Catherine Oglesby: it is December the 29th. I am at the home of Nannette Curran. Nannette and Christopher Curran and she's at 500 Ledford Road Dillard, GA, and we are about to get started. Nannette is going to tell me a few things about her life. A few more things about her life and so the first question Nannette is what is your first conscious memory?

Nannette Curran: I kind of have two of them but that's so funny because that used to come up in therapy sessions and these are the two that always came to my mind. One of them is being on the front porch on our house in Orlando and being left alone. I see myself crying and that my mother has left to take my brother to school, and you know I had to have been younger than four because we left Orlando when I was four. The other memory is a much happier one. It is one of my being at that same house but out on the back driveway with my grandfather, whom I adored, and he and I have some blocks of wood and I am building a bridge. And that's, those are my two earliest memories.

CO: That could be so full of symbolism but I'm not a therapist so…

NC: Right well those are the two that always came to mind and those are the ones that…

CO: So that was you were four or younger?

NC: Yes I would have to have been younger than four because we left Orlando when I was four.

CO: What kind of child were you? Describe yourself as a child.

NC: Hmm…Wow that's kind of hard. Well one of the things my mother said about me was that I was a little bit difficult because I would not let her, for example, wash my hair. And I thought about this recently in terms of current day culture, but my mother had someone that worked for her named Pearl and I would only let Pearl wash my hair. So you know, my Granddaddy said I was a very sweet and nice wonderful child until I was about 4 or 5, and then I got to be more difficult. I think I was...

Chris Curran [CC]: I think four or five is when she came to live with him.

NC: Exactly maybe that was the thing. He saw more of me. But I always said that I was a pretty inquisitive child that you know I was…

CO: You remember that?

NC: I kind of remember that in some vague kind of way that I was asking questions and being told that yeah, up until a certain point they would be answered but at another point it was, "you go look that up." so. Ya know but…

CO: your mother described you as a bit difficult. Willful maybe? Do you remember being that way?

NC: No I don't remember that.

CO: What about your parents can you describe them?

NC: I don't even remember my father at all. My father told me that he would, apparently my parents were having trouble before I was born, and Daddy said he would come home sometimes or come to the house where we lived, I think at that point he had moved into an apartment, that he had at the lumber yard but he said he would come in and to visit and he and my mother would get into an argument, and I would climb up my mother's lap and put my hand over her mouth so. Ya know not a pleasant memory.

CO: When did your parents marry, do you have any idea?

NC: Yeah they married in 1927 or 28.

CO: And when did they divorce?

NC: Um, well they were divorced in 1940, it could have been 39. It was before Mama decided to move back up to Rabun County

CO: She didn't remarry?

NC: No, no.

CO: What about your mother? So you didn't see your father much after that?

NC: My mother, my father came around and came to visit a time or two in Clayton and my mother would just go ballistic. She did not…she would allow. She allowed my brother who of course was older to go down to visit Daddy a time or two but if Daddy came up here to the mountains to see us she would just be terribly, terribly upset. A time or two we did go back down to Florida when my mother stayed very close to her inlaws when my grandmother Carter died I must have been five or six we rode the train and went down to be there for the services and I probably saw my father then and then we went back to Orlando to visit a time or two after that and I remember seeing my dad, but for the most part I really never saw my dad hardly at all until I was a teenager.

CO: Were you influenced by what your mother thought about him or did you have enough contact with him to have your own opinion of him?

NC: I didn't much have an opinion of him. I'm not even sure if I knew what he did. Growing up in a small town I remember some girl on the playground asking me one time about my Daddy and I said I think he is a dentist or something so I didn't really know so. Anyways I did not know much about him my mother didn't talk about him at all and if anything was said it was not very favorable.

CO: So was your grandfather then the sort of father figure?

NC: he was yeah

CO: Well in that case would you describe your grandparents?

NC: yeah I can describe them easily. My grandmother was probably the dominating force in many ways in the household in terms of, you know, she kept things running smoothly, so my grandfather could do whatever he wanted to do.

CO: what was that?

NC: He read. Every day, this was during the early 40's and during the war I can just vividly remember that we had to be very quiet when Keltonborn came on for his news broadcast on the radio and probably radio reception was very poor up here but he wanted to hear H.V. Kaltonborn's report on the war, and he was active in politics, he ran for the legislature, he talked to people all the time. There were people that would come and talk to him because he had been the president of the Rabun Gap-Nacoochee School and the founder of the Rabun Gap-Nacoochee school with my grandmother and so…

CO: Your grandfather?

NC: Yea and so all of these people were always coming in to talk.

CO: Your grandfather founded Rabun Gap School?

NC: Yeah yeah.

CO: I did not know that. Wow.

NC: Yeah and he would talk a little about his past life. I knew a little bit about his experience going to Harvard and you know, knowing some of the rather well known people that he got to know up there. One of them was the nephew of Henry James's son William James so yeah. Oh yea.

CO: Which one of William James's sons?

NC: Henry that was named for his uncle Henry. And he served on the board of trustees at the Rabun- Gap Nacoochee School until my Granddaddy retired in 1939. Granddaddy was just one of those strong personalities. He quoted Shakespeare sonnets the whole thing.

CO: Now when was he born do you know roughly what year?

NC: Yeah he was born in roughly 1868.

CO: So did he know William James?

NC: I suppose so because he talked about walking by their house and that's how he got to know Henry James. He would be walking to class and, my grandfather when he went to Harvard was older than most of his classmates for probably close to ten years. He graduated in the class of 1899, and so he was older than most of his classmates. I think Henry James was 20 when he graduated. But Granddaddy would talk about it he kind of when he was walking you know in Cambridge in his class he kind of fell in with Henry James and so yeah he…

CO: What was his name?

NC: Andrew Ritchie. Andrew Jackson Ritchie. And I was told, I don't think that this is apocryphal that he did some tutoring of some of the younger James's children. So actually he must have been in their homes. So anyway I know he loved Cambridge and I remember in a letter he wrote to my grandmother when he was there about the beautiful carpets, and how it would be so nice when they married, that they would have a home with all of these lovely things. They never did, but anyway that's another story. So um. But anyways I was very, very close to my grandfather. I was in awe of him and his expletive was thunder and when he said, "thunder" everyone stopped in the house and we you know would figure out what we did wrong and what we should do next.

CO: So where was he from? Where was his family from?

NC: Here.

CO: From here. And they sent him to Harvard?

NC: Well they didn't send him to Harvard. That's a whole nether story. My grandfather went to--for some reason or another he wanted an education my guess is that it came from his mother I'm not sure if his father encouraged him that much, but his mother apparently did and encouraged her other son she had I think her other son went to the University of Georgia and graduated there. But Granddaddy went to I think Emory at Oxford for one quarter came home, he wasn't happy there went to the University of Georgia, finished a law degree and then for some reason of the other went out Baylor and that's because he knew the great Baptist preacher, George Truett. He went to school with George Truett in Hiawassee. And so while he was at Baylor somebody said, well you know if you want to finish your degree and get an AB degree in English there is Harvard. Then he said okay he came back home, and he went to Harvard. The story is there again I don't know this for sure but that he went and a suit that his mother had made from cloth she had woven, and he walked into the office of Charles Elliot who must have been quite an imposing figure himself and said I'm here to go to school. And Charles Elliot kinda looked at him like, oh well who is this, and where do you come from and what makes you think you could possibly go to school here? Grandaddy talked his way in. He went to his first class in Greek and the professor looked at him and said, "Ritchie you'll never pass this course," and Grandaddy made an A. He was just that kind of determined. Another one of his stories took is that he arrived in Boston and found a place to stay and had almost no money at all. I mean less than a dollar or 50 cents for a room and walked over to the campus and never found his way back to his room so he was completely lost. He had to have been a man of enormous stamina.

CO: so by that time he was in his late 20s?

NC: He would have been yeah I would have think yeah, yeah.

CO: did he take a class with William James?

NC: I don't know. The philosopher? I don't know? That would be good to know but he majored in English he got his AB in English from Harvard in 1899 in his Masters in English in 1901. I mean I've

got his Harvard class of 1890 the 50th anniversary class book here that you know gives some of the details but not a whole lot.

CO: Has anyone written a biography of him, your grandfather?

NC: No, he writes a little biographical stuff in the sketches in Rabun County history.

CO: his own biographical sketch?

NC: a little bit yea. Well mainly about starting the school at Rabun Gap. He has a chapter on that.

CO: did he write journals or diaries? Did he keep any of it? Are you sure?

NC: Well what I do every Tuesday is I go over to the Rabun- Gap Nacoochee school and go through archives and currently I'm going through the minutes of the board of trustees meetings from 1927 until 1947. I think that's the period time that this fantastic ledger contains all these minutes. And the school he actually started the school in 1903 or 1905 that's when they came back. He had been teaching at Baylor.

CO: this says 1903.

NC: yeah that's when they actually came back from Baylor and arrived back in Rabun County but the school actually didn't get started until about 1905 but…

CO: So now when he finished at Harvard did he have a vision of the Rabun Gap.

NC: No, he headed out for Baylor, again probably because of George Truett. He was head of the English department. He and my Grandmother got married. She's one of the strange groups of women, or unusual group of women that the demographic or something shows married late.

CO: How old? Could you tell me about her?

NC: She went to the GSCW Georgia Women's College and which was at Milledgeville and was now whatever it is. Part of the university system but anyways she graduated from there and she was from across the mountains over in Towns County, Hiawassee and…

CO: What was her name?

NC: Her name was Addie Corn.

CO: A-d-d-i-e?

NC: Addie Corn. C-o-r-n yeah. And she was from…her family was more prosperous than my Granddaddy's family there were 12 children. Her mother was a Dillard. Her mother had her first she got married when she was 16. She probably had her first child when she was 17 or 18. She was quite a person herself. She was a midwife. She would go out in the middle of the night jump on a house and ride off into the mountains to help some woman.

CO: Did they write diaries or letters?

NC: Apparently not. She was I think barely literate. I've seen a postcard or two that she wrote and its pretty. I am not sure how well she…

CO: But what about your grandmother do you have letters from her?

NC: Yeah there are letters from grandmother. I think my brother has a pretty good collection of them. One day, see I grew up in their house and one day I went down to the basement and I found this trunk and I found a packet of letters that my Granddaddy had written to my grandmother. And I started reading them and grandma then discovered that I found them and she burned them. My brother has some of them, he says he has given me copies of them. I don't think he has and I need to get copies of them before…

CO: ya you really do they are eroding as we speak.

NC: well he's made, there are copies of them. Of her letters but yeah back to your original question about what I have of Granddaddy in the archives there must be tons of letters that my grandfather wrote. And that's what I spend my time doing is starting to look for all that.

CO: is the archives pretty organized and processed? Is it cataloged and…

NC: It's a work in progress I would have to say. We have a woman who comes up from Athens every Tuesday. Her name is Linda Aaron and she has been an archivist at the University of Georgia in the Hargrett Library and she has been a big help. She's retired now and her health is not really great. She has trouble getting around but you know she advises about you know what humidity control, taking care of these documents making sure that they are stored properly in boxes so that and copying things onto acid free or whatever, you know. So we do have that…we are working on it.

CO: do you have donors that will support that?

NC: The woman that was here that came by just a few minutes ago was signing a letter that we had written thanking people who have made a contribution for increasing the size of our archives operation

CO: are they literally going to add on?

NC: Yeah we are currently in a fairly small building. Christopher what size is it? About half the size of this building maybe or is it that big? It's a pretty small building. And we are you know we have to…its hard working in there because we are all sitting on top of each other trying to get things you know.

CO: But you have a fund raiser going now?

NC: Yeah. We've got enough money raised plus with what the school has given us to add onto the building and to preserve a little barn that's right there that we kinda wanted to preserve. Originally we were going to try to move some of the archives in there, but it was going to be too expensive to make

it…I mean what we can store in there is a lot of the old farm stuff that does have to be climate controlled.

CO: I'm so glad is the woman from UGA kind of doing that on her own or?

NC: She gets paid a pittance. I think maybe enough to cover her expenses. She loves coming up there for some reason or another.

CO: Oh I'm sure.

NC: And I think the school gives her $200 a month or some thing, its just…

CO: It's an archivists dream, you know, to be able to make…

NC: Well yeah. She just, I mean she is so knowledgeable, not just about Rabun Gap but all this whole area and…

CO: Is she from the area?

NC: No. I've forgotten where, maybe around the Athens area originally I'm not sure? But she is a huge asset. But she runs into a bit of a conflict sometimes with the person who is our main archivist. And he is a wonderful, wonderful person, but he has a practical problem of being able to access stuff pretty readily when former students come in they want to see something. We just got a problem with how to store it so we can find it, and so anyway. Like I say its…

CO: Well that's a project. That's a huge project that's very time consuming.

NC: It is.

CO: It's sort of --- have you taken that on…are you just?

NC: I'm just a volunteer. I go over on Tuesdays and my current---Billy Joe Stiles the almost 80 year old man that has been the primary preserver up to this point. He has just been wonderful. He saved many things that would have been thrown away. And you know I'm just aghast sometimes when he tells me about things that he knows you know got tossed, but anyways, you know it's not like there's a big paid staff over there. I mean the school can't afford that, but we are just doing the best we can. And for me it is a labor of love. It's fascinating. It's one of the things that has made living up here for me. I mean I've never dreamed I would get into this kind of things but I know Christopher told me for years you know you outta write the story…but…

CC: I would really like her to put together a kind of history of how the school was financed. Because they usually get a lot of money from Woodruff and various other big names down here but also a large amount of money came from classmates he had at Harvard and it's…

CO: How about his wife's family? Did they?

NC: No they wouldn't have had that kind of money I mean they had 12 children that you know. They may have had 800 acres or so of farmland but they were prosperous in relation to you know their neighbors, but as far as there being any inheritance…I'm sure my grandfather got part of the land that is now part of the school campus from his father, because I know exactly where that property was and part of its part of…the Rabun Gap-Nacoochee school has now I think about, between 14 and 1600 acres of land in this little Tennessee Valley. They had a little bit more than that and sold some of it off at one point but they had some wonderful land.

CO: If we just had legislators that understood, appreciated, the need for archival support.

NC: yeah and you know I hear Linda Aaron constantly talking about how difficult it is to keep up with everything and make sure things are kept that are important.

CO: Yeah well it takes money it takes resources and budgets get cut and when you serve on a board of historical records trying to get the legislature to comprehend the importance of that is pretty difficult. Wow I don't know but maybe you told me, or maybe Nancy told me, but I didn't realize that or I would have come better armed.

NC: What do you mean better armed?

CO: I would have known more and…

NC: I thought that part of this was the process you know of discovery

CO: yeah but I would have had better questions to ask. I am intrigued by his

CC: where are the 1990, er 1899 book?

NC: It's over there I had it out yesterday because I was…the paper interviewed me several days ago about the history of the school and I pulled out my Granddaddy's --. Well my copy of the Sketches of Rabun County History and also the Harvard…is it not over there? I had it there at the computer there maybe I didn't make it back…

CO: Which paper interviewed you?

NC: Oh the *Clayton Tribune*. It was, well I won't say…

CO: Well some of these questions are designed for you know traditional household about Mother and Daddy but if it applies for your grandparents can this just you know…

NC: I was virtually raised by my grandparents. My mother was there but um…

CO: So she had to work then did she…

NC: No my grandfather, I mean okay here is the whole story about how we lived. When my parents were divorced my father didn't want to pay alimony to my mother so instead of doing that he gave her the house in Orlando that we lived in, which I think she probably intended to stay there, but then it

was so unhappy and Granddaddy and Grandmamma said, “okay, Ruth you can come home.” She was an only child and so she did that she went home, but so there was a house in Orlando that was rented out, and that was income for us and then my father gave Mama and me and my brother all separate basically slum, we were basically slum landlords, he gave us what my father in his grossness would say was, “Nigger property” in you know Orlando. They were little shot-gun houses and my mother, man Mr. Coffee, I remember it well she would come in to Mr. Coffee about collecting the rent you know he would go by every day I mean once a week, or I expect it was once a week and pick up the rental money and send it to Mama. And that was our income until, for our little family unit, until Mama sold the house in Orlando and also she went to work and then the interstate came through that neighborhood the ghetto type slum neighborhood and you know we sold the property when I was, I must have been 20 or 21 years old at that time.

CO: So what did the African Americans who lived there, what would they do?

NC: I have no idea. I had no contact with any of them. I don’t know if I even saw that property ever. I wouldn’t know where it is. I know I could find out but I have no idea where it is. But the other way that we lived was that when my grandfather retired from the Rabun Gap-Nacoochee School he had no source of income, I mean he had no retirement income, he had not received a salary. They had nothing and they left school went over to live with my grandmother’s sister in Hiawasee and the New York and Boston trustees getting word of this, raised enough money for an annuity for my grandfather, enough money to sustain him until the annuity got going, and bought them a house, gave them money to build a house in Clayton which they did and money enough to buy a car, which my grandmother drove since my grandfather never drove a car. And maybe there was, well I think Grandmother still had her typewriter from school at Rabun Gap…

CO: Do you know when she was born your Grandmother?

NC: Grandmama? Grandmother was born let’s see 18…let’s see she died in 1966 and she was 93 so whatever that was. I have to do it uh…I don’t know why I can’t ever remember the year she was born. But she died in 1966…

CO: It might be 1873?

NC: Yeah that sounds right.

CO: When did your grandfather die?

NC: Um 1948. November 22nd.

CO: So your mother didn’t have to work until…

NC: She did not go to work until…I mean Mama was around doing everything she came…when we moved up here from Orlando, my mother immersed herself into every possible I think volunteer thing. Everything from the Baptist church, she started to PTA and got flush toilets in the school. I mean she was, my mother was plenty smart. Um she um she would go down to Gainesville to the League of

Women Voters. I mean she graduated from college she went to same…no actually she graduated from the University of Georgia. She went to GFCW for a year or two and then transferred to the University of GA. She started the hospital auxiliary at one point. I mean she was doing everything.

CO: So she was politically active.

NC: Well she was yeah she was just she…

CO: Did she ever talk about having an awareness of woman's suffrage? She would have been an early teenager.

NC: These women were so strong I don't think it crossed their mind in particularly…

CO: That they needed to vote?

NC: Oh they voted. Well my grandmother. You couldn't ask my grandmother who she voted for because she would say that's my business, and you know I make up my own mind about that so…

CO: but do you think she had a part in the Suffrage Movement at all?

NC: No. Not grandmother. Grandmother was too busy. When she got…when they came back from Baylor. And my guess is she's the big reason why they came back, although nobody ever said that. But when my grandparents came back from Texas to…my mother was three months old. One of the stories is grandmother and mother after they got back here in the back of a wagon and the horse, or whatever took off, and they fell out. Grandmother apparently broke her arm and never said a word about it when she was in her 80s, she fell in Franklin NC and had to go to the hospital and X-rayed her arm and said you broke this arm sometime in the past and she said yeah I know when I did that. She was that kind of person. She…do you need him to close that door…that sound going to dribble in?

CO: I don't think so.

NC: Okay, but anyways grandmother was so busy running the school. She ran the Rabun Gap Nachoochee School for many, many years because Granddaddy had to be on the road raising money. And you can read the letters that she wrote to him saying don't come home until you've got the money so.

CO: So where did they get teachers? I remember reading about the school and being so utterly curious about it

NC: Yeah, uh you know my recollection about a lot of the teachers is that they were typically of that era. Very bright women who were teachers because there weren't many other opportunities for them. And some of…I don't know how they recruited them. Maybe they went down to the state normal school or whatever but one of them was a woman named Mildred. She was Mildred Bryan after she married. She married a man down at Jefferson GA had the Jefferson Mills, but she had gone to Bryn Mawr so you know she was a north, more of a north easterner, beautiful woman as I remember her,

but they pulled them in from all kinds of places. One of the ones that I remember was had been at Berea in that must not have been, they must have gotten other people from Berea because I know my great uncle Hopkins, Will Hopkins was a Berea graduate and he had come to Rabun gap, and that is where he met my grandmother's sister and then they married but so…they got them from wherever they could find them. That's an interesting thing that I would be curious if I could find it in the records. More about where they found these teachers.

CO: Is there a history of the school. I know there is a basic pamphlet history but…

NC: Yeah other than what is in the Sketches of Rabun County History there's not a really good history of the whole thing. Basically Granddaddy-- he does the story of the school here in our share of the founding of the school at Rabun Gap but you have to understand that my grandfather was 78 years old when he was writing all this, and he was in very poor health. He had already been down to Emory and was diagnosed with colon cancer. And he died two years after that.

CO: Do you think your grandparents' interest in this school shaped your own ambitions or occupation in life. Did that influence what you did, what you majored in, what your own educational pursuits would be?

