're able to continue this and get it ready for the next generation and have it go on and not lose it.

K.F.: Your story about the church made me think why didn't the town build its own church?

C. S.: They had Sunday services in the -

J.LEEK: In the pavilion.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

J.LEEK: There was a pavilion on the beach. And it was an octagon shaped building, sort of a multi-purpose building.

K.F.: Right.

J.LEEK: Same place they had dances and parties, they had church. Or some -

C.B.: Or Sunday School.

J.LEEK: -- Sunday school services by the parents on Sunday. And many of them had help to build major churches in the Washington, D.C. area, and they were the original board members and Board of Trustees of these major churches in Washington. So I guess they felt this was only for the summer.

K.F.: Right.

C. S.: Because Mary Church Turrell was one of the first organizers of Lincoln - what is now Lincoln Congregational Church in Washington, D.C. And she formed it with about six other people in her home, and then they branched out. So -

C.B.: And where is that church?

C. S.: Washington, D.C. Lincoln Congregational.

J.L.: 11th and R.

C. S.: 11th and R Streets, Northwest. Used to go to Sunday school there.

J.LEEK: Yeah. Still in existence today.

C. S.: Lincoln - Congregation.

K.F.: Well it sounds like in the summer, it was mostly wives and their kids, and some very strong women in this community. Can you guys talk about some of the strong women in this community? I mean it's - part of the story of the bay is trying to, you know, people it with women as well as, you know, fishermen -

C.B.: And watermen.

K.F.: Watermen, and -

J.LEEK: Well you had Frannie Douglas, was probably one of the earliest that I remember. And then there was Imogene Wormly.

C. S.: My principal of my junior high school, Miss Valerie Chase. (Laughter.)

R.L.: In the educational field.

J.LEEK: Yeah. Most of them, I would say, were in the education field.

C. S.: Or education, yes.

J. LE EK: And so it was natural for them to be out of school for the summer.

K.F.: Right.

J.LEEK: And for them to be here.

C. S.: And then you'd come and see them on a different level, you know -

C.B.: What was that like?

C.S.: -- from the school setting. It was different. It was actually, now I can see this person as a human. Before I was just, you know, you will do it my way or no way. And all of a sudden, she's pleasant and she smiles. (Laughter.) Totally different. I cringed every time I saw her. That's just the way she ran the building. It was no if, ands, buts. It was my way.

J.LEEK: It was interesting. Just two weeks ago, the county exec here, Janet Owens, had a celebration of Elected Women in the 20th Century in Anne Arundel County. And out of about 65, I think 13 or 14 came from Highland Beach, including three who had served as mayors. And many of the folks from, that were there, even counting judges and everything, were amazed at how many women had held political office in Highland Beach, either as mayor or as commissioner. And so it was quite an eye opener for them. And she

presented proclamations and awards to all the women who attended this affair. It was quite a nice affair.

C.B.: With the socioeconomic level of the founders, made me think did any of these people come with domestics?

R.L.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).

C.B.: They obviously weren't domestics themselves, but did -

R.L.: Some did, yes.

C.B.: Were there housekeepers and cooks that came along?

R.L.: Yes, absolutely. Not necessarily cooks. I don't remember any cooks, except at the Bowing Cottage in Anna Zene's (phonetic) -

J.L.: Tea Room.

R.L.: -- Tea Room, she had somebody do the cooking there. And I think Mrs. Walls had a cook at one time.

J.L.: She did. I remember very well.

R.L.: But those are the only ones I remember had a cook. Do you remember any others had cooks?

C. S.: No. There was somebody like sister - died, I can't ask her, but there was someone down here who did have a maid. And like sister used to tell me how impressed she was. I think she had the dress with the little cap and everything. And she was someone who was with them in the city, and they came down for the summer. That's the only person I remember hearing about. And I don't remember her name.

R.L.: Most would bring - it wouldn't be maid. What would you call it? Helped to take care of the kids.