NC: Yeah I'm really pretty sure about that. There was never any question in my mind that I would at least graduate from college. I used to say that I would keep on studying and get a Ph.D. and I did do a couple of Master's Degrees, but nothing very academic in my opinion. I knew that I would finish school. I got married when I was 20 and had Terri when I was 21, and Kay when I was 22 but I still graduated with my class at Emory you know there was just no question in my mind but that I had to finish school and you know that was just…

CO: And what was your major?

NC: Oh I majored in psychology. When I first went to Emory I thought I would major in philosophy and then I switched majors to psychology and then later on went and got a Masters of Arts in teaching, partly because the Ford Foundation said they would pay for it, and they paid for my going to school plus a stipend that paid the babysitting fee for the children. Later on after I divorced, I went to GA State and did an MED in counseling and psychological services, because I thought that maybe I could get a job in that.

CO: Did you use that?

NC: Not really. I worked for the Labor Department in what was supposedly employment counseling, but there wasn't a whole lot of counseling involved. And I did at one point run a program for counseling, it was kind of an odd ball special grant program for the Corrections Department in the Fulton Country Court System where we counsel minor offenders so they would not have – their record could be expunged. So, anyway. Why the Labor department was doing that, I'll never know. It didn't last for long.

CO: Well, I have a whole section on work and we'll get to that. But what of your extended family? So your mother was an only child, and so there wasn't a large extended family of uncles and aunts.

NC: Right.

CO: What about your grandparents, though, did they have any extended family?

NC: Yeah, it's something that as I've gotten to be an older person, I think about sometimes. The fact that I knew so much about my grand*mother's* family. Okay, well starting with my immediate family, my father had two brothers. And I never knew those cousins hardly at all – well I was the youngest of the cousins, and so I didn't know that part of the family very well at all. And my father was pretty much estranged from his brother most of his life. His brother was very, very wealthy, and his children are very, very wealthy. They all owned a large part of the land that Walt Disney bought in Orlando, so (laughs). Among other things –

CO: That could have helped with the school.

NC: Well, they could have helped with a lot of things, but that was not their way of life. So anyway, they have their own private airfields and stuff like that. Which is, you know, fine. But, I never knew them that well. My brother knew them better because he was closer to their age, and I think he stays in touch with some of those. So that part of my family, I didn't know very well. The part of the family I knew best was my grandmother's brothers and sisters. And their children, and their grandchildren. And, you know, as long as grandmother was alive, those people would come around from wherever they lived. She had 2 brothers that were doctors; one in Macon was a urologist and another in Greenville, South Carolina was a dermatologist. And I was taken over there when I was a teenager because of acne, and they did x ray treatments with this contraption that I'm sure – you know, I got all kinds of excessive rays. And later on in life I developed a thyroid problem, and for some reason or another, I told my internist – I said "you know when I was a teenager, I had this x ray treatment for acne." And he said "you should have had thyroid cancer long before now." He said, "that's just a classic." And that's what it turned up. And fortunately, my thyroid problem wasn't cancer, but they did take my thyroid out. Anyway, so you know, I knew my grandmother's side of the family best because she stayed in touch with them – I'm sorry, they [the dogs] need a good brushing there (laughs). Their hair is really shedding.

CO: So they got together often and that's really –

NC: Yeah, she was very close with her older sister – the one that was next to her. My grandmother and her sister were the two oldest girls. I think there were two older sons – both of whom went out – one went to Texas, one when to Nebraska. One was a dentist and the other one – I've forgotten what he was, but anyway. And they died, you know, as young men in their 30's, but the rest of those 12 children lived to be old.

CO: What happened to the two who died in their 30's? What was the –

NC: The flu or something, like that. You know, I don't know if it was that flu epidemic in 1918 – could have been, but I'm not sure. But anyway, both of them died as young men, but they had families that grandmother kept up with and I still stay in touch with one of those cousins that's in Texas. I've lost touch with some of that side of the family. But Grandmother's sister, that she was so close with, also married late and also went to Georgia State College for Women (GSCW). But I remember Aunt Maggie well, she had a home in Hiawassi, and she did have Alzheimers, which never hit my grandmother. My grandmother lived to be 93, and her mind was clear as a bell. So she was pretty remarkable. So, you know, I have one brother – we're like two separate families. We have very different outlooks on life and very –

CO: You and your brother?

NC: Yeah. Yeah, so –

CO: And he was older?

NC: Yeah, he was seven years older.

CO: Now what do ascribe that different perspective to?

NC: I think he was just brought up differently. I mean, he was brought up when Mama and Daddy were still together. I mean, you know, I came along when they were beginning to have really serious problems, I think. And by the time – And I don't know if this went on for all of their married life, but my mother would spend most of her summers up here at Rabun Gap. Daddy was working the saw mill or the lumber company in Orlando, and for a certain period of time, I think when my brother was very little – they lived in Decatur. And Daddy worked as a carpenter, and went to Georgia Tech at night. But he had always felt badly, I think, that he never graduated from college. He said, you know, he had to put his older brother through law school and he was a little bitter about that.

CO: You know, I told you I was interested in mothers. Did your mother – could you describe your mother's relationship with her mother? What was that like?

NC: I think a lot of times it was difficult. Grandmother was just the steadiest person in the world. Mother was more mercurial; she would have mood swings. I can remember my grandmother hustling me out of the house and saying “Go over to Mrs. Randolph’s until your mother is okay.” And the one instance that I remember – it was strangely – was that I had left some chewing gum paper apparently out on this thing, right there – that very piece of furniture that was in our dining room. And I don't know how old I was – I was very young. And grandmother said, “your mother is terribly upset. Go over to Mrs. Randolph’s “– who was this wonderful woman that also helped raise me. I had a lot of good older people that took care of me. But I'd go over to Mrs. Randolph’s until Mama calmed down.

CO: So your mother was angry because you left a wrapper paper?

NC: uh huh. That set a riot off. You never could be sure what would set Mama off.

CO: And when she got set off, what happened?

NC: Grandmother was worried that she would beat me up.

CO: Did she spank you?

NC: I don't remember it. I remember her hitting my brother, but I don't remember being hit. And I think my grandmother would've protected me from that (laughs). I just –

CO: So your mother and her mother had –

NC: They had a sort of strained relationship. Granddaddy – I think Granddaddy adored his daughter. One of the things I've discovered later in my life was that my grandparents lost two babies. Apparently this information appears in the census, and Linda Aaron pointed this out to me. And it aroused in me some memory of – my mother always talked about that she had had several miscarriages, and she had to go to bed to have me, and that was supposed to make me feel special or something. Which it didn't. And (laughs). Well I thought "well I guess you rested up. You got bed rest while you were pregnant." But Granddaddy I think adored his daughter.

CO: So the relationship with him was less –

NC: And my mother probably had a whole lot of resentment, and I think I picked up on some of this about-- Cause she was never properly cared for because Grandmother ran the school. Mother was sent over – and these were funny little stories I would hear. Mother would talk about being sent over to her grandparents – to her maternal grandparents in Hiawassee. And they doted on her – I mean, they were older people. When she was a late teenager, I guess, her grandfather took her to a reunion of the Civil War veterans, possibly in Texas. But he would also, apparently, cause his younger children or their children to be a little jealous of Mama, cause apparently when Ruth came in, Granddaddy – her Granddaddy would buy her like little red shoes and special things. Pretty much everyone agreed that Mama may have been a little bit spoiled, but also a little bit of an orphan child. What is so funny is to go through the pictures in the Rabun Gap archives and a lot of the stuff, Linda and I date from how old my mother is in the pictures. Because she appears in so many of these pictures at the school. And so –

CO: Well she was born –

NC: In 1903. Yeah. She was 3 months old when they came here to start the school.

CO: So her whole life was really –

NC: Her whole life was – I mean she even went to Boston at least one summer with Granddaddy, took two classes at either Radcliffe or Harvard. And, I mean, she would be in the homes of all these people who served wine at dinner – which was really something, you know, she wasn't accustomed to. And neither was I until I was a grown woman. I mean there was always liquor in the house, but, you know, nobody drank so to speak.

CO: So it was medicinal?

NC: Yeah, right.

CO: So was your relationship with her similar to her relationship with her mother? Was it

NC: No. No. I don't think so. I think my mother and I probably – well one of the easy ways to describe it is a sort of a love/hate relationship. I think we went at it maybe from fairly early times, but I was always trying to take care of her or placate her or, you know, I can see her in the hammock one time. There was a hammock out on the porch of the house out in Clayton. And I went out there and took my little piggy bank of pennies and took it out there to say, you know, here's this. “This will make you feel better” or something. (Laughs). She thought 'what's wrong with this kid', but I think yeah, I was somewhat in the role of taking care of her particularly after – maybe after Granddaddy died, I don't know. But grandmother was too, and both of us could catch hell for it. I mean we just didn't know which way it was going.

CO: You were child mother to the mother. You mothered her in some ways.

NC: In some ways, yeah. And also I had to deal with the fact that Grandmother and Mother both adored my brother. He was this very good looking young boy, and Granddaddy didn't like him that much, cause he was a problem child. Granddaddy – because I liked being with Granddaddy. Granddaddy and I would walk to town every day. It was a mile to walk from where we lived into town. I would walk along with him, and he would go to the post office, pick up the mail then stop at the barber shop and get his shave. And he always wore his 3 piece suit with his watch and his little key chain – it was gold, and it was so neat. I always kind of thought that Granddaddy kind of liked me but, you know. And I was hanging around with these people all the time, and I remember one time I said something about discombobulating. And I must've been about six or seven, and Granddaddy says “don't use jawbreakers. You use plain language.” (Laughs). But I had heard him say it, and I would say to him things that I would hear him say. And then he would have me recite things that I can still remember to this day. Like one of of was – I must've been four or five and people would come in and Granddaddy would say “Now, Nannette, you recite for them.” And he would say “Recite what I told you.” And I would say “Okay. There was an old owl that lived in an oak; the more he heard the less he spoke. The less he spoke, the more he heard. Soldier, imitate that bird.” And that's the one that I remember the most having to recite. But I also had to go take elocution lessons and I had these long things that I had to memorize and say. So, anyway, that was funny. Every day when I came home from school, I had to give him a report – and I hated that –

CO: Where did you go to school?

NC: At the local elementary school in Clayton. It was pretty scary (laughs).

CO: But he kept up with that?

NC: Oh yeah! He wanted me to report when I came in from school, you know. He knew what I was doing, he knew who my teachers were.

CO: But you were his favorite, and your brother was your mother's –

NC: And Grandmother's favorite. So, anyway. I think it was a little bit of an unusual childhood, I mean, I think a lot of kids probably grew up in grandparents households – I mean it was unusual to have at that time parents that were divorced, I think. I was the only kid I knew that – and I mean I was horribly embarrassed by it. You know – that my parents were divorced.

CO: Was your grandfather though in your lifetime, was he sort of a celebrity in the region?

NC: I didn't really know that – I knew that there were interesting things around him. I remember a man coming in to visit one day that signed the guest book and I remember being there when he was there. He came from Turkey. And what he wanted to know about was the Farm Family Plan that the school did and he read about it in Time magazine or something like that. And it was the time of Ataturk, I guess, in Turkey when he was doing all this – trying to bring these people into the 20th century or 21st century or from wherever they were. I knew my Granddaddy was special. I remember that he went down – I knew we were a little worried cause he'd gone down to Gainesville and gotten up on a platform – made a speech about how Gene Talmadge and today it seems so, kinda strange. But compared – Gene Talmadge to Hitler, cause you know this town, these time people get compared to Hitler or Stalin or whomever else – oh my gosh, let's not do that. But Granddaddy got out there and said "you know, the county unit system is so wrong." And he was outspoken. My grandmother worried – my Granddaddy always walked a lot. He would walk from Rabun gap to Clayton, and when he was late coming home, she was always sure he was dead, because he didn't hesitate to speak out against bootleggers, or whomever else he thought was doing evil in the county. So he had enemies.

CO: Well I could listen to those stories – and I'm sure there are more. And I'm happy to hear them, but can you – this is going to be difficult. Can you choose a most significant or memorable event in your life up to the age of 12 – when you were a child, before you reached adolescence?

NC: That's not hard. It's when my Granddaddy died. I was 11, and I can remember sobbing so, I can remember the dress that I had on. My recollection is that there was nobody there to comfort me. That they were all so – you know, my mother and my grandmother so distraught. And I remember – it was in November, and I remember going back to school – must've been right around Thanksgiving. And I remember thinking "I'm going back to school. Nobody's going to know what's happened to me." And of course they didn't, I mean they were children – [Phone rings]. That's the point at which I think I might have become very depressed. But I don't know – I think it was very, very hard for me. Another night, when he was dying, I was sent up to the Frys' home where the archives are now. They were good friends of the family and they always took me in when there was some traumatic event going on. And Granddaddy was dying, I think they knew that. And I was sent up to the Frys, and then eventually taken back home. I mean, there was this crowd of people there that had come in – I remember them coming in when it was dark. But the whole business of my grandfather's dying was, I think very hard for me. I remember one time the dentist came in, cause he couldn't go in, but they felt like his teeth needed cleaning a little bit. And I got the job of holding the flashlight while they were cleaning Granddaddy's teeth. And I fainted. I mean, you know.

CO: He had died already?

NC: No, he was still alive, but they felt like cleaning his teeth for some reason or other was the thing to do so they had the old dentist in Clayton come up to the house. For some reason or another, I was the one holding the flashlight for the dentist to work in his mouth, and I remember fainting. So those are bizarre memories –

CO: But they're there for a reason. When you were a child, what did you dream of doing? I mean, obviously you had a family with pretty significant ambitions and visions. When you were a child, what did you think you would do as an adult?

NC: I thought I'd be a writer. I could remember – you know, Granddaddy was writing the book, Grandmother was typing up notes and there was a stenographer that came in. And I was always going to write my own book. Grandmother said "fine, come on, tell me what you want to write." And I'd sit down for a few minutes (laughs), and try to write my book. But it never would get written. But that's where I thought I'd go. But you know, I think at some point in my life, I thought that the way out of this situation with my mother is for me to get married and go off and have my own family. And that's what I did. And, you know, I don't have any regrets about that. I knew I had to finish school. I thought I could be a teacher, but I couldn't – It just didn't work for me. The people at Emory that came in and observed me said "Nannette, you know, the only kind of kids you could possibly teach would be very bright ones." (laughs). Cause I was struggling in a very – in a school where most of the kids didn't have a bat's chance in hell of becoming above what they were and it just drove me crazy. I wasn't good at that. I didn't know how to handle it.

CO: Who were your heroes as a child, when you were a child? Anybody from a relative to a –

NC: Well, Granddaddy was my major hero, but you know in my teenage years it was Lillian Smith, that was for sure. Other than that, I don't know. I really didn't have teachers or people like that that stood out –

CO: Well that's enough! Granddad and Lillian Smith are pretty –

NC: Yeah. I mean I read a lot as a kid, so I think I lived a lot in a fantasy world.

CO: And a fantasy in terms of what you would be was that you would be a writer.

NC: What about your struggles as a child. You've talked about some of them. What would you say if asked that specifically, what were your struggles as a child, what would you say?

NC: Well, you know, the first thing that pops in my head with psychotherapy – dealing with that – would be my mother – just dealing with my mother. Who could be so much fun. I mean, I can say that there are many things that I got from my mother that – my love of going out in the woods and camping. The best times I remember with my mother were when we went out camping and being in the woods foraging – she'd call it foraging---we'd go out finding ferns and hemlocks and dig 'em up in the woods. I mean now if you got caught doing that you'd probably be arrested. But we'd come home and plant em – she had this wonderful hemlock hedge. I think I loved – I got a lot of my love of

gardening and working in the dirt and stuff from her. But I also got a lot of my fears – sort of neurotic fears from her.

CO: Psychological –

NC: Yeah, yeah, I mean. A lot of inhibitions or fears of not being nice or something like that (laughs). You know, nice to other –

CO: So did she have that sort of – did she feel like she had to be nice to people?

NC: Yeah, I think so. It was very important to my mother that she have status in the community, I think. Not monetarily, but as the whole thing with the family was that you've got to be an upstanding citizen and contribute. And those are not bad things – I don't fault that at all. I thought, you know, there was an underbelly that as I've grown older and people say to me things like "oh, your mother was the same." I think well, not from my perspective (laughs).

CO: Was becoming a teenager – I mean, we put so much emphasis on that now psychologically, that transition from childhood to adolescence. But do you recall it being a marked stage in your life? Becoming a teenager and you know –

NC: Yeah, probably. I didn't do that very well in – I know this is tangential, but Christopher gave me an article two or three days ago from the *New York Times* on the new concentration on the importance of the per-pubescent age from eight to like 11 or so, what's going on there. And I think it's because the brain make so many changes, and actually reaches – well, it's a more important period than its given credit for, I think. But anyway, as far as my teenage years, when I got through the 7th grade in the Rabun County Schools I said I don't want to go to school here anymore. I was 11 – my menstrual period started when I was in the 6th grade, and that was kind of early and I think that was a bit traumatic for me. I'm not sure I knew what exactly was happening to me, and I think my mother was – I think I was given the book on whatever the current book was on where baby's come from or something like that. And so –

CO: So you were given a book instead of a lecture.

NC: Yeah, I don't remember there being any lecture. My mother was a very – I think conflicted person about sexuality. And Grandmother was part of that Victorian era and my grandmother was, I think probably the most influential person in my life in many ways in terms of just steadiness. I mean with Mama and Granddaddy there was more passionate, you know, ups and downs and fluctuations in their moods. Grandmother was always pretty much the same person – when there was trouble, that's who you went to, cause she'd get you through it. And that remained true I think all her life, that I knew her. I'm sorry I lost track of where that came from.

CO: Well I asked you about was it a notable turning point when you became a teenager.

NC: Yeah, yeah. As far as – I just remember it as hard. I think I would've liked – I mean I had two or three good friends, and to this day, I think that's incredibly important. I mean that you have at least one or two good friends among your peers.

CO: Well, what about your brother? Cause he's considerably older. He's what, seven years older than you? How was the transition for him?

NC: Yeah. I have no idea. He graduated from high school when he was 16 – that was when Georgia had the 11th grade was it. He was gone and off to Mercer University and all I knew about John was that he caused trouble. He would come in drunk, and cause trouble and I'd have to write him notes, cause I was so much younger and I thought that he was going to hell. So I had to write notes about Jesus and stuff like that and put under his pillow so that he wouldn't go to hell, and so that maybe Mama would quit beating up on him. But I mean –

CO: So your Mama spanked your brother?

NC: Yeah. I mean as a teenager – this is a very vague memory, but I can remember John as a teenager being – apparently some of buddies just threw him up on the front porch one night when he was drunk, and Mama apparently beat the stew out of him. I don't know with what, but that's what I was told. Or that's what I thought happened. That's what I recollected. And I think it scared me, and I was very upset about it.

CO: Scared for him?

NC: Scared for him, and scared for me and the whole thing. And this was after Granddaddy died. So Granddaddy wasn't around.

CO: I wanted you to address the issue of gender awareness. But there was a considerable difference in your age, so it would be kind of difficult to say whether or not the difference in treatment was related to your being a girl and him being a boy. But did you –

NC: I think expectations of me were far beyond what they were of John.

CO: More?

NC: Yes. Yes.

CO: Now why is that?

NC: I don't know. I do not know. My impression comes not only from my recollection or my experience of it, but also from my brother's that I was considered smarter.

CO: And you think your grandfather picked up on that?

NC: My Mother always said to me "Nannette, you are a very smart child, yet you don't have any common sense." That kind of thing. John – they just adored him. I mean John – and John's no slouch as far as – I mean he graduated from college and went back to the University of Georgia after he did

his stint in the Navy. And had his own accounting firm in Gainesville. He did quite well. He's not a stupid person. But to be sort of blunt and maybe a bit snobbish about it, my part of the family was much more dedicated to education. My three children all graduated from Emory and two out of the three did professional degrees. I mean, my son and my daughter both graduated from University of Georgia Law school. And daughter Kay did fine, she went to the Emory Business School and worked for Delta airlines for eight years. But it seems to me – and maybe that's because of the environment they were brought up in. They were brought up in the Emory community. But I can't help but think it's partly because my dedication to education far outweighed that of my brother. Because his kids, and I'm close with the youngest – or next to the youngest of them – but from what Susan tells me, education to my brother for his children was not something cared about. And that to me was very disturbing – six [?]. And you know the oldest one did graduate from the University of Georgia in animal husbandry. The rest of them managed to finish school one way or another, but mainly community colleges and things like that. And there's where I'm probably being snobbish, but I still think there was a huge difference in how we felt about where you went to school and the kind of education you got. And education to me was not so that you could make big bucks, but so that you could be a better person in some way or anther. I don't know. Or so that you could explore the world with a few more tools. That's where I came down and – you know my brother and I are not close. We are kind of like this – I would not let my brother in my house.

CO: Because your mother and your grandmother doted on him and your grandfather seemed to dote on you, do you think that affected your brother at all?

NC: Probably.

CO: So he had a sense about –

NC: Well he probably wouldn't say that, but I would suspect he did. I mean, I'll give my brother credit. It would have been very, very hard to have been taken out of a very comfortable home in Orlando, Florida, where he had a much nicer house, he had much nicer friends, he had cornet lessons; he was in a band. He could do this and that and the other. And be taken to the wilds of North Georgia.

CO: And he was what, 12 when that happened?

NC: He was – yeah, 11 or 12.

CO: That's a pretty critical time.

NC: It was a critical time! He was taken away from his father. You know, I think it was tough and so, you know, I understand. Part of it – but it doesn't make it possible for me to have a relationship with my brother that I enjoy. Because he always in one way or another tries to take me down. (Laughs).

CO: And you feel that there may be some resentment there from the –

NC: Oh yeah. I mean, we don't – when I ran away from home when I was 16 or 17 and went to live with my Daddy, and that wasn't gonna work out, and my mother was getting a court order for me to

come back and whatever else was going on. And my brother said “oh, I will take Nannette.” He was up in Norfolk, Virginia in the Navy, and you know, I wouldn't have gone there. And I think even my Daddy would have said, “No way, you can't do that.” And I'm not sure my mother would have allowed it, but anyway. What that ended up with is I went to boarding school at Young Harris.

CO: Well my next question was about – I asked you what was the most significant event up to the age of 12, and of course that’s classic division of developmental stages. But what about as a teenager – would it be that when you ran away at 16?

NC: Oh yeah. I went to school at Rabun Gap in the 8th grade. I told my mother, you know, I don't want to go to school in Clayton anymore. I was sick of it, and I thought I wasn't getting a good education – I didn't like it. And so she said, “Okay, I'll drive you up to Rabun Gap every day.” And in 8th/9th grade I think things went pretty well. But by the 10th grade, Mother and I were fighting tooth and nail, and I was being somewhat rebellious, you know. I'd sneak around and smoke a cigarette, or something like that. And I never – my studies never suffered. I always made –

CO: So this was early '50's.

NC: Oh yeah, this is early '50s. I was – my rebellion was kind of, you know, smoking cigarettes, driving a car like a maniac, and my mother would actually sign off on my smoking when I went to Young Harris. She signed and said “Yeah, sure it’s okay if she smokes.” But she would be so strange, you know. Many stories about that. When I ran off and lived with my Daddy, when I was just getting so upset. I think I was really thinking suicidal thoughts. But my mother would do things like – when I ran off to live in Ocala with Daddy, she got my best friend at Rabun Gap – who's still my friend. And had Cathleen and her parents come down at 7:00 to have a prayer vigil for Nannette. (laughs).

CO: So your mother was religious?

NC: Oh, extremely! Yeah, and that was part of this business of status in the community, was that she must have done something terribly wrong because, you know, John was getting into all this trouble and I was rebelling and this showed to the community that she was a terrible parent.

CO: Do you think that she was actually interpreting it thought these spiritual values or was she more concerned about how the community was seeing her?

NC: My guess is the later. I mean, she would worry about – she did worry about, you know, about – and see that is so strange when I start to talk about that because I never had this real sense of my mother's deep, spiritual – how that was in the depths of her being. Maybe I could see that in my grandmother, who didn't go to church a lot but early in the morning, she would be at the table reading her Bible. But never spoke very much about religion. And Granddaddy certainly didn't.

CO: Granddaddy didn't talk about it.

NC: Uh, uh.

CO: It informs, obviously, his principles that started that school.

NC: Yeah, I would think so. Yeah, what he valued was caring about other human beings and making sure they did better. Or had an opportunity at least to improve themselves, that was what his school was about.

CO: Because not all Baptists believed in helping people. You know, that was not a – that it could be extremely other worldly, and that was the focus. It was all about saving souls, not helping people, you know.

NC: Right. Well, I think that's more of a Presbyterian thing, is to be interested in education, as I understand it the Presbyterian Church was very active in early education in Georgia before there was public schools. But my grandfather was actually a Methodist; my grandmother came from a family that had a lot of Baptist ministers in it. But if there was anybody dedicated to improving human life it was my grandmamma too. That was just what she cared about.

CO: There was a lot more reform-mindedness among the Methodists –

NC: And social action, yeah. But I was – I mean that was the Wesley's there.

CO: It's such an individual thing. I mean its – depending on which branch of the Methodists you were, you know. Well it sounds like this question is a foregone conclusion, but was your rebellion – the question is do you recall disagreeing with or questioning your family's beliefs or values, and which ones if that's the case? But was your rebellion about that? Were you questioning your –

NC: Yeah, I was questioning my mother. I mean, that's who I was mainly rebelling against was – I think sometimes her. Well, I'm not sure exactly, because the lines were always moving around. I knew I had a more open mind than she did even when I was that age; that my view of the world was different. And my mother wasn't, you know, like – I think she was happy to see me in anything I did. Like to fight against segregation or anything like that. Ours was somehow a deeper – I don't know there's a deeper. It had to do more with – I had to be my own person separate from her. And she wanted me to be her person, and be like her, and meet her expectations as far as who – I shouldn't deviate at all from the party line. Whatever her party line was.

CO: Well, that's important. I really want to know what her party line was. But that sounds like that might be pretty detailed. Do you –

NC: Yeah. Well, what just pops into my head was somebody said to me after Lillian Smith died, that what Lillian loved about me was my rebellion, which was she thought a good rebellion.

CO: What did your mother think of her? Of Lillian Smith?

NC: You know, I think she – Strange Fruit was wrapped in brown paper on the bookshelf. It was there.

CO: Did she read it?

NC: I don't know that she ever read it. If she did, I think she would have been frightened by it– I think she was frightened by anything related to her sexuality.

CO: What about race? Cause I mean, that is a whole category of its own.

NC: Race, I think my mother was coming to a real good understanding that we had been – things had been so, so wrong. Because – and this sounds kind of silly at this point, in its way. But Beulah who came to our house to cook, you know, in the last years of my grandmother's life and during my mother's life, Beulah was getting old. And as my kids were coming along, she would still come in the house. But Beulah ate with Mama at the dining room table. That's not saying a whole lot, but my mother would have never been upset with my views on racial issues.

CO: What about your grandfather's views on race?

NC: It's a peculiar thing, I think in a way. In that Rabun County had very few black people. There is a sentence, so in the schedules of Rabun County, which he mentions the black community and he says something about "They're well behaved and understand their place," or something to that effect. Which is of course is to me at this point and time very offensive. In today's world, my Granddaddy would be very happy to see how things are. The only thing I can guess, given what I knew about him.

CO: But race wasn't a chief issue for him. Because it wasn't a chief issue for the –

NC: No, no! And it's very clear to me. When you read the little pamphlets and stuff about the Rabun Gap Nacoochee School is that this is for white, Anglo-Saxon – you know, the children of the mountains are white, they're Anglo-Saxons. We're not talking about any miscegenation or any (laughs).

CO: But was that because he wanted to get money?

NC: Yes. I think it was clearly because he wanted – Oh he knew, he knew. And even – you can read some of the volumes which I have done of the James family. They were not – they viewed Afro-Americans as an inferior bunch. I mean, the North in many respects was much crueler and biased in their views of the black population.

CO: Well, their living arrangements were different, so they –

NC: Yeah. Well, Granddaddy talked about the Filipino servants that were, you know, in some of the departments in New York where he would stay at times and things like that. They thought nothing of having – I imagine these people were virtually slaves.

CO: It's easy for us to talk about race through a lens – in hindsight. But they were living through the time which makes people like Lillian Smith so phenomenal.

NC: Oh, absolutely. She was so far ahead of her time. And had such depth of understanding of the soul of southerners. That's just theirs.

CO: I think we'll stop for just a minute. Stop and assess where we are.

Reenters in mid-conversation

NC: So in awe or respectful or whatever of my grandmother, I just never wanted to upset her unnecessarily. Although she was the sturdiest character around. But with my mother, I really would want to just confront her, you know, with a different view on religion particularly. Probably our political views weren't that far apart.

CO: Would that be because your mother was open-minded?

NC: Yeah, she had some excellent qualities as far as – I mean, she would have been called a liberal Democrat. It was in a time when nobody paid much attention, I guess. I mean, we didn't have terribly many issues up here. I mean the main one – we have a very, very small Afro-American community. And the main thing that disturbed my mother and of course other people was that the children had to be bused all the way to Toccoa or somewhere where there was a school that blacks could – where they could go to school. It was interesting to me though, that since I've been back here, I was talking to the meat market man down the road. And he said that when they integrated the Rabun County High School, there were no problems whatsoever. You know, it was like no big deal at all. And he said there was one instance; it was the mayor of Clayton who said "I will not allow my children to go to school here." And sent them up to Rabun Gap – well Rabun Gap had long since had black students (laughs). Nobody quite understood that, but –

CO: When did Rabun Gap admit black students? Is that written up anywhere?

NC: I could give you probably a pretty quick answer to that if I call Billy Joe Stiles.

CO: Well you can do that when we take a break. That would just be interesting, you know, what time –

NC: What year it was?

CO: What year it was, and how it happened.

NC: I'm almost positive it was an African student.

CO: So not an African-American, but someone from –

NC: Not an African-American, but yeah. And I don't know how long after that, but right now, the school is one of – probably the most diverse, certainly boarding school in the country. I mean, they're the envy of all these schools because, you know, frankly it's a great thing. Some kid that grew up in one of the worst neighborhoods in Atlanta, from Rabun Gap to Princeton. I mean, that's, I think awesome. But anyway, back to your question about difference of views –

CO: Can you say something about how – if you challenged your mother's religious beliefs when you were a teenager. What particular beliefs you felt like challenging, which ones were you most at odds with.

NC: Oh, it was probably the usual suspects, you know. I don't believe in a virgin birth, I don't believe, you know. I guess I'd read Schweitzer's "The Historical Jesus", I didn't have any problem with that there was a Jesus. But I would express my doubts about was there a life hereafter.

CO: The fundamentals.

NC: Yeah, yeah. The basic, you know. And I sort of questioned that. And I know I have a real belief in things like hell.

CO: So as early as teenage years, you were questioning that?

NC: Oh yeah, very early. You know, I think – when I was in about – lets see, I was in about the 10th grade cause I was at Rabun Gap. And Mr. Warren was my teacher. And he was a friend of Mama's, or his family was, and he said to Mama one day – he said "you know, Ruth." And he liked me a lot, I mean I think he liked me. I liked him a lot. But he said that "you know, Ruth, Nannette is headed straight for a Communist Cell in New York." (Laughs). And this is after I'd read I think Whitaker Chamber's, you know, I forgot the title of the book. But yeah. I was just rebellious, I mean, if Mama was left, I was gonna be far, far left. So that was – and maybe I'm misthinking about Mother's – but I actually believe – I know she's strongly supported when I was in my 20's and Martin Luther King went down to Richs Department Store and they wouldn't serve him in the – for some reason or another there was a thing with Martin Luther King and Richs. Maybe they wouldn't give him a credit card. Anyway, I canceled my Richs account. And, you know, Mama was "yeah. I should think you do that." Now my ex-husband was a little upset (laughs). But that was, you know, I did it.

CO: So were you – you were in contact with him still at the time?

NC: Oh, my ex husband? We were married. It was when my kids were little.

CO: Oh, I see.

NC: It's when I took my little children –

CO: Oh, I'm confusing you and your mother. I'm confusing those two breakups. Okay, I gotcha.

NC: Oh, my father. That's one of the reasons I never liked my father. One of many reasons, but I went to live with him when I ran away from home, was that – and that was purely rebellion with Mother. You know, I'm leaving. But my father was a member of the KKK in Orlando. And you know, just things my mother told me, like about Russell – Richard Russell. You know, I never had had any fine feelings for our great senator. But we had several that – Herman Talmadge(?) being another one – that came along and didn't, to me, represent my views at all. But anyway.

CO: The fundamentals of what southern Evangelical Fundamentalists report is what you were challenging as a teenager?

NC: Yeah. I think mother was worried – and you know, you said yesterday and It rang a bell with me, she was more concerned about appearances in terms of – she was more worried about appearances

to the community rather than to, you know, probably my spiritual or bearer of my soul. I'm guessing. Somehow or another don't think she generally thought her daughter was going to go to hell (laughs). But maybe she did. I didn't have that sense of it. It was kind of always when either John or I – one did something that upset her, it was "oh, I failed." And you know we – **I** got sick of it. I don't know that John paid any attention to it. To me, it was – you know, I'm me. And I'm separate from you. And that was lasting probably the first 5 or 6 years in therapy was getting over that. And frankly, when my mother died, my therapist was really worried about me. I mean – because Mama and I were so – in some ways so tight. Yet just, you know, there were times I wanted to kill her literally. I threw a lamp at her one time (laughs). But anyway.

CO: I know the answer to this, but I'm just going to ask it. I mean, everything you've said answers this question so far about being conscious of the world outside your household. Your family was not insular – they were aware of what was going on which is why your father was going to school. Did you talk about world events?

NC: Oh of course. Oh gosh yes. We sat around the dinner table, and there were discussions-- there were good discussions, you know, of everything from philosophy where I would get in trouble. I mean, I was 11 when Granddaddy died, but I can remember that there were a lot of discussions with Mom on whether Granddaddy – around the dinner table.

CO: Like what would be an example of something he would be intensely involved in, but it might not be – it could be happening. Let's see, he died in '48. Do you remember their talking about the war and the outcome of the war and the events surrounding the Cold War? Do you remember that?

NC: Not a whole lot about the Cold War. I think Granddaddy was a little worried about Truman coming in for some reason or another. I don't know exactly why. Of course they were great. They felt like FDR did an awful lot for the country. They adored him. They hated – I mean that's so southern, isn't it.

CO: Well, yes, but there are –

NC: I mean I remember they were talking about a fellow named Pegler who was a columnist, and they thought he was just the devil personified because he went after FDR all the time. He was the main, you know, columnist that wrote – and I'm not sure what paper he wrote for, but they would talk about him. I remember they were talking about Pegler. They did have some concerns about Communism, I think. I remember two things – One was that there was a community – a Macedonia community, which is basically a commune. In the county, or just over the edge in Habersham County. And they knew about that, but didn't seem to be alarmed about that. They seemed to think those people were probably fine. They went about their business – I think they were a community that made like children's toys or something. I don't know exactly. They were either in this county or just over the line in Habersham County. I've wanted so much to be able to track a little bit about that community and what happened to it. But if I'm right about what it was, then there was another that the commune had started in New Jersey. I think that's right, but there again, I don't know. They were also a little concerned about that Highlander School – and I can't think of the man's name who had that. But they

were a little concerned they were a little too far left. But Berea – they were fine with. And Berea was the school in Kentucky that –

CO: To some extent inspired by the same thing that inspired your grandfather.

NC: Right. And the same thing that inspired Martha Berry. And they were all along in the same vein of "oh, we gotta do something about these mountain folks.' My Granddaddy was a great believer in that mountain folks were pretty smart, you know. Either they were lazy or they hadn't had the opportunity to –

CO: So he knew about Highlander? And was also concerned about – that they were too close to Communism?

NC: Uh huh. Yeah. I just remember it very vaguely, and it just popped back in my head the other day when I was over at a festival and somebody spoke about Lillian Smith, and talked about her books and about her. And somebody in the crowd raised her hand and said "did she have any contact with" – and I cannot think of his name that the man at the Highlanders Folk School spoke to.

CO: Yeah, I know. Because he was closely connected with the man who started Koinonia, the commune near Plains. It might escape our minds, but I know who you're talking about. It was different – just different. He was cut from a different mold. So many people didn't know about him.

NC: Yeah, but that was the place where a lot of the – if I'm not wrong about this, I think I'm right – A lot of the people who came down for the – during the bus –

CO: They used non-violent tactics.

NC: Yeah. So – But that was long after my Granddaddy died.

CO: Yeah. Did they have strong opinions about Eleanor Roosevelt? They liked FDR, but did they talk about her at all?

NC: You know, I think they did, but you know. From all I heard, she was always a hero. You know, a good person. Of course, at that time, nobody talked about people having affairs or living separately or you know, or having polio, or not being able to walk. But gosh, you know, I was walking home from school the day that I heard that FDR had died, and I heard it blaring – we had a crazy woman that lived across the street from us whose radio just blared out across the neighborhood. And that's how I heard FDR had died, in '44, '45. I remember that, and I remember when the war was over. You know, we all jumped in the car and went down the road blowing the horns, you know. But yeah, there was deep concern about – and a lot of support for things like the Marshall Plan and helping Europe get back on its feet.

CO: It's interesting to me how some people just don't have any recollections of anything outside their home place, because apparently – they don't remember because it wasn't really discussed, it wasn't really an issue. So I'm always interested when a family does have those concerns that you talk about.

NC: And talked about the atom bomb! You know, that was –

CO: Were there lots of fallout shelters here?

NC: Not until – I don't think so, not until maybe the Cuban [Missile] Crisis, and then people made em. But I don't think they paid a whole lot of attention. Gosh, I used to run into them in Atlanta when I sold real estate. But you know, there would still be – every now and then, you'd come across a house that had a bomb shelter (Laughs). But that was much, much later.

CO: Okay. Because your family, your experiences are deep, you're going to naturally get way ahead of my (laughs), my guide.

NC: Oh, I'm sorry.

CO: No! But I'm probably going to ask you a question that's going to refer back, and you're going to say 'I've already told you that.' But you may think of it in a different way, so. About leaving home – what was that like? Your first experience leaving home. Now you said you ran away at 16? But you came back. How long were you gone then?

NC: Yeah. Okay, well, you're going to have to bear with me. I tend to go off on my little thing. Alright. I left home, partly because my mother wouldn't let me go see the psychiatrist in Atlanta. I told you about Mr. Warren, my teacher that was concerned about me, and part of his concern was I was acting out in his class, you know. I would interrupt and make my cracks which were usually fairly unkind to somebody I thought was stupid or making a stupid comment. And so, Mr. Warren – and I was depressed, that was clear. I just would cry. I've never cried like that since except when my dog died two years ago.

CO: So you were 16?

NC: Yeah, I must've been 16 because I could drive; I had a driver's license. Unless – no, I was 15, because I must have turned. Daddy actually taught me more about driving when I was down in Ocala. But anyway, Mr. Warren said, "Ruth, really get Nannette some help." So she relented, and let me see a psychiatrist in Atlanta for one or two visits.

CO: So this was still early '50s?

NC: Oh yeah. If I was 15, it must've been – I was born in '37, so this was like –

CO: It'd be '52.

NC: Yeah, '52. But then Mother became very alarmed. Now I can't think of this name, but it'll come back to me. But he – I think he wanted an interview with Mother or something, and she just balked.

CO: The psychiatrist?

NC: Yeah, the psychiatrist. It was not a psychologist, it was a psychiatrist. But she just said "no way, you can't go anymore, and I'm not paying the bill." And that was just when she went ballistic, you

know. I took off – I got on a bus and wen to – I don't know how I scrounged the money or what, I don't remember all the details. But I got on a bus and went to Ocala. And somehow or another let Daddy know I was coming. My father had remarried, and you know, they pretty much welcomed me into their home. And so I was down there for a week or two and Daddy said “Okay, it’s alright if you stay, but I gotta take you to Clayton and get your stuff.”

CO: Now, did you your mother know where you were?

NC: Yeah. Somehow, I left a note or something. Anyway, she knew where I was. And so Daddy and I came back up, filled up his trunk with clothes and stuff and I went back to Ocala with him. Well, then apparently my parents got in – mother decided – that's when mother called my friend up here and had her parents come down to have a prayer meeting over Nannette. And you know –

CO: So they could get you back home?

NC: Yeah. She was just totally losing it, I think. From what I heard. And so she decided she'd write to the judge in Orlando – actually the judge I guess who had done their divorce or whatever. I remember his name was Judge Smith. And Daddy talked to Judge Smith, and the conclusion was that I could not stay. I think by that time, my Stepmother was probably relived. She had never had any children and she was very particular about things, and she did not want a young, teenage girl in the house that was always mouthing off about education and stuff like that. And, you know, I was in the Ocala school, I was doing well. I was having trouble making friends, I think, but you know that was probably not too strange. And you know, I was beginning to do okay. And it was actually probably a lot better school than Rabun Gap was at the time. Although my English teacher probably wasn't as good as the one I'd already had at Rabun Gap. But anyway, the upshot was that mother came down and got me. She brought a friend with her – Mrs. Fry – dearest lady in the world. And I came back home. I started back to school at Rabun Gap – this was in October, I think. And stayed in school for about two weeks and then the fight just got too bad at home. I put up locks on my door, you know. Actually put – I was sliding a lock on my doors to my bedroom to keep Mama out of my room. And then I quit school, and I went to work – this is another place where I ran into Lillian Smith, because I went to work at Marvin's Cafe as a waitress. And Miss Lil and Miss Paula Snelling would come in, and (laughs) eat and they would – you know, I would talk to them. And –

CO: Was that in Clayton?