C. S.: Like a nanny.

R.L.: Like a nanny, yes. There were those who would come and spend the summer with the family and be responsible for the kids in some way. But women were so independent. Let me tell you a little story. My mom went to school, went to Armstrong High School, which is a vocational school, to learn how to repair cars, even though she was a school teacher, so that when she and her mother drove by themselves from Washington to here, if the car broke down, she could fix it, 'cause there were no service stations, there were no - couldn't call a tow truck. So she used to repair the cars when the car would break down. Flat tire, whatever. Get the car started enough to get here. (Laughter.) So that gives you an example of how independent women were in those days. They pretty much - I think they were more independent then than they have become lately (Laughter) in many ways. I mean in many ways. In terms of being self-sufficient to that extent. You know, you don't see women fixing cars when a car breaks down. They call somebody to fix it. But in those days, you didn't have that luxury, so you learned to do those things yourself.

K.F.: A very practical approach too.

R.L.: Yeah, yeah. Go to school, learn how to do it, then buy a car and you can hit the road. (Laughter.)

C.B.: So is there anything we should - you'd like us to know that we're not covering?

R.L.: Well I think we've touched a little bit on most of the subjects from families to friends to all the nuances of the social history of the place, so the economics of it.

J.L.: Government.

R.L.: Government, yeah.

C.B.: How about the sea nettles? You all talked about swimming, and nobody mentioned coming out all itchy.

C.S.: Well we used to have a net, a sea nettle net on those pilings. But in recent years, we haven't been troubled as much with the sea nettles as we have. I'm not sure whether the salinity of the water has changed or what. And it was very costly to keep those - put those nets up every year, and then take them down, and then they had to be mended.

J.L.: Right.

C. S.: Because a small hole came in the netting, a small -

J.LEEK: Jelly.

C. S.: Jellyfish would get in, then grow big, and then he'd be trapped inside. (Laughter.) Have to go on the outside of the net.

J.L.: Required a lot of maintenance.

J.LEEK: But there was always a swim area there where you could swim for - relatively safe from the jellyfish, but you still got stung.

C. S.: But August was probably the worst month, usually.

J.LEEK: Yes, yes.

C. S.: And we had our home remedies. You'd come and rub sand on the place -

J.LEEK: That's right, yeah.

C. S.: And everybody had a tale, a horror tale of getting struck in the face, which was the worst.

J.LEEK: Yeah.

C. S.: And I think we sort of enjoyed telling our experiences with the jellyfish. I think -

K.F.: What is your experience with the jellyfish?

C.S.: I only got hit on a leg once that I can remember. Because you keep an eye out for them. You have a stick in your hand, you go near the shore, and you try to pull some in if you saw them, and throw them up on the sand where the heat would take care of them. And so it was a game, and it was part of being at the beach.

J.L.: Part of summer.

C.S.: It was no major catastrophe.

J.LEEK: I think probably the nettles were worse on the Eastern Shore.

C. S.: Oh?

J.LEEK: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Because it's more salinity. Yeah. The way the water comes down the bay, the fresh water tends to be more on the western shore, and therefore, it's less - the sea nettles are more toward the higher salt concentration, which is on the eastern shore, so you probably see more over there than you do over here.

C.B.: And having this creek right here, you're always in the fresh water flow directly.

J.LEEK: Actually, we have a creek on both sides. This is Black Walnut, and on the other side is oyster. So we're surrounded. We have water on three sides of us. The only way you can get in is the way you came in, and the only way out. And you have water on all three sides. Speaking of water on all three sides, sometimes it all meets right here at the bottom of these steps (Laughter), at these doors. In my lifetime, I have seen the bay completely above the railing, the fence across the street, and all of this is under water.

C.S.: With waves.

J.LEEK: With waves coming right up to the front steps of my house.

C. S.: Yeah.

J.LEEK: So it's not unusual when we have these bad storms that push water up the bay that all of these bodies of water come together, and you cannot get in this way at all. The only way you can come in is the back and up to the high ground.

C.B.: Good thing you're near the Coast Guard.

J.LEEK: Yeah, yeah. Well they attempted to rescue people, some who did not want to be rescued. (Laughter.)

C. S.: I just know the story. The legends.

K.F.: Well let's hear the legends.

J.LEEK: My mom was here by herself I guess -

C. S.: It was in the fall of -

J.LEEK: How old was she then?