NC: Uh huh.

CO: Marvin's Cafe?

NC: Marvin's Cafe in Clayton. Its right across from where the grapes and beans is now and actually is where – I think where the food cellar – the Root Cellar is, the health food store. It was right in that location. That building may be different, but anyway. That lasted for about two or three weeks, and one night, Marvin took me home and he said “Nannette, you have to go back to school.” And (laughs) I said “Okay, but I can't go to school here.” And Grandmother took it upon herself to get me in school

somewhere. Mama took me down to Westminster and they did the tests and things there. And they told that I probably wasn't a good fit for Westminster (laughs) in so many words.

CO: The Presbyterian school?

NC: Well, yeah. It's kind of like Rabun Gap – it's not really Presbyterian, but it had strong Presbyterian connections. But, I mean, it's still the elite school in Atlanta. And they had a boarding department at that time– I think they were just afraid of a child that was of my rebellious spirit. And I don't blame them; I would have been a bad fit. So Grandmother got together with Dr. Dover, the old doctor in town that was on the Board of Trustees at Young Harris. He'd been chairman of the board of the school board here in town, he was probably chairman of the welfare board that, you know, Mama worked under. And so Grandmother and Dr. Dover said "Nannette needs to go to Young Harris." Grandmother and I went over there, and they said "sure, she can come. She can come right now, middle of the quarter." And so they took me in. And I'm forever grateful for that. That was one of those lifesaving things, and I roomed with Armeade Craft – who was from Clayton. She was the daughter of the craziest Methodist minister you'd ever seen in your whole life. I mean, he was so far out in left field that – you know. But Armeade and I – you know, we struck it up.

CO: What's her name?

NC: Armeade. A strange name: A-R-M-E-A-D-E. Armeade and I, you know, managed to get along pretty well. We were always smoking cigarettes in our room, which was very dangerous. I mean, the building we lived in was a firetrap. And we always figured we were going to get caught, but I think Mrs Thornton, the house mother, just didn't want to catch us. (laughs) So –

CO: Now, you were still 16? You were a 16 year old?

NC: Yeah, and I was driving by that time.

CO: Were there 12 grades in school?

NC: Yeah, they had 11th and 12th grade. I was in the 11th grade. Yeah. Because I was 18 when I graduated, so. Anyway, I just stayed at Young Harris most of the time. I did come home that next summer, and stayed at home and worked at the Bynum house which was this old resort that was very well known. You know, people would come up there year after year after year. And I worked in the office for Roslyn Bynum, who was – let's see, she's I've forgotten her married name now. But anyway, she was wonderful. But her older brother would come in at night and had too much to drink, and if I was working late in there, he'd chase me around the office (laughs). And you know, I just said get out of here. (laughs). And looking back on it, it's just funny because Armeade married Knox. (laughs). And Armeade and I never were friends after that brief period. I think she was just my roommate that first year I was at Young Harris. After that, who did I room with? Oh gosh, it must have been Ann Hayward, who was a character. Anyway –

CO: But you did well academically?

NC: Oh yeah. I did well academically when I went to Emory. The Registrar there, who had a connection with my then boyfriend because my then boyfriend's brother lived with the Registrar. The then boyfriend who became my husband. But Luke Clegg said to me, he said “Nannette, your scores in everything are higher than these kids I get from Westminster.” So you know, I thought, (laughs) that was sort of a relief. I guess I'd been told enough that I was smart that I probably thought I was smart, but I didn't really have much confidence and I certainly didn't have much – I didn't like to work hard. If it came easy and I grasped it sort of intuitively, that was – very few things I worked hard at. Because – and one of my daughters is very much like me. She was a national merit finalist, you know as far as digging in. I regret that I didn't study math as hard or get, you know, a lot of background that I would like to have. So. Classical stuff too. But anyway, that's my life.

CO: And that's what I want to hear.

NC: So did I go off completely on a tangent on that one?

CO: No. Well the question was what was your first experience of leaving home like. But it sounds like you weren't traumatized by that.

NC: Oh gosh, I was so glad to get away from home. And I think that was a large part of why I got married. I thought “well, I don't know where I go from here, so I'm getting married.” And that gives me some kind of stability or some sort of –

CO: Legitimate way to get out.

NC: Yeah. Yeah. And I knew I could finish school, cause my first husband – like Christopher, worked for the University – he was in the business part of the University. But anyway –

CO: As a girl living in the south, a region known for its stronghold on tradition. Did you feel free? Did you ever feel constrained by being a girl? Were gender prescriptions something that constrained you, or something that you were aware of being constrained by?

NC: Not really. And see, I have some trouble with it to this day, because I always thought that if you want to do it, you can do it. I think that's cause I lived with very strong women, and they just – you know you might not do something because it wasn't lady-like or something like that. You might be told not to do something that wasn't lady like or proper. But I can't remember ever being told – If I said I wanted to be a doctor –

CO: Whatever you wanted to do.

NC: Yeah. Now my mother would have probably liked – this is probably one of the places that we had conflicts. She would have liked for me to have been more interested in the D.A.R. And the U.D.C. If I had taken better care of my fingernails – which I don't to this day. I mean she went in once a week and had her manicure.

CO: So your mother was at least for appearance sake a southern lady?

NC: oh yeah.

CO: Was she more a Scarlet type person than a Melanie type? She looked the part, but was she rebellious inside at all? If she had liberal politics, she was somewhat –

NC: Yeah, but she just didn't go around publicizing that.

CO: But she definitely didn't mind the image of a southern lady.

NC: Oh no, no, I would say that she wanted to be – I think she was embarrassed about being divorced for instance. That wasn't quite acceptable. She always wore her wedding ring.

CO: Did she ever come close to remarrying?

NC: Oh no, she never dated. Never went out with anybody. I think somebody in town may have asked her out, but she said no. But I don't think there were many people around that she would've been at all compatible with. My friend Claudia Derrick told me that Mama and her uncle Fred were really good friends. But Uncle Fred was a womanizer, and mother had very very very uptight views – moral views, you know "Nannette, you be careful, men will take liberties with you." She was – and I know with her clients, when there were illegitimate children or things like that. I mean I'm sure she preached about their moral behavior. I mean, not that it had done any good – maybe that would have been a good thing (laughs). But she was very – repressed sexuality, yes, it was certainly there.

CO: So she didn't feel – I mean she might have been stigmatized by the divorce, but she didn't feel the need to be married after that?

NC: No, apparently. She was – I think she enjoyed, in some ways very much enjoyed coming back to her Mama and Daddy, to let them take care of her in some way with these two children. I think – I don't know what she would have done. I mean, I've often wondered about the counter-factual. What would have happened with me and John, you know, had – when Granddaddy died. When I was in the seventh grade, Granddaddy died when I was in the sixth grade in November. When I was in the seventh grade, mother decided she was going to move us all back to – well, John had gone to college. But she was going to move back to Orlando – she and I and Grandmother were going to go to Orlando. Well, Grandmother immediately got very sick. She broke out in Eczema, and she was a mess. So we went over to Uncle Charles, the dermatologist in Greenville, and he said "Ruth, if you take your mother to Florida, she's going to die." And so mother backed off. So I don't know what that was an expression of – whether she wanted to get back more with people that she – you know, that she would have been with people more of her education and she was very, very active in the First Baptist Church in Orlando. Very active in the social world there. But not to mention never exhibited behavior that made her stand out as far as – she was just considered a fine, upstanding woman because all the stuff she did in the church. I mean she couldn't be a deacon cause it was a Baptist Church, but she could head up the Woman's Missionary Union. But she didn't seem to be bothered by that.

CO: So all that church work redeemed whatever would have been a stigma from divorce?

NC: Yeah. Yeah, I think that's true. I mean, she divorced my father, but it's because my father said, you know, that's the polite way to do this. But we're not going to be married anymore. Anyway, which was a good thing.

CO: Yeah. So how did she wind up married to a man so unsuitable for her? Was that rebellion? Was she just wanting to get away from home, or did she share that story with you?

NC: She never really said. And it's funny, I taped – and I destroyed one of the tapes – my mother, about a year before she died. Or maybe it was six months or so. She was killed in an automobile accident. And I think I tried to get her to talk about that a little bit, and she couldn't – My mother and my Daddy were cousins. My Granddaddy Ritchie and my Granddaddy Carter were first cousins. They shared a grandmother. I think my dad came up here in the summer – my dad was good looking. And in many ways, he had a really neat personality, you know. My brother has some of that, you know, a certain amount of charisma or something that people were drawn to him. And I think she wanted to get married – she was getting older, she was twenty – let's see, if they got married in '27, she was 24. Well, back in that time – she'd finished college, and her prospects up here in these mountains where she lived, you know, she was still coming home living up here were probably not all that great. I don't know that she dated anybody else. I don't know if she dated at the University of Georgia and in fact had thought about it back when, I should have asked her that. But to the best of – I never heard her talking about boyfriends. And so, you know,Daddy came up in the summer to see his relatives up here and they got married.

CO: Were they actually first cousins or third cousins?

NC: Well, my grandparents were first cousins. They were like second cousins. Or were they first cousins once removed, or second – I think they were second cousins. Yeah. They were second cousins, because my mother and my Granddaddy carter would have been first cousins once removed. I think that's the way kinship patterns go.

CO: I don't know that either, but I do know from talking with so many people that it was not uncommon for even first cousins to marry – as late as the early 20th century and decades into it. But there was enough of a stigma attached to it that people didn't want to talk about it.

NC: I know. My brother to this day won't admit that we have – would not admit that we're as inbred as we are. Now, it's not only that my parents had that connection, my granddaddy Ritchie and my grandmother were related. And Granddaddy would mention it sometimes in terms – just sort of lightly that we had a common ancestor that was a Dillard. And then my grandmother Corn was also related to my Granddaddy Carter. No – My Granddaddy Corn was related to my Granddaddy Carter, because it was through the Corn connection. But you know, that's part of who we are.

CO: And it's not limited to mountain regions or anything –

NC: No, no. There's some good studies about the implications, you know, from Iceland, because they're such a –

CO: You were talking about studies of that –

NC: In Iceland, yeah. I mean, they just show that – I mean, a certain amount of kinship seems to be beneficial to the gene pool for some reason or another. I don't know. You know, I liked reading that (laughs).

CO: Yeah. When you were young, growing up – well, at one point you said that you might've wanted to be a writer?

NC: Yeah.

CO: Did you share that? Did you talk about that with your grandparents? Or your mother and grandmother?

NC: Yeah, yeah. Well grandmother was willing to sit at the typewriter and let me dictate. Because, you know, I was used to seeing Granddaddy dictate to her, so she was willing to write my book. Now what inspired my book was *Heidi* about a girl and her grandfather, writing, so I wanted to write a book about a grandfather and a granddaughter. (laughs).

CO: Did you ever see the movie the *Whale Rider*?

NC: Yes. Good movie.

CO: Well, I've already asked this question, but I'll just ask it again. Was there – you and your brother had tensions, but did you ever think that he was in anyway privileged by being a boy? That he had more privileges than you did by being male?

NC: I thought he had more privileges because he was better looking and he was a lot stronger physically. I mean, you know, I say this because I was known in town as John Carter's little sister. And all the girls wanted to date John Carter, and you know people would always say “Oh, you're John Carter's little sister.” And then physically, I mean I just remember one day he was home from college I guess, and he told me to polish his shoes and I said “no, I’m not gonna do it.” He made me do it, I mean he twisted my arm. And so he was a bully, I think. It’s funny, in his class – I ran across his class picture – graduating class picture in the Clayton Tribune archives in Clayton and it said “John Carter was selected most conceited in his class.” (Laughs).

CO: Did that make you feel validated?

NC: I just laughed.

CO: One more question on this section, before we move on again. But you talked about your family, and you did say something about a friend that you have had from your youth. What about friends? What kind of long term sustained relationships have there been?

NC: Well, the friend that I mentioned earlier – Kathleen Brown, now Efird. Whose home is right over that mountain, and she and her brothers still own this house. And I was out of touch with her for years until I came back up here, you know 6 or 7 years ago. But she was my friend from the 8th grade, when

I went to Rabun Gap – that's where I met her. And there was another case of where I could go to her house and have a safe haven. I loved to go to her house after school. Her mother would cook us, you know, something like steak or something. And homemade biscuits and you know. And she was the adored daughter – she had two older brothers, and the whole family worshiped Kathleen. She was this adorable looking brown eyed, you know, young girl. And she ended up going to Agnes Scott, so you know, I stayed in touch with her – I was at Emory, she was at Agnes Scott. Was she in my wedding? I don't think so, but – she was not in my wedding, but we were **at** each other's weddings I'm pretty sure – Oh, I think I **was** in her wedding, because Terri was just a baby. But anyway, she did things like with her psychology courses, Agnes Scott. She came over and did a study with my little daughter, you know. And so I just have the fondest memories, I mean, over the years. And she's very conservative politically. We don't really delve much into politics, we talk a little bit about religion cause she married a Presbyterian minister.

CO: Pretty much would be hard to avoid talking about religion –

NC: Yeah, but she didn't really push it. She's a pretty good example, I think of a basically good, bright, mountain woman. She finished at Agnes Scott, her children are all pretty conservative, I think. Her son I think works for the C.I.A., but he does stuff with, you know, checking on like heroin and poppy fields in Afghanistan and stuff like that. Kind of dangerous stuff, but anyway. They're very different from us, and pretty fundamentalist in their beliefs. In fact, I think they left the Presbyterian Church – Charles did, and sort of went to a more independent Bible based church. My other friend, Claudia Derrick that I mentioned, Claudia and I in the 7th grade, took off – it was a warm, warm January and we were out of school, and we got lost – well, we were supposedly lost on Black Rock Mountain. We took off from my house and climbed Black Rock Mountain, you know, that looms over Clayton. And it got to be dark and we weren't home, so they sent out the Fire Department and everybody, and Claudia and I had decided well, we'd gone on up through the trails and through the woods, so we better come down on the road – there was a road up through there. So every time a car would come by, we'd jump in the ditch cause we didn't want some, you know, bad hillbilly to get us. And so anyway, Claudia was my friend from as soon as I'd got to Clayton as a four year-old, Mama got me together with Claudia. Because Mama was friends with Claudia's mother, I guess, pretty quickly, and they did have some things in common. Claudia's Daddy had played baseball with Babe Ruth – played baseball with the New York Yankees. But anyway, Claudia and I were good, good friends until I went to Rabun Gap and eventually she went down to Brenau to the academy down there. And I went to Young Harris, and over the years we didn't see each other that much. Now since I've been back in these parts, we have seen each other – she lives in Huntsville, Alabama. She married a West Point Graduate and they of course had the Army career thing. She is very traditionally minded – pretty conservative. She met in Laural Falls Camp, and I was always so envious because my mother couldn't afford to send me to Laural Falls. Looking back on it, I kind of resent that because my brother was sent to probably an equally expensive camp in North Carolina. But anyway –

CO: So did Claudia turn out to be – she's traditional, how did she – because they could – from what I understand, some of Lillian Smith's ideas were, you know, the campers were aware. That's pretty open-minded.

NC: Yeah. Claudia makes nice donations to the Lillian Smith Foundations, and is appreciative. She just –

CO: Do you think she's read any of Lillian Smith's works?

NC: Yeah, I'm pretty sure. I know she has. Claudia is well read, she was an English major. But she is very well read. I guess you would say she just didn't buy into it – she wouldn't put it in those words, but I mean. I'm passionate about Lillian Smith, and the more I read the more I recognize the breath of her humanity is just awesome. And nobody in my life – I mean, I've had the same psychotherapist for many years. She was jealous of Lillian Smith (laughs). Because I would always come back to Miss Lil, as I referred to her. But Claudia and her sister Ruthie both went to camp – neither one of them – I'm sure it affected their lives in many ways, and both of them – Ruthie is now dead, but neither one of them had especially easy lives. Ruthie lost a 16 year old son in an accident and she and her husband divorced. Claudia's son was born with – what is it – Cystic Fibrosis (?????) Anyway, the type of thing that the kid doesn't live to usually be more than 12 or 13. He survived until he was 40 – he actually married, graduated from the University of Florida, got a degree and was working in a high powered law firm in Washington, D.C. And then Robert died. But Claudia had devoted, I think, much of her life – well after Robert was born, her life was devoted to keeping Robert alive first of all as long as she possibly could. Not a bad thing. And apparently, he was – Nancy Fichter spoke about him, she got to know him – I guess it was somehow or another at Tallahassee. Maybe he went to Florida State, but anyway, none of my childhood friends that I know of, exactly – they loved me in spite of our being very different and I loved them in spite of our being very different. It's not something that separated us. I don't know what that says, but you know, as I got older, I had different kinds of friends. My friends during my first marriage were pretty typical southern women. But I'm getting ahead of the story I'm sure.

CO: Well, the next story is about marriage and children. So I think I'm going to stop for a minute.

NC: They eventually merged, and became the Rabun Gap/Nagoochie School. Nagoochie had a Presbyterian affiliation, and the charter reads that the senate of Georgia would have the right of approval of any members of the board of trustees, and that was in effect I think until sometime in the '50's or '60s, at which time that dropped out. My Granddaddy right away was very disappointed with the results of the merger – he thought that the Presbyterian Church would make larger contributions to the school and he would have to spend less of his time and energy out on the road. It didn't happen.

CO: Alright. Our next category, as we enjoy Amaretto Chocolate covered pecans, is on marriage and childhood – children and motherhood. And if any of these questions just fall short of getting at something that you want to say, then just say it. You know, they're designed to kind of accommodate any sort of background. But one thing – I've been trying to ascertain the choices we make – the cause of the choices we make and so forth, I wonder how much romance plays – you know, we read romance novels and we don't think that it plays a whole lot of choice. But how much was romance a part of your family of origin? Like did your mother talk about – was there this image in your mind that you would grow up and fall in love with somebody and, you know, get married and live happily ever

after? Were there ideas about romance when you were growing up? Either in your mother's home or your grandparents'?

NC: Probably but, the only thing that immediately popped in my head on that one was Ivanhoe – my mother just loved Ivanhoe – the Sir Walter Scott's novel. I guess my romantic ideation I suppose came from movies in the '40s. Cause I went to the movies a lot.

CO: Do you remember one that struck you? Or even just a theme in them? Because '40s romance film was pretty – I mean the '30s can certainly be misogynistic, you know. The '40s may be less so, there was more –

NC: I just remember more like Ester Williams – I just loved Ester Williams' movies, you know, with the – of course they focused a lot on the swimming and the water ballet and that kind of thing. But it was also Betty Grable, those romantic sort of war stories. You know, the soldier being away, coming home, that kind of thing. And the romanticism of things like *Lassie*, Elizabeth Taylor in *National Velvet*. Those kinds of, you know, sweet stories, happy endings. But a romanticized view – Miss Miniver, or whatever those – with Greer Garson.

CO: So you had an image of what romance was. Man – woman romance. Pretty traditional.

NC: Yeah, I would say so.

CO: Okay. What about your grandparents? Do you think that they kind of upheld that notion? Was living with them, did it in anyway offer you alternatives to that or was it pretty – did it –

NC: You know, I think the way I viewed them was as a partnership. Never thought of them as a romantic couple. I don't know whether I had much image of any – like of my friends parents or anybody I knew. When I was 14, my brother got married, and you know, he had brought his girlfriend up, but –

CO :That didn't strike you as a romantic? You didn't envy that –

NC: Nuh uh. That wasn't something that I don't think made a – I really do think – most of what I thought about as a romantic was probably from reading stories in the Saturday evening post and books I read. And the movies.

CO: Books, movies, and the magazines.

NC: That's where I got my – yeah.

CO: Okay. But in those books, movies and magazines, was it a happily ever after sort of ending?

NC: Oh yeah, I think it was not very realistic I don't think.

CO: Right. So did you have an expectation of that for yourself? Did you think that that's what you'd do?

NC: You know, I'm not sure what I thought. I think I wanted to get married because then it would be alright to have sexual relations with somebody. And it wasn't okay unless – I think it was a fear thing with me. I mean this was of course prior to birth control and things like that, but I had no permission to be sexually active. And you know, it was with fear and trembling that I went to see an ObGyn at Emory before I got married to ask about birth control. And you know, one of their strongest suggestions was, "Don't you have any older sisters or anybody to" (laughs) "that you could ask about?" And that kind of puzzled me. I think they did make some suggestions, but none of which worked when I was pregnant two months after I got married.

CO: Well that's interesting. Did you think about how many children you wanted or if you wanted children? Did you ever consider not having children?

NC: Hell no. I mean, neither way, I didn't think about it particularly either way. We were – I thought we were using birth control methods, but I thought that through getting pregnant three times. And you know, I have three wonderful, wonderful unplanned children.

CO: Well tell me about your romance, how you met their father. Tell me what that was like.

NC: Well, like I say I went over to school over at Young Harris. I don't think I knew Bobby until my second year. I think I was a Senior in High School and he was a Freshman in the college.

CO: At Young Harris?

NC: Uh huh. I'm pretty sure that's the way it went. And I don't even remember how we met or how we started dating. I had dated a couple of other people, but –

CO: Were you star-struck by him?

NC: No.

CO: Did you fall in love with him at some point, or was it just –

NC: I don't remember being – I just somehow or another, I thought I was in love with him. And you know, I went over to visit his home in Rossville – well Lakeview, Georgia, right outside of Rossville to meet his mother. They lived in this tiny little house his mother – his father died when he was 14, and his brother was already at Emory. And his brother was 18 months older, I think. His mother was extremely hard working woman. Had taught school, but then started selling World book Encyclopedias and started making really good money so that she bought a Cadillac. (laughs). But anyway, he came over and visited in Clayton – I think my mother was happy that I had a boyfriend that – you know, I think she may have looked at Bobby and thought "well, maybe Nannette's going to marry this guy." I don't know what she thought about that, but anyway.

CO: So you were a high school senior when you met him? He was a college freshman?

NC: Yeah or – I guess he was maybe, I've forgotten. We're three years apart I think in age. Anyway, he finished his two year program at Young Harris and went to Emory, you know where his brother

was. And then I graduated from Young Harris and went to Emory, and stayed my first quarter. And I was miserable. I had a roommate I couldn't stand, and I was taking survival swimming and hated it. I was just crying all the time, so I went into Luke Clegg's office, you know, being unhappy. And anyway, we decided I'd got back to Young Harris and finish my first two years of college. And I did, and Bobby and I said we'd get married. And I just stayed in school – I did not go home after – the summer I was 16, I'm trying to get all this straight in my head. The chronology. But the summer I was 16, I was back at home and worked at the Bynum House. But after that, I never was home for a summer again. I was either at Emory or after that married –

CO: When did you and Bobby marry?

NC: We married in 1957.

CO: Okay, and his name was what?

NC: Williams.

CO: William Williams?

NC: Bobby Williams.

CO: Robert Williams?

NC: Uh huh, yeah. He was always known as Bobby and his brother always is Jimmy, even when his brother was head of the Suntrust, he was still Jimmy Williams. So he was another – well I guess he did go by James B Williams –

CO: So what did he do?

NC: Um, Bobby? When he graduated from Emory, his major was Political Science, but he immediately went to work. As soon as he had a job, I think in August – well, I think he had worked all the time he was in school at Emory. But anyway, he stayed down with what was called Auxiliary Services and that was – you know, it was over the bookstore and part of the University. And he eventually became Vice President for Business but anyway. He was working, we got married, we bought a house. Oh, we lived right there on campus – right on North Decatur Road about where the Law School is now, there was some apartment buildings in there that were Emory owned. And you know I just went back to school, which was kind of neat because I didn't have to pay tuition since he was employed by the University. And I had Terri the next year in '58, and the next year I had Kay. And somewhere in there we bought a house, because we sold the property in Orlando – that was when that property was sold, so we had a little stash of money. So we bought a black Chevrolet Impala with a red interior, and it was bat-winged and we bought the house – our first home on North Druid Hills Road when it was a two lane road. And they were building North Decatur Mall. Anyway, am I off the subject at this point? I don't know.

CO: Well, no its okay, I'm just trying to figure out what roll romance played and if you felt – did your actual relationships live up to your image of what romance ought to be?

NC: No, I don't think so.

CO: Okay. But you did start having children pretty quickly. Did you work outside the home while they were babies?

NC: No. I went to school.

CO: You went to school, so you were involved.

NC: Oh yeah, I was in school.

CO: Well how did you handle it? Cause that's like a job in terms of time management.

NC: It was crazy! It was absolutely crazy. I remember when I was pregnant, and I just found out I was pregnant and I was in class in a Developmental Psychology class and the professor was talking about problems that resulted from problems in pregnancy, and mentioned something about anemia and I think I thought I was anemic or that I *was* anemic, so I fainted. (Laughs). But anyway, and then when Terri was about eight months into the pregnancy, one of the crazy doctors at Emory said "Oh I think you got a problem here, she's gonna end up being born with a twisted arm or something. Because your uterus is just too tight." She was perfect. I mean, you know. Just all the craziness you go through. So I was living through the drama, and of course my mother in law saying "I don't know why you're having this baby." (laughs). My mother was fine actually. Mother and grandmother were very "Oh, okay well this is how it is." But I mean my academic life probably suffered from – after Terri was born, I would just drop her off at a – there was a faculty member that lived in a little house right behind – again, this was probably housing that was constructed for the G.I.'s when they came back. But I would drop her off at the Futchs', walk over to classes at Emory, and then walk back and pick her up and sit out in the back – our apartment was on the 2nd floor, so I'd walk down there with Terri and spread out a quilt, sit down there and study. And you know, some how or another I graduated.

CO: Did Kay come along before you graduated?

NC: Kay came along in August, and I graduated in August. So actually I was one quarter behind my class. So I didn't go to graduation.

CO: Majoring in what remind me?

NC: Psychology. I majored in Psychology. I had one good professor (laughs). Well, maybe two, but for the most part they were not stellar.

CO: But did you have any kind of help at home? Or did you have to do cleaning, cooking, all that stuff.

NC: No! My ex-husband never changed a diaper. He said he didn't change diapers, he didn't cook, he never washed a dish. I did it. I mean, I didn't have any help. My good sweet mother in law had by that time, I think, moved to Atlanta. Or about that time, not long. But she would sometimes take us out to eat and that was a big help. But for the most part, I struggled alone in there.

CO: Did you ever do, when your children were small did you – okay so you went to school. Did you get a paying job?

NC: No. After – okay. I graduated in '59. Kay was a baby, and Terri was a toddler. And that's when we had moved out to North Druid Hills Road, and then for two years I didn't work at all. I was pretty active in the little Methodist Church nearby.

CO: I was going to ask you, if you weren't working, did you do volunteer work?

NC: Yeah.

CO: So you worked in the church?

NC: Yeah, I was mainly doing church stuff. You know, basically trying to take care of two little kids. And then I was pregnant with Ritchie, who was born in '62, and then not long after Ritchie was born – he was about a year old. Bobby came home one day and said – Oh, I started taking some education courses. Decided "well, maybe I want to be a teacher." So I started taking a Kiddy Lit course in the library, and I adored it. I mean I still have some of the books. I was just – I had the best teacher, and it was so good. I forgot her name, but she was good. And then I think I took another Education course or two, and then either somebody in the Education department or Bobby came home one day and said "Money's coming in from the Ford Foundation to start a Master of Arts in Teaching Program at Emory. And they're going to offer full scholarship and stipend, why don't you apply." Well, I applied, and they said "Oh, great. Your scores are great." And you know, they didn't look at my previous grades too carefully or didn't care (laughs). I mean, I had not made all A's in a long time. Not since I left high school I guess. Except like in Spanish – I probably made good grades in Philosophy when I was majoring in Philosophy. But that was a trip. Anyway, I didn't work until I finished that Master of Arts in Teaching degree, and while I was doing that, I had somebody come in because there was money to pay for child care. I had somebody come in and look after the children. But that didn't work out too well. The first one, Mrs. Browning – no, I've forgotten her name. Always insisted the children call her Mrs. whatever, what her name was. But she eventually just lost it – she went into some kind of religious freakishness, and so I had to let her go and then the replacement was a neatness freak, and she locked the children out of the house. I discovered that when I came home early one day. And then Mama said, "Ok, well why don't you get Sadie to come live with you for the last three months" or half whatever it was. Sadie was an 18 year old Afro-American girl, who lived up here and lives up here now. And Sadie came down to live with us. And you know, this was the '60s. Before that, I had taken the children down through a parade to see LBJ – LBJ had come through town, and I said "you gotta go see the great civil rights person." And I don't know that they remember it – they do remember being taken down. We were at the state capital when – I had taken them down to the state capital to just see the building and stuff down there the day that Bobby Kennedy was shot I think. It was really weird. But anyway, they remember some of these experiences, but anyway Sadie came to live with us.

CO: Would that have been in the mid to late '60s when Sadie came?

NC: Oh, it would've been '63, cause I graduated with my Master of Arts in Teaching – no, it would've been '64. Cause that's when I graduated with the Master of Arts in Teaching.

CO: And did you have a job teaching?

NC: I had an internship. Well, I taught for half a year – what they did with this program was you didn't do practice teaching, you were just thrown into a classroom and that's when I decided I couldn't teach and when they came over to observe, they said "Nannette, you can't teach these kids." (Laughs). "You're not doing very well with this." And it was a horrible experience. But I just wasn't equipped for dealing with children that had the kinds of problems these kids had. And there was nothing the school was doing to help these children who needed psychological and emotional support almost more than they needed – well anyway. You know, learning disabilities and all kinds of stuff just thrown into a 4th grade classroom. Anyway, that was not a good experience, but that was – I mean, I was paid like a regular teacher for half a year.

CO: Alright, this was pre-integration? Was the school all white, or all black?

NC: Mmhm. It was all white. All poor, white children. 1963, or 4. Yeah.

CO: So when Sadie came to live with your children, had they had experience? Cause you said yourself there weren't any black people in this region.

NC: Well, there were a few. I mean, Sadie's family was here. We had Mozell and Beulah that worked for us. I mean, we knew black people, but you know the interesting thing about most of – or all black people I knew in Clayton – if you heard them on the telephone, you didn't know they were black. So I mean, they were just pretty well integrated into the community in many ways, although they had to live over in a special section and they weren't allowed of course to eat in the restaurants or whatever else.

CO: So the customs of segregation governed, either if somehow or other, the culture of poverty did not? It sounds like they weren't afflicted and oppressed by poverty here as they were in other areas.

NC: Probably not, because most – now, Beulah, who worked for us the longest, that was her only employment. She had a nice little house that was her own little house, and it was nicely furnished – she was very comfortable.

CO: Where did her means of livelihood come from? How did she get the house?

NC: My guess is – and I think I could find this out – I'm thinking that her previous employer, the Suddeths, had bought the house for her. Or maybe she had worked in Washington D.C. Or some other places, and maybe somehow or another she had put together enough money to buy the little house. But in that community, there were people – there were men who worked for Georgia Power, or you know, some – they had decent jobs. They weren't destitute. And they believed in education, and they, you know, they had their own Church goers over there.

CO: And were the schools they had – how well staffed and –

NC: Well, I was looking at some stuff two or three years ago about the history of education in the county, and there was a report from the State Superintendent school office, and the black school that was in the county had the highest grade. They said it was the cleanest, the best teacher of all the schools in the county. Now it was segregated.

CO: Where did they get the money?

NC: I don't know. I mean, that was a public school. I don't know how that worked.

CO: Somebody needs to study that. I mean that's just so out of the ordinary.

NC: Yeah, it was. But it was a very, very small black community, and –

CO: Well how long did Sadie live with you and how did that work out?

NC: Sadie lived with us for – I'm thinking maybe close to six months, but it may not have been that long. May have just been three or four months, I can't remember exactly. But it worked out fine. She wanted to go home on the weekends when we usually could manage that. The children adored her, cause she would dance with them and do stuff. I mean that's what they remember about Sadie. And one day, I said “Sadie, come on, we're going to go to lunch.” And Sadie and I went and ate lunch at Richs in the Tea Room, in the Magnolia Room. (Laughs).

CO: In '64?

NC: Uh huh.

CO: They let her come in?

NC: Uh huh, they did. It was right at the beginning of things were breaking loose.

CO: So did you do it on purpose?

NC: Oh yeah. I mean, you know, I'm not particularly proud of that, but you know, because it seems in some ways artificial and very deliberate. But Sadie and I still get together every now and then – not as much as I would like – to have lunch or something. But she's a pretty unusual woman. Her son – she had a son, and he is the chief of police in Clayton.

CO: She sounds interesting.

NC: She is. She's a character.

CO: What does she do now? Or she's retired now?

NC: Yeah, she said she had to quit working. She probably – she did sort of like LPN, taking care of older people and things like that. Her sister, Pearl, is long term employee of the Lillian Smith Center. Her sister Pearl is also a character. Pearl's husband is on the City Council in Clayton – Willy Fortson, and one of their sons was a state patrolman – there's a section of the highway that’s named for him. So anyway, he died.

CO: This is Pearl's children – son?

NC: Uh huh, Pearl's son – his last name is Fortson, I think its Michael. But he died three or four years ago, and they had a big ceremony up here – the governor came, whatever else. He was sort of the person in charge that took care of the governor. Anyway, we're a strange bunch up here.

CO: I love it. Well, I have a question about your relationship with your children, do you want to tackle that?

NC: Sure.

CO: When they were children before they've become adults. Describe your relationship with them.

NC: Well, I think I really enjoyed having small children. They were just very interesting to me. And I just liked them.

CO: Did you read books about mothering or parenting –

NC: Yeah, well I was a psychology major so I had to read a lot of that stuff. I had to read – Consult Dr. Spock on a regular basis –

CO: Did you approve – were you a Dr. Spock proponent–

NC: Yeah, there was – you know, a lot there I thought. And God knows I wasn't by any means a perfect parent, but I think – and I need to ask my children about this, but I remember just enjoying doing things with my children. In particularly as they were getting older and they were interested in doing things like, you know, going down to the Capital or just, you know, little excursions, things like that. And I loved reading to them. They – to this day – mildly complain that I read this 600 page book to them called *Big Tiger and Christian*. Because it was such a fascinating story to me, and I read it aloud to them. (Laughs). And they would complain when I would try to do a British accent or something (laughs).

CO: Okay, just to quickly – you and their father divorced when?

NC: When they were older – we divorced in '74.

CO: So they –

NC: The girls were teenagers, and Ritchie I think was 11 or 12 or so.

CO: So you enjoyed their –

NC: Oh, yeah. Yeah, and I mean for the most part, I – you know, I liked having children.

CO: What about – okay, cause the next question will be about how differently did you treat your daughters from your sons or son. You know, was there an awareness or did having girls differ from having the boy and you know, that sort of thing. But finish the – you played, you read, you enjoyed

them as children. How about once they become teenagers and they want to individuate and they have that impulse to resist, rebel, whatever.

NC: Well, let me go back – I'll come to that, but. When they were real little – when the girls were in the 1st and 2nd grades, and I guess I had finished my MAT and all that thing, and just gone back to basically being a housewife most of the time. My grandmother was dying, and I would get in the car a lot and come up here – particularly the last six months of her life. My daughter Kay found that really hard. Because I would leave her with the neighbors. She still – you know, I wasn't gone for long, but she still felt resentful of that – I guess her dad picked her up if I spent the night up here, I don't remember. I remember I was driving a Volkswagen Bug back and forth.

CO: Now what about was their relationship with their grandmother? Did they – cause she lived there.

NC: Oh, yeah. My grandmother would come help me with the children. When I went to the hospital to have Kay, she came and stayed with Terri and then was at the house when I got home. I think we ended up hiring somebody for a week or so to help out a bit until, you know, I was back to my usual.

CO: So your daughter's resentment wasn't because she didn't know her grandmother, it was just –

NC: Oh, no, they adored my mother – my grandmother they also adored, my older daughter, Terri, was very close and my son with my mother. They would come up and spend lots of time with her in Clayton. Go hiking, go do whatever Mama was doing. And Kay was not – I don't know, not as happy with mother I don't think. I think Mama was, for some reason or another, more critical of Kay. Terri – in school, when Terri was in the first grade, I was very concerned that she, you know, would be pushed along and I was more focused on how she was doing in school – that kind of tapered off. Kay would probably say that she was the middle child and that she somehow or another got neglected. I'm not sure that was exactly true. Kay always inserted herself when her brother came along, and their dad wanted to take him to – whatever, Indian guides, whatever the program was that the Y did. Kay insisted that she get to go along too. And just raise cain. If there was a meeting there that Ritchie, you know, that Bobby was doing with Ritchie, her younger brother, Kay always managed to insert herself. And I don't think – she wasn't punished for that, she was – as far as a lot of difference between how the children were treated because of their gender, I don't think so a lot. Later on, when Ritchie was a teenager, I had friends that just said they thought that Ritchie was, you know, sort of the main focus of my life. I didn't think that. I mean, I think he was somewhat of an unusual child, and he was an attractive person. And I kind of think – do you remember?

CC: [Christopher] Women loved him. Older women.

NC: And I think that was then more than it was me, I mean.

CO: So they were projecting onto you?

NC: I sort of felt like that. I never felt that I was particularly partial to my son. My daughters, when I divorced their father, were much angrier with me. And they eventually went to live with their father, although, you know, In the beginning I had custody of them. But because I didn't have a lot of money,

I had to sell the house they grew up in and that was it. They said “we're gonna go live with Dad.” And Dad gave ‘em a sports car. And they were in high school, and there were probably very good reasons. They were 15 & 16, I've grieved and sobbed and spent many hours in my psychologist, psychotherapist's office. You know, grieving over that. But Ritchie stayed with me, he – and Christopher and I got married in 1978 when Ritchie was, what, 16 or so? But I don't know, did you see me treating my children very differently?

CC: [Christopher] Most of your friends were commenting about is that you gave a lot of independence – gave Ritchie a lot of independence. It’s like he had an apartment to himself to a great extent. And –

NC: Well, that's cause they weren't there, though. They'd gone to live with their dad.

CC: [Christopher] I understand all of that, I just think that's what your friends were projecting on. I don't know that they were particularly right. When I saw you deal with him, it struck me as you were focused on him because he was the only one living in the house.

CO: Do you not think that there is a different dynamic between a mother and a son than a mother and a daughter?

NC: Oh, absolutely.

CO: There is, I mean it is an issue. It’s not like –

NC: It’s an issue, absolutely and totally agree with that. But I think as far as achieving things are concerned, I thought Terri was going to be my major achiever. I mean, she just, you know, like I said a National Merit Scholar. She's the one that took Calculus in high school – actually, Kay did too. But yeah, I mean that's – but yeah, of course they were treated differently. You know, because they were different.

CO: But do you think – I only have one daughter, so I don't know how to judge this. But was it easier to raise a son? Was it easier to be a mother to a son than to daughters?

NC: Well, it was easier to maintain a relationship with my son in a way. I mean, what Christopher is talking about in terms of an apartment is that when Christopher and I started dating seriously and got more involved, I actually spent a lot of time with him at his apartment. And Ritchie was 16 or 17 – yeah, he sort of did have an apartment. I was checking on him, I was there for supper, or he ate supper with us. And I was there first thing in the morning before I went to work. And he didn't have any wild parties or anything like that, but –

CO: Was his apartment in your house?

NC: No, no, this was an apartment on Claremont and North Decatur Road near the Emory Campus. And he was in school at Druid Hills High School.

CO: So his sisters were with their father? Where was he?

NC: Yeah, not far away – a half mile or so, two miles away.

CC: Christopher: Except for the time you lived in Marietta.

NC: No, I lived in Sandy Springs, and Ritchie and I lived in an apartment in Sandy Springs for a year.

CC: Christopher: And he went to school up there, and he was very unhappy.

NC: Well, I don't think he was *very* unhappy. He was – well, anyway. And then I moved back into the Emory community. I had moved up there cause – this is what was the thing that really bothered me, was when I divorced my husband and then a year or two later had to sell the house because I didn't have any money. I was having trouble finding a job, and my alimony was stopped – my therapist insisted that, you know, for the sake of my mental health, it was very important not to have alimony more than two years. And she was right. And then I was getting some child support, but it still wasn't enough to make house payments and feed the kids and do everything else. So anyway, I sold the house and I could not get an apartment for me and my three children in the Emory area because they said they did not want a single mother with two teenage children and one close to teenage child. And that was just devastating to me. I could not figure that out. So because I was moving to Sandy Springs, that was really the straw that broke the camel's back. I could get a three bedroom apartment in Sandy Springs, and have my children there. But the girls said no. And they were right – they didn't want to leave their high school. I guess Terri was a senior and Kay was a junior. And they wanted to stay with their friends.

CO: So that's why they lived with their father?

NC: Uh huh. That's when they moved in with their father. But he had said "you will never get custody of the children and I'll never pay alimony or child support." Well, after six months of the judge imposing extremely harsh conditions on him, I was getting practically his whole paycheck. He backed off of that and said "Well, we won't go to a jury trial. We'll settle here."

CO: But the decision was really the girls.