C. S.: She was in her late 80's.

J.LEEK: Eighties, yeah. And we had this -

C. S.: About 85.

J.LEEK: -- huge storm, and she called and said that the DNR police were at the front door standing in a boat, ringing the doorbell telling her to get out, to get in the boat, you have to evacuate. She said no, I'm not going anywhere, you just go on. (Laughter.) So they came back and said look, you don't understand, this is not the high tide yet, it's not even the worst of it yet, you've got to leave. So she called me and said look, I've dismissed these gentlemen twice now, and they keep bothering me, and I'm not going anywhere. So I said all right, let me get my son. So my oldest son, Tony, I sent him down. I said go down and see what's going on with grandma, and what needs to be done. So when he got here, she says I've been here all these years, I'm not going anywhere. Get some candles, get the bottle of scotch, and let's go on upstairs. (Laughter.) We'll be fine. And she stayed, and the next morning, it started to recede.

C. S.: She said I told you so. (Laughter.) And our son was there, the waves were just lapping. Said mom - (Laughter.)

J.LEEK: So that's, yeah, that's -

C.B.: Funny story.

J.LEEK: Yeah, about the bay. One other little anecdote I will mention because it may be of interest to some people, I think it was during - which administration, was it Bush's administration or - when they met with the Russians and they recited the ships passing, the two boats met out on the ocean. Do you recall that story?

C. S.: No.

J.LEEK: Two presidents. President from Russia -

K.F.: I don't think it was -

J.LEEK: -- president from United States happened to be on ships, and they decided to meet or something. Hasn't been too many. But the point I wanted to make was the poem, Ships Passing in the Night, was written by Paul Lawrence Dunbar, who was inspired to write that poem by sitting on the front porch of our house watching the ships go up and down the bay. And it was Frederick Douglas who introduced Paul Lawrence Dunbar to Mary Church Turrell, who ultimately became good friends. Paul Lawrence Dunbar purchased a lot here in Highland Beach, but died before he could build. So it just gives another connection. Many people know that poem, Ships Passing in the Night.

Have no connection with who wrote it or how he was inspired to write it. So that's a little interesting bit of history.

C.B.: Absolutely.

J.LEEK: Especially about the Bay. The other thing that I think is so unique is the poem, Oh God, written by Frederick Douglas. I don't know whether you know that, but there was a poem written by Frederick Douglas, and it's the title Oh God. And as it turns out, when you read through the poem, and you begin to realize he's talking about the Chesapeake Bay, and at the very end of the poem, he ends by saying, And some day this very bay is going to set me free. And, of course, it did, because he escaped up the bay to Baltimore, worked in the shipyards until he could go north. And that's how he was able to escape slavery. So it was the bay that really did that. So those are a couple of little pieces of history that a lot of folks don't know about. And believe it or not, we're still doing a lot of research, and we're still learning a lot, and we're still folding a lot of history that we didn't even know about. Jean and John and

Carol and a few others right now are working on a new exhibit for this museum. And it will be on the life and times of Mary Church Turrell. And many of the items that you see placed around the museum right now actually belong to her and begin to tell her story. The photographs and all of the materials that will go with it have not been assembled yet, but they're in the process, and that's where they are, in developing the story on her life.

J.L.: That's what all these books are about.

J.LEEK: Right.

K.F.: Oh, right. Okay

J.LEEK: All the photographs all the books are here, and they're going to, because there is so much material to pull from, that you know, we have to select. I mean we've got letters here from our church in Memphis, Tennessee dated 1905, December the 7th. And he says My Dear Little Daughter, your letter was very - I was so pleased to receive your letter and so forth. But anyway, she's telling him that we're here at the beach. And this is - I'm sorry, yeah, 1905, December the 7th, 1905. So we're still finding a lot of these photographs. Here's a picture of my mom. You'd have to take the book - let me show that. That's in the 1930's. And we have a lot of photographs here at the beach. Hold on just a second.

C.B.: Well do you want to tell us any more stories, or are you storied out?

J.LEEK: Well there was one instance when they mentioned the water coming up to the house, I remember as a kid, I guess this was at the same time, around the '38 storm, the end - the road end was not exactly where it was now. It was over toward the creek a little further, and it was lower. And so what had happened was the water from both creeks had met back there. So we were in Iowa, and I recall having to take my boat, row over, row up the creek to Arundel Road, got my - and then go and walk and get some milk, and then come back and bring milk down, but I'd go by boat (Laughter) because we were, as I say, surrounded by water. The road end. As you come in off of Arundel Road, I think you'll notice on both sides, there's a marshy area. Well that was all, the road is higher now, but at the time, the other road, the new road wasn't there. And it was all under water. Both creeks had met back there. So we had water. Only way to get from - to the high ground was by boat.