NC: To go live with their dad? Oh yeah, they decided –

CO: Because of school and –

NC: Yeah, and you know, Georgia law, they were over 14, they can make that decision. And of course they insisted Ritchie should come too, and I said "nope." And Ritchie didn't want to go. So he stayed with us until we got married and he went to live with his dad his senior year in high school.

CC: I remember why.

NC: Oh, because it was too crowded in our little house and we had three bedrooms which he had his own, and we had John and Michelle – she was Michelle at that time, she changed to Christianne – in one bedroom, and at some point we said "Ritchie, you're going to have to give up your bedroom and either let John move in with you so that Christianne has her own bedroom, or else you can move into

this section of the dining room area that we'll kind of wall off for you." And he decided he'd just go live with his dad. And my oldest daughter just raised heck about that.

CO: Was she still there?

NC: No, I think she was a freshman at Emory by then.

CO: So why didn't she want her brother to live with their father?

NC: I don't know – you have to know my daughter to know that sometimes, in spite of the fact that she's a very rational person and a lawyer, if she decides something's not right, then it's just not right. You don't – I always said you don't cross Terri. It's not worth it. From the time she was little, I didn't cross her (laughs). She turned out okay.

CO: So what has the relationship been like since they've been adults?

NC: Wonderful. You know, yeah. I mean, my daughters and I – I have very different relationships with my daughters. My older daughter actually in many ways is much like me in terms of her politics, her – what she reads, and how she feels about the world in general, including probably religion and whatever else. My second daughter, Kay, in many ways has had a much harder life. She didn't work since – well, she worked for probably seven or eight years after she finished school. But she's a traditional Dunwoody housewife, tennis player – good tennis player. Raised three children by herself – although she's married. Her husband's an anesthesiologist, and she has – I mean, Kay's been a very traditional homemaker. But she's been through some hard times, and she's done very well. Hard times in her marriage, and I at many times said "Kay, you can leave him." And she wouldn't do it. And she was probably right.

CO: So she's still married to him?

NC: She's still married, and actually I like her husband better now than I ever have. (laughs).

CO: So all three of them went to college, all three of them –

NC: Graduated from Emory, they all go tuition free. They might have chosen to go elsewhere if they had had –

CO: Is that because their father still worked for Emory?

NC: Mmhm. Yeah.

CO: So Terri is a Lawyer, Kay is a –

NC: Housewife.

CO: How many grandchildren do you have?

NC: I have seven.

CO: And they range in ages from what to what?

NC: Kristen's 24, she graduated from the University of Georgia two years ago. Came out of school within three weeks of graduation and had a job that she's still working at – although she's thinking about going back to school now. Will and Andrew are both – Will's at Vanderbilt on a tuition free scholarship. Andrew's at George Washington, Claire's at Dartmouth, Zach just got into Vanderbilt. And Gus and Grant are still at home.

CO: So those were – what about your son? What is –

NC: Ritchie went to the University of Georgia Law School after he graduated from Emory. And after his first year, he said he would never be a Lawyer – he didn't like lawyers. (laughs).

CC: Actually he was there for 2 weeks.

NC: (laughs). And he eventually got a job with IBM. He and Polly got married, and moved to Chicago after living in Dallas for a year where Polly was teaching – she went to Emory too. That's where he met her. And so they went to Chicago, and they were there for 6 years with IBM then Ritchie was transferred to Atlanta. And eventually, he got out of IBM cause he hated it, and has been working for the Arrow Corporation and he seems to be happy – although he has to be in an airplane a good bit of the time.

CO: So he has how many children?

NC: He has two. Okay, Terri had two – a boy and a girl. Kay had the first one, that's Kristen. Then she had Will and then Zach – so she has 3. Terri has 2, she has 3, and Ritchie has 2. And then my stepson John, you know – I acquired two stepchildren when Christopher and I got married because he had custody of his children.

CO: And they were roughly – they were small weren't they?

NC: Oh yeah. How old was Christianne when we got married? Six or seven?

CO: Well, she was born in '71, so she would have been six.

NC: Oh, you're right.

CO: And the son would have been eight.

NC: Yeah, that's right. So they again went to Emory tuition free. Christian left us when she was 14 to go live with her Mama in Boston. And that caused considerable heartache, but not so much for me, but for Christopher. I mean Christianne never did take to me, I think John did. I think that's right.

CC: That's right. John took to you.

CO: And some of that might have been the female-female dynamic, and some of it just

NC: I don't know. I mean, over the years, Christianne has always come to me – I couldn't say anything to her, or make any suggestions, or ask her anything really without her being bristly or whatever. But every now and then, she'd call and she'd want some advice about how to cook something or just – you know, funny little things. And I had this great feeling of well she does want to connect with me in some way. And it's not that I ever had a sense that she disapproved of me, right?

CC: No, well, yeah she did. Just so you understand the context, from the moment that my ex-wife and I got divorced, she and Christianne's grandmother campaigned for Christianne to move to live with her mother. And this was just an ongoing campaign. As it turns out, I don't think she liked living with her mother. But she really did need to –

NC: Well we had set up a rule that if she went, she couldn't come back until – I mean she came back when she was 18 to go to Emory, but –

CC: I think she probably would have tried to come back from what they told me, cause she didn't like her stepfather. Who apparently was awful.

CO: How about your relationship with your grandchildren, how is that?

NC: When we were in Atlanta and they were little, we had a fair amount of contact with them – although I was working. And actually, there was a period of time – we were in Austria at one time for three months. We had a lot of stuff going on.

NC: I'll try not to be as tangential as –

CO: That's okay, I'd like this tangential. So you were talking about your relationship with your grandchildren and –

NC: Oh, grandchildren. I'm very very proud of my grandchildren. You know, I can't say I'm a typical grandparent. You know, I talk to other grandparents – they talk about buying stuff for the kids and hours spent and time spent. I've spent some time with my grandchildren, I enjoy 'em, but they have busy lives, their parents have busy lives. And I enjoy my life. And they probably have spent in the past more time with their grandfather, because he would demand it. I mean holidays or things like that, I've always said you can be wherever you want to be. When we were in Atlanta, we would cook a big Thanksgiving dinner, a big Christmas dinner. The kids would have to come to our house or their dad's house, and over to the other in-laws house. I always felt like that was asking way too much. But anyway, they would always drop in or be there. They always enjoyed my cooking since I became a much better cook somewhere along the way – probably – Christopher and I used to cook together a lot when we first got married, so.

CO: It sounds like you're not really sentimental about motherhood or grand mothering.

NC: Not really. It was something that I think I enjoyed, but I'm not sentimental – I say this so many times – I'm not sentimental about holidays, birthdays, anniversaries, or any of that. And maybe it's a terrible thought, but I was at church a couple weeks ago and people were talking about Christmas

and getting stuff out. And I said “You know, I quit getting out hardly anything. I think I had out here place mats that I was just putting up from Christmas that are red and green. And maybe that bowl Christopher's sister gave us, but I said “I don't do a Christmas tree. I haven't for years, and I love it.” Because I don't want to have to spend the time putting it up and bringing it out – putting it up and putting it away. It’s not important to me and I found if very freeing not to have to do that. I would certainly never fault anybody for doing Christmas tree – I'm sure my children do it, and they have children, and that makes sense. And I did Christmas trees when they were little but I've never enjoyed holidays or special occasions. I think of myself as somebody who enjoys everyday life, and that's kind of how I am with my grandchildren – Is I'm very appreciative of em, very, very proud of em. And probably inordinately so, but you know. I'm not –

CO: So you certainly spent a good portion of your life mothering or grand mothering, whether you're doing it hands on or not –

NC: Yeah.

CO: What sense do you have that being a mother has shaped who you are?

NC: Well, what crossed my mind immediately was when I was taking this counseling course down at Georgia State. You have to take all these tests and things you know, as part of it because you're learning about em. And my score on the nurturing scale was up to here. I mean, it was about as high as you could go. And it’s like with my dogs, you know there's something about me – I love to be nurturing.

CO: So do you think that that nurturing was to some extent catalyzed by mothering? Or do you think that that’s just the kind of person you were?

NC: I think it’s just probably my nature. I think, you know, we talked a little bit about mothering a mother. That's just who I am. I've gotten better in the last few years about wanting to feed everybody that comes around or that I'm around. I'm still a little bit that way, and I want to feed em like they want to be fed – not necessarily like – I want to please them. I think it has to do with that partly.

CO: So you think that the nurturer in you wasn't necessarily related to being a mother. It’s just part of who you were before you even had children. But it sounds like that may have been one way that you related to your mother? Because you nurtured her because she seemed to have a need for it? Your grandmother kind of almost promoted that by –

NC: Yeah, and I don't know if it could be one of those things that comes out of – because I didn't have so much of that. I was nurtured by probably – you know it takes a village to raise a child, that kind of thing. Anyway from Pearl – the woman that looked after me when I was a baby – all that community of mainly older women that lived around us in Clayton. And like Mrs. Fry up here at Rabun Gap, there were older people around that seemed to care about me and take care of me for some reason or another. Maybe that's how that got in place, but I don't know. But having children I think gave me a real outlet for that. But although I was never quite satisfied. I mean, I was always trying to figure out where I could go back to work, or back to school. You know, when my children were little. A

lot of people disapproved of that, you know. I had a professor at Emory when I was doing my Master of Arts in Teaching. He was the Elementary Science education professor, and he just railed about my being in school when I had three little children at home. Totally disapproved of it. But I think I had to get out – I didn't realize how unhappy I really was in my marriage, but that was probably a big part of it.

CO: If you could go back and do the mothering thing again, would you do anything differently?

NC: Oh, I'm sure I would (laughs). I don't know how I would do it, but –

CO: So you learned something from it –

NC: Oh yeah.

CO: Did what you learn from it, did that have any influence on what you tell your daughters or your son about the whole parenting thing do you think?

NC: I've never told my children about how to – well, maybe Kay a few times, I've said something or suggested well maybe she ought to just leave Zach alone for a little while. But that's probably where my children would fault me. And maybe that's where I failed as a parent. I never once insisted that they do much of anything. I expected them to do things, but it wasn't like they were told, you know, you go do your homework right now. I wasn't a "tiger mom" by any stretch of the imagination. I was probably too lax in some – according to a lot of people's standards. And I think today, parents are just overly involved sometimes with the children. That's what we – I accuse my middle child of, with her 3rd one that – you know, just leave Zach alone! Or insist that he take some responsibility –

CO: Ok, well I have a question – what does it mean to be a good mother? What could you say less is as good as more for being a good mother? What would you say if somebody said in a couple of sentences. How would you describe it means to be a good mother?

NC: Well, the first thing that pops in my head is sort of hold to your principles, don't back off from who you are. And let them be who they are. It's not a very good description, but its – you just –

CO: Do you think it's easier today or harder today to mother?

NC: My guess is it'd be harder today. I just think it's too complicated a world. Maybe I'm wrong, but my children didn't have as many activities to do. I did take the girls – and I'm kind of proud of this – to ballet lessons, and you know. Encouraged Ritchie – he had piano lessons, and Terri did too – Kay didn't take to that. Kay was always trying out something new. But I would encourage them to be adventurous, I might encourage them to – I don't know, it's hard to say. I mean, I just have to knock on wood and have to say that they turned out in many ways, far better than one would expect given that they had a fair amount of trauma in their childhood (laughs).

CO: Could you say – I know you've already talked about how proud you are of them, and of your grandchildren. But in a sentence, could you say what you admire most about your three children? Like what do you admire most about Terri and Kay and Ritchie?

NC: The three of them in one sentence?

CO: No, no, no. In six sentences –

NC: Oh oh okay. Well, Terri, I think I do admire how tenacious she is. She's been a very different mother from the kind of mother I was in many ways. A lot tougher with her kids about, you know – but maybe that's a product of the times. And she's certainly had more financial means to – I mean these kids went to Westminster, they lived in a very nice house and they've had a lot of opportunities that I couldn't give my children, simply because I didn't have the money. But I guess I'm just proud that she's as tough as she is, and she's a good person. She's volunteered for the 16 years she didn't work as a lawyer, she took off 16 years – she was volunteering for all kinds of good things and tutoring and president of the PTA at the public school the kids went to. And raised all kinds of money, and very active and stuff at Westminster so I think she's a good person. And Kay, I'll give her credit to her stamina – for hanging in with a marriage that I think I would have bailed on. She saw in Bill things that were worth sticking with him through and they worked through it. It's been a tough fight, cause he had a big problem and they had to get through it. But she's – and so far, so good. Its been five or six years that things have been okay. Not easy, but – and the kids went through hell at one point, but that's I think a tribute to her that those three kids got through high school and kept their friends and she kept that household very much intact.

CO: So neither of your children were divorced?

NC: No. No. And my son, he's – and maybe this is where things are just different. The word that comes to me is just delightful. He loves music, art, and you know, his art history teachers and people at Emory said "You know, it's so long for him to go through law school, he ought to go do art history or something like that." But he and I are not what you would call close, I mean we probably speak on the phone every month or so. And I don't see him all that much. In fact, I was telling Christopher, you know I need to go to Atlanta and see Ritchie and Polly's new house. Cause they recently moved, but I love the way he looks at life I think. He's a good – I like the way – when I divorced his father, I left the Methodist Church because that's where his dad was on the Emory campus. At Glenn Memorial, and started going to All Saints with Ritchie with me. Well he fell in love with the Episcopal Church and all the pomp and everything from – I mean, he'd probably be swinging incense or whatever but he was an acolyte, and you know, he –

CO: Does he continue to be involved in the Episcopal Church?

NC: Mmhm. Yeah. You know, not real close – he's never been on the Vestry or anything like that that I know of. But there are a lot of things about Ritchie that I don't know. That's always been true – he was editor of the school paper and I didn't know it for months (laughs). Somebody came in – I mean, Christopher and I just got married, I was working, and trying to figure out how to take care of two stepchildren and whatever else, and I wasn't paying attention. (Laughs). I'm not a proper mother in many ways.

CO: Well, I'm not going to ask, but that would require defining what proper is.

NC: Right (laughs). In many people's eyes, I'm sure my mother would have said “Oh Lord.” (Laughs)

CO: Alright, we're on again, and I'm going to ask you to tell me about – We're walking in the mountains, which mountain is this? Do we know?

NC: Yeah, I don't know that this one has a name. I was trying to figure out – I think that in the distance – I believe that's Rabun Bald, if we can see back in there, which is the second highest mountain in Georgia is back in there. It’s the highest. Well, actually I think we see that tower up there. May be a part of Rabun Bald. I'm not sure, I'm just worrying a little bit.

CO: Can you tell me about – your grandfather was obviously obsessed with getting the school started, but what did either when you were with your mother and father, or with your grandparents, what did they do or entertain or recreation? What was their –

NC: Well, growing up – we didn't have real vacations, so to speak. There are pictures of us at the beach – you know when my mother still had the house in Orlando, and we would go to the beach – I don't even remember that. I can remember after we were up here, that for fun and recreation it was pretty much hiking or camping, or one time we rented a cabin just a little north of here in North Carolina where was a little CCC camp, actually. And I remember loving that. I mean, we didn't – I mean we'd go to movies, there was a movie theater in town.

CO: What about music and art and events? Is anyone in your family talented musically?

NC: Well, mother played the piano. She played through a rag-tag style – she just played all over the piano, which I always envied and never could do. Dance – square dancing. There was the old Mountain City Playhouse was where we went square dancing – it was there for years and years and years. It had sort of a mixed reputation because they would sometimes have, you know, fights with the locals there. But the kids from the local camp – Rabun County had a lot of camps – and in the summer time there would be camp councilors there, or this summer people were up here for – their summer vacations. But –

CO: Well you really lived in a vacation land.

NC: Well, yeah. But I remember picnics and, you know, just anything like that that was outside was fun. That's –

CO: Do you think your mother liked to hike and –

NC: Yeah, she did.

CO: So you did that growing up because –

NC: Oh, yeah. We were outside. She always loved that. It was one of the things that, you know, I really appreciated about my mother. She also liked pets, but we weren’t very successful with them. Either they had to go back to where we got ‘em cause they killed the neighbors chickens or they got run over or something. That wasn't a big part.

CO: I have a question about that, but very few people – I think only one person has told me that she had them.

NC: Well, I remember how much my mother liked to – must have liked having pets, because we had this dog Freckles – the one that had to go back because he killed the neighbor's chicken. But Freckles got sick with Distemper and the vet said "the dog's gonna die, you can't save it." She stayed up all that night next to the fireplace with the dog with Vicks Vapor Rub – the dog survived. So she did good.

CO: She loved pets –

NC: Yeah, yeah.

CO: Well, I just want – you talked about education a good bit, because it was such a huge issue with your family. Can you just tell me from – you know, like preschool all the way to the last college course you had, your schooling. Starting from as early as –

NC: Kindergarten? Sure. I started Kindergarten in Orlando, and I remember it very well. Or I remember it being talked about a lot. Mother played the piano, apparently I would be upset if she left me there by herself with – I think I got okay, but the kindergarten teacher was a German woman, and the FBI came to our house – I think they even came to Clayton and asked mother about the kindergarten teacher because she was German and they were always so worried about, you know, somebody might be – whatever else. But anyway, apparently I went to a good kindergarten in Orlando, and then when I came up here, didn't have any school until I was in the first grade – which was not long after I got here. And my mother was always involved with the school, always concerned that I got the best teacher in the grade. And then went to the public school in Clayton until I went to Rabun Gap, which at that time, was a semi-private school – we described it. They were still getting state funds because they still had public school students going to a private school. Terribly unusual I was told – unheard of by professors at Emory when I took education courses. And one of them finally came up and took a look at Rabun Gap –

CO: Now, Rabun Gap was originally for students who couldn't afford school, wasn't it?

NC: Oh, absolutely. Rabun Gap's been through a whole lot of different –

CO: The kids that are there now look pretty preppy (laughs).

NC: They're preppy, they are preppy. It a prep school, no denying it, and I'm all for it because that's the niche it has to fill. They could fill that whole school up now with Chinese students.

CO: From this area?

NC: From China. They have a huge population – of course they're very bright and their parents are able to pay the tuition for boarding school. And they're great kids – the ones I've had contact with. But back to your question, when I was at Rabun Gap, they had – in the boarding school, they had kids that had serious problems, and Rabun Gap kind of got a reputation for being a school for kids with

problems. Anyway, then I went to Young Harris where I mainly took college courses when I was in high school, because I think there were only like 12 kids in my class. I was Valedictorian in my class at Young Harris, but no big deal there because, like I say, it was a small group (Laughs). And then, you know, as I told you I went on to Emory and ended up doing a Master's Degree there, and then later on went to Georgia State. But, is that what you need to know about my education?

CO: Yes, that's right. Then I have a section on work, but you talked about it a good bit. Is there anything – what work did you enjoy most, did you find the most rewarding?

NC: Um, my real estate career. It was so very – I worked for the State, I think I told you, for 8 years. I finally got a job after I finished at Georgia State and I was scared to death because I was a single parent – never really had a full time job in my life, and I was 40 years old so, you know. I was scared, but I'm grateful that the State gave me a job for eight years, but had to get out of there. I didn't like the politics.

CO: Doing what now?

NC: I was working in the Georgia Department of Labor. And part of that time, the labor department was flooded with money because during Jimmy Carter's administration, they had what was called the CETA program, and there was a lot of money out there for job training and stuff like that. Ended up monitoring product pilgrims all over the state, and that's when I lost faith in government (laughs) and bureaucracies or whatever. But anyway, there was tons of tons of money going into people's pockets who didn't need it.

CO: You said a real estate career was rewarding though?

NC: I enjoyed it because I had – for the most part – a great clientele. I fired one client, but for the most part I had either Emory people or, you know, people in the Psychology department or the Math department.

CO: Was it residential real estate?

NC: Yeah. I sold those – that was all I did. I think I liked it because I really didn't like – as you can tell, I like being outside. I didn't mind driving, I liked seeing different parts of the city. Like I say, I had some interesting clients, and it was rewarding. I had thought at one time, a lot of my friends took their counseling degrees and went on and got either degrees in Clinical Psychology or whatever else, came in their studies, went into psychotherapy. I just didn't want to do that. I discovered that I was pretty good at it when I did my internship and stuff, intuiting a lot of what was going on with people –

CO: What sort of clients did you have when you did that, your internship? Was it adults or children?

NC: Well, yeah adults mainly. Mainly adults. I had one young woman I was working with, but I did one internship – was at Odyssey counseling center, and they had started out mainly – they were getting their funding mainly for doing drug counseling. I wasn't terribly interested in that, but addiction has always been – oh look at that. Anyway, it was sort of like, I told you, I have not been good at maybe

sticking with something if it got hard or whatever else. But I thought with counseling that yeah, I could intuit a lot of what was going on with the person, but I didn't want to get into it for the long haul – it felt like more than I could carry. I would get too much involved personally. It was hard for me to set the limits – That most good psychotherapists that I know, could set good limits – when they were at their best, they did that. That was hard for me. So, anyway, I could be with people and I thought do some counseling and really in buying houses – which might seem strange, but I could sort of ferret out what kind of house they were telling me they wanted. Although, they didn't always appear at first, but we would eventually get there. One of my friends that (laughs), that I worked with – who happens to be one of those psychotherapists. So she always talks about how I kept taking her back to this townhouse that she just couldn't – or condo – she just couldn't see why in the world I'd be taking her back to it. And eventually, she kind of got it and bought it and she said that was the place she liked best of any of the places she had lived in after she left Massachusetts I think. But anyway –

CO: And you felt you had an intuitive sense about that?

NC: Yeah, and I've always hated being around real estate agents who bragged about how they could help people into buying something. I didn't think that was my job – to talk somebody into buying what I thought they should – I mean, that doesn't seem to fit with what I just said, but I couldn't think of myself as a sales person. I went to a lot of those sales classes that – seminars and things – and always hated it. I thought that was pretty trashy, like selling patent medicine or something. Anyway, maybe I'm just – but that's how I felt about it.

CO: If you could go back and train for any profession, do you ever think sometimes about what you might have enjoyed, felt rewarding, been good at, that kind of thing?

NC: Well, the latest thing I've thought of, and this has just been – you know, I think I've gone through several things I've rolled through my head. Lately I thought you know, if I could have done something related to design, I think I would have loved it. Cause I like everything from architecture to just interior decoration and – or landscaping – landscaping was a big one. Just design, and I know when I think about – I do all the landscaping around our house, so don't think about that. But there are times when I'm out there, fooling with stuff and I think gosh, you know, this is a neat idea if I had the money or the people to hire to do this design – this is – what I would do and it usually has to do with staying very close to the natural. I don't like a lot of fru fru stuff, or – I just like incorporating what nature has to say.

CO: Do you think there are any jobs that are not suitable for women?

NC: Hmm. That's a good one. We were talking the other day about whether – you know, whether in the Army, women doing all the things that men do. You know, firing guns and all that kind of thing. Kind of concluded that well, yeah, if they're physically able to do it, you know, and wanted to, okay. I mean I can't imagine wanting to do that, but that's a different issue.

CO: Well women in combat is such a controversial issue.

NC: Yeah, I know.

CO: You'd be opposed to combat in principle –

NC: Yeah, right. But if you were a person with our – a man and in combat, I would want a woman who was equally able to defend herself and be at my back to be with me. But I think there are women that can do that – I may be wrong. And if there are and they can and they want to, I don't have any problem with it.

CO: This is an issue that can split a classroom right down the middle. And its not women against men, it really is both.

NC: Yeah, I can understand that.

CO: Not just what should women do or not, but the issue of women in combat. They have strong opinions about that. And obviously it doesn't always reflect their other political opinions, so that's –

NC: Yeah, I mean. I think that – I mean, I've grappled with whether I could defend myself or my children and I realized with the dogs, I probably could. If somebody were going after my dogs, and I knew they were gonna kill 'em, I could very well "off" 'em (laughs).

CO: Did you teach your daughters to be financially independent? I mean is that something that – was that whether you taught it explicitly, was that an implicit message that they got?

NC: I think they got it because they saw the struggle I went through. I was so glad when my daughters had equipped themselves with some way to make a living. Because they saw what I went through when I was divorced and didn't have a job and didn't know how I was going to get one. They must've understood from that that it was very, very important. I was so proud that both of them had careers, even though Kay's didn't go on forever. Now Kay declares that as soon as Zach goes off to school next year, she's getting a job. And we all said "Great, we think that'd be good." And I hope she does, but you know, my daughter Terri, didn't work for 16 years. She went back to Lawyering a year or two ago and I was very happy. She's 52 or 53, she gets –

CO: So they learned that as much by example as they did by you using certain –

NC: Yeah. I mean, I never told my children – or my stepchildren – that I had any stake in their getting married, having children, being gay or straight or – I mean, my friends always told me my son was gay or was gonna be. I was "Okay, well that's fine. Whatever he needs to be."

CO: Yeah, I've heard they love their mothers.

NC: (Laughs). Yeah, right! But I'm not sure that I wanted that kind of attention or idolization or whatever it is.

CO: No, but I mean, the men I know who are gay are healthily gay, but they love and respect their mothers. I know that's not a universal, but in my experience –

NC: Yeah, there are some exceptions to that but yeah, that's pretty much true from my experience. No, I just – did I answer that question? (laughs)

CO: No, you did. Is there some accomplishment or improvement that you wanted but didn't make itm and either retired or quit or whatever before you got there? Was the last thing you did real estate?

NC: Uh huh, yeah. I was very glad to quit when I did. But it was when Christopher was so sick, and I just didn't have what it took to take care of him and me. You know, we had a drop in income, but that was okay. We do fine. We certainly don't hurt for anything. You know, as far as things that I think about I'd like to be able to do, they're mainly things like gosh, I wish I could read French, or German, or if I go back and pick up my Spanish – cause I was good at Spanish. And there are things like that that I think about that would be nice.

CO: What was it like to retire? Okay, you retired to take care of Christopher when he was sick –

NC: Yeah, well it was kind of – I didn't miss work or anything like that. I mean, going to the office – in fact, toward the end, I very rarely went because I hated going to sales meetings once a week. And you know, once you had a computer, you can do most of your work –

CO: Were you here?

NC: No, no. I was in Atlanta. No, I had people ask me if I wanted to join the company up here and I said nope!

CO: So what do you like most about being retired?

NC: Oh, I like most is that I can do what I want to. I don't like being scheduled. I found that if I volunteered for things that I had to be at some regular meeting, I just didn't like that. I just like having a loose schedule where I can fit in whatever I want to do. Did that answer that?

CO: Yes it did.

NC: Good.

CO: The next subject would be money. Yeah, it's – well, this is one your husband could really – well, I know he would not be able to restrain himself as an economist.

NC: And his personal money he has no interest in whatsoever. He is so relieved that at some point I just took over all the finances. He doesn't worry about it because it drives him crazy. His son's the same way.

CO: Are you better off financially than your parents were?

NC: Yes. Well, certainly better than my mother was. My father at one time probably made a fair amount of money but he – then later on in his life he didn't. I mean he was okay, he left me his small inheritance but it was not big.

CO: Are you better off financially than your sibling? Than your one sibling?

NC: No. No, John would have made lots more money than I did.

CO: Did your family have ideas about – they sound like they were very open minded people. Did they have ideas about class or – this is a stupid question to ask with a grandfather who started the school (laughs) for [underprivileged children]. But it's my question, so where do you think his openness to those issues? Do you think he understood the economy, or did he simply understand people? Was he – you know, did he understand that poverty was a systemic problem?

NC: Oh yeah, I mean he was very concerned about helping other people about lifting *them* out of poverty, but it didn't seem to occur to him that he should maybe think a little bit about what would happen with him and his wife one day if they weren't employed in the Rabun Gap Nacoochee School. I mean, does that answer it?

CO: Well, one thing I'm trying to get at is how is that we know we're a certain class? I mean, I grew up lower middle class but fully influenced by middle class values. You know, but I knew my family was not financially there, but culturally that was what we shaped our values. So I guess that's what I'm getting at.

NC: Well, I grew up being very conscious of my family was not as well of as most of my friends. And I think my children grew up knowing in a way that they were not financially as well off as many of their friends, and certainly their cousins they were close to whose father was making big, big money. But as far as in my home was concerned, I think when I started looking at sociological things like middle class, upper middle class, I was very conscious, and I think my family brought it home to me was, "We don't have a lot of money, but we do belong to the educated class." That was where they thought – you know, that was their strong suit. It was not having a lot of money, but it *was* having an education.

CO: So you were rich in education? That was a –

NC: Yeah, that's what they stressed.

CO: DO you think that they –

NC: Well, in many ways too, I think that I was a lot better off, and my family knew they were a lot better off than most of the people in Rabun County, because most of the people in Rabun County were very very poor. I mean I went to school with kids who didn't have shoes in the winter time. I mean they were terribly, terribly poor.

CO: So it's all pretty relative.

NC: Yeah. But I knew I wasn't well off like my friend – Claudia Derrick who lived in this lovely brick home. You know, with a furnace. We actually got a furnace – one of my grandfather's benefactors in Atlanta, when he got sick, said "Oh, well they're living up there in a house with a fireplace and a stove – a coal stove in the kitchen. We got to put in central heating for them." And you know, they paid for a furnace to be put in. So you know –

CO: So before you had a furnace, how'd you heat?

NC: We had a fireplace. My mother would get up in the morning, fire up the fireplace. I'd go run – my grandfather in the winter time always – in the fall, they switched the mattress to a feather bed, and I'd run, jump in the bed with my grandfather because it was cold until Mama had the fire going so I could run into the living room and get dressed for school by the fireplace. And then grandmother would plait my hair. My mother never plaited my hair, I'd never let her touch my hair for some reason or other. Then, you know that's how – the fire would be revved up in the little coal stove in the kitchen. And we had electricity, an electric stove, and a refrigerator, you know. There wasn't a washing machine there for some time.

CO: Grandmother just had to wash by hands.

NC: There were two laundry tubs down in the basement and somebody came in and helped with the washing and ironing – I've forgotten who that was. I hadn't thought of that for years. But somebody came in and helped with the washing – that may have been Mattie, I haven't thought about that in years – washing and hanging clothes out a lot. I remember the chickens – we had chickens in the coop and grandma would wring their necks and they'd go flopping down the –

CO: Yep.

NC: So anyway.

CO: I'm really trying to understand what it is – how people assess the role money has played in shaping decisions they make. Like a lot of people in some families -women – marry because they can't take care of themselves.

NC: Yeah, well. You know I don't think that exactly crossed my mind. I know Lillian Smith – when I went up and told her I was marrying Bobby William, said "Well," something like, "you know he's not going to be making much money and his prospects don't look too good." (Laughs). Didn't phase me at all, never thought about it. And I think in a way I thought we were probably better off than we were, cause I thought "Well I own property in Florida." At that time I didn't think much about what kind of property it was, cause I wasn't down there with it. But I think I thought we were better off in some ways than we really were financially. And because my mother wasn't in my – maybe this came from my father, but he always said "Well, your mother wasn't a very good manager. You should have had – she should have saved a lot more money than she did." When she sold the house in Orlando, the Woodruffs advised her about putting it in some stock and she did. Had she had held onto it, we would have been quite wealthy. That's an old story in the South I think. Everybody that sold their Coca Cola stocks at the wrong time. That's just one of our... I've always been this way, and pretty much thought it was fine – except for that period when I didn't have any money and I was scared to death, had to sell the house. But for the most part, never had any serious worries about money. It was – and i'm not sure that that's not a mountain trait– as long as we had enough to buy some of the basic things you wanted and you weren't hurting in any way. Because I watch people up here and people around here are known for working a job for a while until they have enough money and then they'll quit for a while and go fishing or hunting. And not worried about it until the next time they're getting a little hard pressed.

CO: But do you think those mountain people who were so poor they didn't have shoes, did they also feel that way? Were they equally as self-sufficient in their minds?

NC: Well, I don't know. I mean, those were the people my Mama worked with, you know, in the welfare department a lot of 'em. I think in some instance they were just so mentally impaired. I'm not sure they –

CO: In terms of psychologically?

NC: Yeah, but also just terribly low IQ's. I mean there were some of these people that were 16 and in my class in the 3rd grade, you know, and I was 9 years old. And they were just staying in school till they could be 16 and leave. They did not understand much about life other than it was fun to go out and hunt and fish. And they could –

CO: Alright, what is the most – you talked about family members. Of course you've lost all of your parents or grandparents, people in your life. What has been the most difficult loss you've experienced through death?

NC: I think my grandfather probably because of the age I was when he died and how attached I was to him. My grandmother died – she was 93, and she had been sick for the last 6 months of her life and that was the only time I knew she'd been sick. And so letting go of her was not nearly as hard. My mother was killed in an automobile accident. That was traumatic and shocking to me, and a bit hard to take. But in many ways, after having been estranged for some time, I had been back up to visit with her in Clayton a couple of times. As I told you, I actually taped my last visit with her and I had a good memory of that.

CO: You taped it like we're taping now?

NC: Uh huh. I audio taped it. I still got one of the tapes, I got one of my nephews to put it – I think he's put it on a CD by now. I actually bought a machine that you could transfer the tapes from the cassette tape to a CD and I think he – although Gary hadn't brought it to me yet, I think it's done. I taped my father too. Or my daughter did. I mean, much later than the one of my mother because my father died in – well as I told you, in the 1980's and mother died in 1977. I think the most traumatic loss to me was my grandfather.

CO: When you were 11?

NC: Yeah. I mean, but mother had some health issues – she was losing her eye sight almost completely. There were indications that she had given up – she was 74 years old, and that's been hard for me because I'm 74 now. This is the year that I've certainly thought about her dying at 74, and my thinking that well I hope I have a few more years left. But it has – I even mentioned it to my doctor not too long ago. I said you know this is the year my mother – I'm the same age my mother was when she died. And he said "well, that's not unusual for somebody to start thinking about, you know, their own mortality when that happens."

CO: But it was a car wreck. But did you say her health was declining? Was it –

NC: Yeah, she was having – she had all kinds of heath problems going on from everything she – my mother was very, very much overweight. And she fought it all the time after a certain age, but then she was losing her eye sight, she had back problems, and for somebody who had always enjoyed being as active as she had, I think that was really hard on her. And she had given up – she had taught for probably as long as I can remember – 30 or 40 years – a five year old Sunday school class at the Baptist Church. And she'd given that up, and so we kind of had a sense that she was starting to – that she had a sense of the end of her life.

CO: Was she alone in the car accident?

NC: No, that's one of the family stories that kind of is very sad for me. She adored her grandchildren. She was on her way to see a grandson – my brother's eldest son was living way near the coast of North Carolina, and she was going there. My nephew – my brother's youngest son Scott was 15, and driving the car. They were in the rain, and the car went off the road into a creek and Scott got out of the car and Mother didn't. But it's one of those things. My brother never told me that Scott was driving the car. My Daddy eventually told me, he said "Nannette, you need to know that your mother was not driving the car." And then I discovered later that my brother had just been absolutely infuriated because the North Carolina State Patrolmen that was at the accident just ripped him up one side and down the other. For allowing a 15 year old to be driving under those circumstances. I mean, what can I say? Mother thought it was safer with Scott driving than mother driving, cause she couldn't see. But anyway, one of those sad –

CO: So how is that young man now? So that was – well, 17 – and said 15 in '77.

NC: Yeah, he's 50 – almost 50. Scott is the Baptist Minister up the road here in a little Baptist Church. And probably to my knowledge nobody ever dealt with that with Scott, which just breaks my heart. That's gotta be a load he's carried all his life.

CO: Well, okay. There was a lot in addition to grief –

NC: Oh, well it was just absolute shock. I can remember I was at Christopher's apartment – I guess it was either late in the day or early in the morning, but – you know, I can remember my brother calling and saying "Mama's been killed in a wreck." And I think that's when I decided that Christopher was maybe somebody I'd think about making a permanent relationship with, because he came up here with me for the funeral service and he was the one that the Baptist Minister just kept insisting that I had to go to the funeral home and view my mother's body. And I kept saying no, I don't want to do that. And he kept saying, "This is something you need to do." I have a very happy memory with my last visit with my mother, I can see her as I was leaving the house. I do not want to go see my mother in a coffin. So Christopher just finally stood up to the man and said "no more of this." And he just stood right by me, and he'd never been to a funeral, he'd never been to a small town. He went to the Walgreens drugstore that used to be on Mainstreet. Somebody came up to him and said "You're here with Nannette for her mother's funeral." And he nearly died, he was like how would anybody know

this? (Laughs). And I said well, this is a small town. So (laughs). But anyways, that was when I kind of knew, well this is somebody that does care about me (laughs).

CO: Have you learned lessons? Valuable lessons that you think about grieving or bereavement and through the process of the losses?

NC: Oh yeah. But I had an awful lot of help with the grieving of my mother because I was in therapy at the time. And the loss of my father happened – I mean, I didn't like my father a whole lot. I got called in at the last minute when my father was dying, and he was in the hospital. And my step-mother called – very nice lady, I liked her a lot – and my brother. And they said "we need you to come spend the night up at the hospital, we're worn out." And I said fine, I'm glad you, you know – I'm willing to do my part and I'd been up a few times before. And he died that night in the hospital. And I had sat by his bed – it was 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning and I knew he'd breathed his last.

CO: So you were with him when he died?

NC: Oh yeah. And I sat there for 30 minutes. I sat and sang old Baptist hymns and hoped nobody would come in the room. And eventually I went out and I said, you know, I think my father's dead. Or has died. Well, they started ringing all the bells and bringing in all these people. And he had a do not resuscitate – no extreme measures. They did all that, and I was just furious. I'm sure my step-mother had to pay for all that. He was dead. I mean, and he was 87 years old, he was not going to get better, he had a stroke, he was miserable, and he died.

CO: How many people have you been with who actually died? You saw them die?

NC: He was the only one.

CO: He was the only one?

NC: Mmhm.

CO: Was there anything – that's just something I'm intensely curious about, that experience of death. I missed my sister's – we drove furiously 20 hours to try to make it to her bedside when we found out she was dying. We missed it by an hour and a half. But her end was very dramatic, and so –

NC: Really?

CO: Yeah. And so I mean I've always been curious about, you know, that experience. But since then I've been intensely curious about -

NC: How was hers dramatic?

CO: Well, since then I've discovered that it happens to a lot of people. She –

NC: Well she was young.

CO: She was 47. As the time grew nearer for her to go, she had already lost consciousness. Had not given any signs of recognition, of any awareness of anybody in the room. But seven people were in the room with her, and she suddenly – hadn't had enough energy to lift a finger. No eye movement, nothing. She suddenly sat straight up in bed. She was lying, you know, flat, and sat straight up. Lifted her arms up to heaven, eyes wide open, smiled, teeth, everything.

NC: And then she was gone? Wow. There was nothing like that with Daddy's dying. The death rattle was going on, but here was an 87 year old man who had had a stroke. You know, he was pretty – I suppose, the fetal position or whatever. But –

CO: Well they say that people – for hours before a person dies – well actually even days, they begin to see people that have gone on. Because they talk about it. They're sort of delirious. We think, you know, that Sherri saw somebody.

NC: Yeah. Well who knows what goes on in this brain, because I think that unconscious just pops back in there. And there was probably some muscular reaction to that. But he was not talking. You know, I think the few days before when I'd been there, he was still talking a little bit but not very coherently –

CO: Where was he?

NC: In Gainesville, at the – he had moved up from Ocala after his second wife died. And I'm not sure of what had killed her. But anyway, he was – he came up to visit with my brother and met Dot, who was a really nice lady. And they got married when he was 80 years old. And bless her heart, she hung in there with him for those seven years –

CO: How old was she?

NC: Much younger. She just died four or five years ago – I think Dot was 90 something, but she was a lot younger than Daddy.

CO: So you learn something about grieving through that process. Is it something that you feel like you could – has anybody come to you or have you been in a position where you could sort of counsel somebody about the whole process? Cause grieving is a process, and if you don't experience it, you don't really know. You can only intellectually understand it.

NC: I think the Jewish thing about there being a year of when you – it's hard to get away from your loss or your sense of loss. And then at the end of that time, I think they have a service or special prayer or whatever else. And I think that's a good thing. I don't think anybody should dodge that process of assimilating the loss as best way you can, doing whatever you can with it. And that's gotta be idiosyncratic – I mean it's one of those things that is a part of who you are, how you handle it.

CO: Its a bit different for everybody.

NC: Yeah, but like I say when I lost my mother, my therapist at the time was very worried about me. And I did turn up with, you know, a pretty serious – not real serious – had to be removed cancer on

my leg. You know, skin cancer type thing. But you know, Milly was just worried because she knew how tightly my psyche was tied with my mother's. But you know, I think fortunately Christopher was there for me. He had just gotten back from six months in Peru, and we had just started dating again. And so he was there for me. And I think I greatly appreciated it.

CO: So did that experience, do you think facilitate your relationship?

NC: Probably so, yeah. I mean, my mother probably – actually Christopher met her one time, it was before he went to Peru and when I was living in Sandy Springs. You know, she would have probably been glad enough I got married again. But my father just (laughs) – he was so funny about – when he first saw Christopher, Christopher had just gotten back from Peru. He had on a poncho and he had this really scraggly beard (laughs). And Daddy thought I was, you know, living with a Hippie I guess. (Laughs). But anyway.

CO: Was there anything that you would consider – and this sounds hokie – but is there a silver lining in some of that grieving? When you grieve, does it bring something – bring wisdom?