C.B.: I guess in closing, I was thinking all the publicity, which is wonderful, but it also can be great enemy of a private little resort at the end of a quiet road. How do you feel about that, or I know that the mayor said that you can't park on the street, things like that, but suppose people see your TV show, and they come. Are they only allowed to drive through? Just how are you going to deal with that? Because you're getting visibility because you're doing such good work.

C. S.: They usually just drive through during the summer months. During around May 31st, Memorial Day Weekend, through maybe October, we do have a person at what we call the gate. And that person pretty much lets the visitors know that this is a community where you have to know someone in order to park on the property, that there's no on-street parking. Just reviews the rules of the speed limit and the fact that the children are in the streets and just, you know, keep your speed down. And if they would like to come to the Douglas house, there's a phone number that they can call to make an appointment. This is not open all year. So, therefore, we control the number of people coming that visit by making appointments.

K. F.: Right.

C. S.: And we steer, pretty much steer clear of summer appointments, except during the week because weekends is just too many people. And the people from the community like to come in and see the house or bring their friends. So we try not to impact too much on that level. Sometimes people do have parties and they're given special passes, which they place on the dash of their car to identify them as guests of so and so. And they notified the Board of Commissioners, the Mayor, prior to the party so that we are aware of the fact that we will have some people on the street parking. But they do have a guest pass.

K.F.: And how many houses are here?

C. S.: I think I counted like '97. I'm not sure.

C.B.: That's how you could get 500 people on a weekend if everybody's house is full.

C. S.: And then you have extended family, and somebody has a party and, you know, the numbers just increase drastically.

C.B.: And I've noticed a policeman drive by, I see you have a police officer.

C. S.: Yes, we do. And we have someone on duty, we have around - not around the cock coverage, but we do have coverage, both from the county police and sheriff's department.

L.L.: -- the guard's gate.

C. S.: Yes.

C.B.: And how do you like living down here? We actually have a bona fide child amongst us who is growing up here. What do you think is special about living down here?

L.L.: Well that we can go to the beach and we can swim all we want.

C.B.: Tell us again. What do you think is special?

L.L.: That we can go down to the beach and swim all we want.

C.B.: And are you a good swimmer?

L.L.: Yeah.

C.B.: Do you know everybody in the summertime?

L.L.: Mostly.

C.B.: Do you have friends that come down and visit you?

L.L.: Yeah.

C. S.: What other kind of activities do you do at the beach besides swim?

L.L.: We can fish, and we go crabbing.

C.B.: Have you ever caught a fish?

L.L.: Yeah?

C.B.: How big?

L.L.: Like that big. (Laughter.)

C.B.: Wow, 12 inches.

L.L.: Really, though, I threw my dad's pole in the water.

C.B.: You did? Why? You were afraid?

L.L.: Because I couldn't catch a fish. So I just threw it in the water.

C.B.: And where do you go to school?

L.L.: At Georgetown East.

C. S.: Georgetown East.

C.B.: I don't know where that is.

C. S.: Which is off of Forest Drive.

K.F.: Okay.

C.B.: Okay. Do you ride the bus in the morning?

L.L.: No.

C.B.: No?

L.L.: No, because it doesn't come down here.

C.B.: Oh, you're so isolated. That's great. Do you ride your bike around? Do you have a bike?

L.L.: Yeah.

C.B.: How many playmates do you have down here now?

L.L.: A lot.

C.B.: Great. Do you think you'll always live down here?

L.L.: Yeah.

C.B.: Great. That's what they want to hear.

C.S.: Not the parents, the grandparents. (Laughter.)

K.F.: And did you know all this history, Lisa, before?

L.L.: No.

K.F.: No. So this was a good, this was like school day for you? You learned a few things?

L.L.: Yeah.

C.B.: Tell your teacher then. Extra credit.

C. S.: I guess she's been learning about the family and her heritage. She did a report on Langston Hughes, which is a member of our family.

C.B.: I actually meant to ask, because you mentioned Langston, and I wondered if he was a regular here or if he were a relative or -

C.S.: He is a relative. His mother's maiden name was Langston. So she was - I'm not sure, I'm sure he visited here, but I never saw him here.

C.B.: Related to someone famous before you get famous, right?

L. L.: Yeah.

K.F.: Okay. Well I'll go ahead and turn this off.

(END OF INTERVIEW.)