NC: I think probably just reflection. Makes you go back and think and you have to deal with your own mortality, which is a good thing. It's good to know that your life is – I think Steve Jobs spoke to this – Death is very, very important because it's there for all of us. And the sooner you get that picture in your head, the better.

CO: Besides loss through death, can you recall any other significant losses – divorce, friends moving away –

NC: Ieper died. Broke my heart.

CO: What's that?

NC: My dog. Two years ago. I mean, and I think the reason that that just tore me outta my frame –

CO: Whats the dog's name?

NC: Ieper. I-E-P-E-R, that came from – spent some time in Belgium, oh 15 or 20 years ago and went to a battlefield where there was this marker and 20 or 30 Curran names on it. And when we got this Belgium Sheep Dog, Christopher said – or one of us said "What about Ieper for a name?" Cause that was the city where this monument was. But anyway, I think what happened with me was I had been afraid to grieve Christopher's illness, and she was so tied to that for me. I mean I had taken her over to the hospital to see him when he was so terribly, terribly sick and you know. And she was there for two or three years of his recovery, which was tough. You know, it was – that dog just carried so much for me of years of –

CO: Now what was his illness? Bladder cancer did you say?

NC: Yeah. He had bladder cancer – they went in and 10 hours of surgery to remove this bladder and hook up a way to attach a bag to replace the bladder but when they were in there, they also

discovered that he had prostate cancer so two primary cancers. And they said that they could not get all the cells, and after the surgery they could not do radiation because of the surgery and whatnot. Then after that, it wasn't long before he showed up with a serious heart condition. And that's the reason he went to see the cardiologist people yesterday. But he's amazing! (laughs). I mean, he doesn't go out and hike and he doesn't – he sometimes helps a little bit in the yard, but he has almost – I mean it's too quickly the angina pains hit him. Or he's out of breath. But he's hanging in with us.

CO: On to a different topic: Aging. Do you remember when you were younger and you had ideas and thoughts about old people? Like when you were 25, what was old?

NC: My grandmother who was 90. But see, that's what I think that is something – a gift growing up with old people. I just –

CO: You don't think of them as old.

NC: They were too vital. And old people that were sick or infirm, I didn't know much about that. You know, I knew a little, but mostly I looked at old people – I mean it didn't bother me that they were old and wrinkled and that's probably why it doesn't bother me enormously that, you know, that my skin's sagging and I'm visibly an older person. I hate losing my hair, and that part of aging. Cause I've always enjoyed my hair (laughs).

CO: So you're not really scared about aging?

NC: I don't think – I'm not afraid, and this may not be unusual, but I'm not afraid of being older. I think I am fortunate in that I'm pretty healthy. I mean, I don't have any serious ailments. I take some Synthroid, but I don't have high blood pressure or anything.

CO: How old do you feel in your mind? You know, when you – Do you feel like a different person than when you were 25?

NC: Yeah. I just feel a lot calmer. I just – a lot of my neurosis, or a lot of the things that I was anxious about are no longer –

CO: That's a good thing isn't it?

NC: Oh yeah. Very freeing. And I think I'm more in touch with, you know. I am a speck on this earth, and this earth's been here a long, long time, and hopefully it will be here for a long long time. But it's all in some sense ephemeral. And you know, that's – I'm comfortable. That's what I'm comfortable with.

CO: What's been the hardest part of aging? The most difficult part?

NC: Not being able to think quite as fast as I used to, or absorb stuff quite as fast as I used to. I mean, I used to be able to pick up anything – I could read extremely fast and absorb it. I've slowed down a little bit.

CO: So what has been the most rewarding part? The benefits of aging? You've already really said, you've become calmer.

NC: Yeah, I just think reaching that point where so many things don't matter anymore that used to worry me.

CO: So, okay, then are you – I have a question that asks what age do you recall the most nostalgically or the most favorably. Or if you could remain at a particular age, what would it be? But it sounds like you're just happy to be where you are now.

NC: Yeah, I sure wouldn't want to go back, I can say that (laughs). I don't have any – I mean I think I've known people who think that their best years were when they were in high school and the football story or the cheerleader or whatever else. That's – no. Those were hard years for me.

CO: If you were asked to tell somebody not from this country – it would have to be a non-European, because most Europeans who know anything about this country understand that the southern US is different. But let's just say it was in Asia, or somebody who was not familiar with the country's history, and you had to explain the cultural differences between the south – as though that was one monolith, and I know it's not. But there's this perception that the south is different than the rest of the country. How would you do that? What would you say? How would you explain the south or describe the south? And actually, those are two different things, so take whichever one you want.

NC: Gosh. Well, I would say that the south has had to recover from the terrible time of slavery. And that for a person who had not lived here or in this country, or even Europeans or probably other people in our part of the – you know, in the United States, would not really understand the impact of that. Of the impact that slavery and the resulting war had on – and there are people in this county who are still fighting the war.

CO: So for you, the difference is undeniably the institution of slavery.

NC: Yeah.

CO: The legacy of slavery is still –

NC: Yeah, I think it closed people's minds that in some ways it's been extremely difficult to overcome. Because they closed off something that was too – that they didn't really want to deal with. I think Lillian Smith understood that her – (Dog barks). I do live with an academic so maybe it rubbed off (laughs). But that also comes from my deep appreciation for the writings of Lillian Smith.

CO: Yeah, I would say – because she certainly understood it in her bones. What does it mean to you to be a southerner? Was it something your – well, answer that part first. What does it mean for you to be a southerner?

NC: Um, well there's part of me who is sort of defensive of my southern-ness in a way. It's always irritating to me as it was to my grandfather and other people, including my Yankee husband. There are Northeasterners who turn their nose up at us, and I want to say that we're a proud people. And

I'm proud of my heritage. I'm not proud of the fact that you know, one of my ancestors did own slaves, at least one of 'em did. That's not what I'm proud of. I'm proud of a certain resiliency. I'm proud of the love of the land that I think came from that. I'm devoted to the land, it's something I care about.

CO: And do you think your family, like your grandfather – was he strongly identified with the region? He of course would be very – he would have a rich experience of going to Harvard because they definitely had opinions about people form –

NC: From the south. Oh gosh, they looked down their nose at us. And they do to this day. I mean, my husband was up at MIT for a seminar about the time we got married. And he would come home from the classes and just say "Well, you know, because I'm from a southern University, I get immediately labeled." And that's so stupid.

CO: Yeah. But in your family of origin, or your grandfather's household – was there any explicit talk about being southern?

NC: Yeah, my Granddaddy would – there was some story, and I can't remember all that well. But he related about a southern woman that he knew and admired – and he knew and admired Lillian Smith and Mary Hambidge that we haven't talked about. But this southern woman got up in some meeting and they had been carrying on about the poor southerners and hookworm and disease and all this stuff. And she stood up and he said she was a very tall, stately woman of very well-educated. And said "I'm sorry, I'm an example of the people you're talking about." And so yeah, he was very much –

CO: Did he ever talk about how he handled that when he was Harvard?

NC: He didn't say anything about it but from what I've heard from other people, my grandfather had that kind of way of being. That people were drawn to him – I don't know, I think of people like Bill Clinton kind of comes to mind – who just had this personality that people responded to. And it sort of – where he came from or whatever else fell into the background.

CO: And do you think some of that rubbed off on you and his other grandchildren? Well he only had your –

NC: I don't know, I don't know the answer to that.

CO: Okay. What about in your own household. Was that an issue for you and – how about your mother? Did she – was it just an implicit thing in your household that you we're southern?

NC: There was not much made of that. And part of the reason for that was I think – we didn't think of ourselves much as southern. I mean southern was people who – plantation and you know, that was all the southern and had this wonderful southern accent. And you can get a little bit of that out of the richness of that if you talk to Nan Pendergrast. She has a lot of that aristocratic southern accent. But I think because we had our Appalachian accent and because we knew we were different. I don't remember ever, when I was growing up, thinking much about being a southerner. It just didn't cross my mind. I remember it coming back from – when I did my little stint down in Ocala, went back to

Rabun Gap for that brief time – one of the boys looked at me and said “You know you sound like a Yankee.” And I thought “I don't sound like a Yankee!” But I know a few times in my life, people have said to me “Well you don't sound like you're from North Georgia.” And I can sound like I'm from North Georgia, and it’s neither – sorta I blend more with where I am and who I'm with a lot. But I can sure pull it out. But I just – being southern has just never been a big thing for me.

CO: Yeah, okay. You know from reading anything that Lillian Smith's ever written how identified the region is with troubled race relations. Do you remember the first time – have I asked you this part already? The first time you realized that there were consequences for people whose skin was not white. That it mattered what color of skin you had?

NC: Oh yeah. I think I knew that very early.

CO: So do you recall? I mean I do recall vividly an incident that happened that made me conscious – not in an articulate way, but it was such a vivid memory that I’ve recalled it all my life. And a lot of people write about that conscious memory. Like W.E.B. Debois writes about it in his essays *The Souls of Black Folk*. And there's just a time that you become aware that there's a difference expectation for you – you know.

NC: I don't recall a specific incident. I do remember being in Atlanta and seeing “White Only” or “Colored Only” water fountains and things like that. I recall that. I don't remember any specific instance, but –

CO: Do you remember how you learned? What proper behavior – see I'm sure its a little bit different when you live in a region where there aren't many blacks, so it’s not as essential that you learn a code of behavior because you don't encounter the situation. But if you live in a little urban area where the races live in relatively close proximity, there's a code. It’s palpable. Do you recall when you realized that and how you knew what was right for white people and what was right for black people?

NC: I don't have any specific memory of that. I know reading some of Lillian Smith's stuff, she had the memory of when the child came into their household. I just – it just kind of evolved. The people – the black people I was around were domestics, you know. They were in our house to help out, to cook or to clean the house. Although I don't remember they did much cleaning. We took our ironing over to – I do remember that now – they lived in a separate community, and I knew that. But I don't remember when I was just absolutely conscious of “Well there are these rules that apply to them, and to how we were supposed to act.”

CO: So it seems like you were always aware of it? As far back as you can remember?

NC: I don't remember there was any point – which you know, like I had black playmates and I knew that we couldn't go to school together or – I didn't have any of that kind of experience.

CO: Have your opinions on race – do they differ from your family? Did reading Lillian Smith make you more –

NC: Reading Lillian Smith made me more aware of some of the deep psychological implications or wounds that were a part of our southern psyche I think. More so than anything that was going on in my family. I think for my family, immigrants, black people – everybody – theoretically to them should have an opportunity. Maybe they were equal opportunities – and my grandfather's segregated but equal, which when they probably seriously thought about it "well that doesn't really work." I think my mother was pretty far along toward – to me it wasn't a big conflict in my family between what I believed and what they believed. It would have been with my father. I mean, my father was – as my husband will attest to – very racist. It was ugly, I mean it was repugnant to me as a person. Now he would claim that he treated the black folks that worked for him real fine, but –

C: [from background] With a 2 by 4.

NC: Well, yeah. There was that story.

CO: Do you think that having a black man in the white house has changed opinions on race in the country? Has it made them better, worse?

NC: I wonder about that. I don't know the answer, but I have been so surprised around in this community, that people I thought would've been anti-Obama because of his race, when I've talked to them, that has not been true. I know there are those people out there, and I know some of those people too, but I've been surprised at the exceptions to that. In some ways I think that the generation, like of my children and certainly my grandchildren, is in many ways colorblind. Maybe I'm wrong. I hope I'm not wrong, but –

CO: So you think it's improved dramatically –

NC: Yeah, I think it's improved dramatically – for people like me and Sue Paulson – the 80 year old you just met. For us, we were gleeful, because "Oh, wow, in our lifetime, we've seen a black man." And we had hopes and aspirations for him beyond what any human could probably fulfill. And personally I had my disappointments, I don't know how Sue feels. But there's just so much of that that has to do with who you see and who you want to talk to. And I'll admit, I'm not socially terribly active – I don't hang around with folks that would be bashing Obama a lot.

CO: What is the most important historical event that you've either participated in or lived through?

NC: Hmm. Gosh, the first thing that popped into my mind – this is – 9/11 was certainly life changing, but was that more life changing that World War II? I don't know. I mean I've lived through both of those, so, it does seem these cataclysmic violent events had an impact, but you know, it could be that the inventions or the invention of the internet and all that probably far more – I don't know. There are just so many of those things that I can't fix on one of them.

CO: The Depression – you talked about your parents and your Granddaddy. We did talk about FDR, and there's a common sort of understanding that the Depression didn't really affect the mountain folk because they were –

NC: Poor anyway (laughs).

CO: Right. Did it affect your family?

NC: Oh yeah. But we had the CCC up here. I mean, you can go all over this county and see where the civilian [conservation] whatever it was corps built things and they were very much a part of what went on in this part of the world. And of course you had the TVA and half the men in this county went off to one place or another and built dams around in the region. It provided employment for 'em, and then of course eventually we got electricity in here. But in one of the buildings at Rabun Gap, it came out of that – the old gymnasium. You know, I've been reading in the records of the school about how that came to be. I didn't realize that, but it was a WPA –

CO: Project. What do you recall, historically, about the – 50's. Was the 50's, from your own recollection, was that a good decade? Personally for you and for your family, and what about for the nation as a whole? Just in your own mind. Just your opinion.

NC: The 50s. That – well we were kind of considered – what was the label put on us? But we were not very active, or we – it was before all that activity of the 60s – there was a word used to describe us, but –

CO: Mountain people or just the country people?

NC: Well, my generation. But what should I speak to? I mean, the mountain people or?

CO: Well –

NC: Or my whole sense of the 50s?

CO: Yeah, actually that's what I'm lookin for. Your whole sense of the 50s. How do you recall it?

NC: Well those were my high school years and my college years, pretty much – yeah that was. I started high school at the beginning of the 50s and I graduated from college at the end of the 50s. As far as what was going on in the country, I don't think I thought a whole lot about it. Eisenhower I guess was president, and you know, I remember worrying sometimes about things like the Cold War.

CO: Some people in your generation think back nostalgically to the 50s like it was the height of American Greatness –

NC: No. No, no. I don't see that. I mean, that wouldn't be where I'd come from. I don't see the glorious 50s – we had our problems then, we certainly had not solved any of the racial problems in the South. And there was stuff going on that wasn't good.

CO: So what about the 60s? So you would have been a young, married woman in the 60s, right?

NC: Mmhm. Yeah.

CO: Cause your first daughter was born in '59 –

NC: No, '58.

CO: So they would have been babies in the '60s. So how – were you aware – you had babies, you were a young married woman. Were you aware of the – basically the turmoil of the era, the decade? The country was experiencing things throughout that decade?

NC: Oh yeah, I mean as far as the civil rights movement was concerned, yeah I was very aware of that. I was, like a lot of people, sort of fascinated with the Kennedy family and torn up about the death of John Kennedy and Bobby Kennedy and Martin Luther King. All of that was very traumatic, and thrown in there was the Cuban missile crisis. Yeah, that was –

CO: You were aware and you were affected by it, and you have a perspective on it?

NC: Yeah. I mean I went down and helped address letters – probably in the organization that Nan Pendergrast had set up. We were out doing mailings to say we can't close the schools in Georgia, this is crazy.

CO: So she was promoting integration?

NC: Oh yeah. Yeah. And I can remember dropping my children off at a friend's house and she kept the kids while – this was before Ritchie was born. What was the year of that court decision – anyway.

CO: *Brown* decision? That was '54.

NC: Yeah. Well, anyway, Gov. Vandiver was getting ready to close Georgia schools or something was going on.

CO: That was '63 I believe. But it didn't happen.

NC: No, no, and I think one of the large reasons it didn't was because Georgia had a lot of strong women that said, "You can't do this."

CO: That is a major statement that you just made. So you really believe that? That women –

NC: I think Georgia women, particularly the – I've forgotten the title now, but there was a council of church women –

CO: Lobbied hard?

NC: oh yeah. And they saw to it that their husbands towed the line. I believe that, I may be terribly wrong, but they just said that this is not right. And so, anyway, I give them credit. And I've heard that from a lot of sources.

CO: And this Mrs. Pendergrast is an example of a woman with that kind of thought and that kind of –

NC: Oh yeah, she was out there.

CO: Okay. So how do you recall the civil rights movement as a movement?

NC: Well, I think in a way it was energizing. It was like – okay this is a time to solve a problem, let's get on with it. In that sense it was exciting and energizing and very frightening at the same time.

CO: Do you remember, or what do you remember about these – such as the sit ins and the city riots and those sorts of things? How do you remember hearing about it and what do you remember your response to it?

NC: Yeah, I mean of course it was in the Atlanta paper which I read. It was on the news, so I guess we got most of our news – well, television, radio, church – a lot, I was active in a Methodist Church. We were trying to support – I was active in the –

CO: A Methodist Church in Atlanta that promoted the cause of civil rights.

NC: yeah, the little Methodist church that I was in was a small, suburban church, but that was a congregation that was supporting the civil rights movement. That was –

CO: Because there were many that were not.

NC: Yeah, I guess so. We were – but this was close to the Emory community, there were a lot of Emory folks that were a part of that.

CO: Do you remember the Emmett Till lynching at all?

NC: Yeah. But I mean, I remember my sense of it – I just remember the horror.

CO: And you said you remember the assassinations of the Kennedys and Martin Luther King. Were you in Atlanta then?

NC: Oh yeah. I was in Atlanta from the time I was 18 until 7-8 years ago, whenever we moved up here.

CO: So how do you remember the Atlanta community responding to King's assassination? What do you remember about that?

NC: I just remember just sort of being astounded, I guess. It was like too much. We lost John – we had a president assassinated, we'd been through all this – when was Robert Kennedy assassinated?

CO: He was assassinated just a few months – King in April and Kennedy in June/July.

NC: See, all that sort of blends together for me. But it was just grief. I mean –

CO: But I mean there wasn't violence in downtown Atlanta after King's assassination?

NC: I guess there was some.

CO: There was violence in many places.

NC: Yeah I guess there was some in Atlanta, I think. But we were fortunate in that the business community in Atlanta had a lot of good sense about keeping relations – who was the mayor then, Christopher? Was it Sam Massell or Hartsfield?

C: IT was the –

NC: I Can't think of his name, but the fellow in the office – Yeah, office furniture business, but I don't know why I can't think of his name. But he did an outstanding job of keeping calm in the community.

CO: IT wasn't Hartsfield?

NC: No, it was probably – was it after Hartsfield or after Sam Massell.

C: Right before Sam Massell, I think.

NC: Terrible I can't think of his name, but he was very, very good. And actually I think Woodruff and all those people did some right things at that point. [Ivan Allen was mayor in Atlanta at time of MLK's death.]

CO: Okay. Before getting to the other men – do you remember how the black power movement played out in Atlanta? Do you remember it – do you remember Malcolm X and –

NC: No, I remember Julian Bond in the House as an active politician. Christopher had more contact later on with his brother – what was his brother's name, Christopher?

C: James Bond.

NC: James Bond, but –

C: As big and as heavy as Julian was thin in those days.

NC: (Laughs). But the Bond family, of course, they were very prominent. They – Julian's parents were at the service for Lillian Smith up on the hill – up on the mountain. And I remember that, but that was 1966. I knew that Lillian Smith had her differences with SNCC and some of those people, because they were turning away from the non-violence. And she was –

CO: White people.

NC: Yeah. And so –

CO: And was she – she wasn't actively involved with SNCC was she? I mean, I know that she knew them, but –

NC: I don't think she was actually a part of that organization, but she certainly wrote letters to them and let them know what she thought about how they were –

CO: The direction they were going?

NC: Yeah.

CO: Following the civil rights movement was also so many other movements. I mean it kind of opened the door for the woman's movement, the Gay and Lesbian movement, the Red Power movement, you know even to some extent the environmental movement – ecology and so forth. Do you remember having strong feelings about any of those?

NC: Not a whole lot. I think, for partly personal reasons – I was busy getting on in my life – I was working, had other things going on. So they didn't loom large in my – you know, I wasn't heavily into political activity of any kind, or movements, or whatever.

CO: Do you remember – what about Vietnam? Did you know anybody that went to Vietnam, did you have strong feelings about the war?

NC: Fairly strong feelings, I certainly didn't want my son to register – although he was not 18 until sometime after.

C: You didn't want to register your 3 year old?

NC: (Laughs). Well, the war wasn't over until '75, Ritchie was – I guess he didn't turn 18 until '80 but yeah, I was anti-war. But I had a fondness in my heart someplace for LBJ because of what he'd done for the civil rights. And there was something about that man that was – I don't know.

CO: He gives many people a hard time because in one way he was such a big hearted man –

NC: He was, and he'd come up hard. You know, yeah he did some bad things, but there was something about him that –

CO: Right, an example of how you can be so well intentioned and have such wonderful ideas but get so disoriented and bogged down. Well, you didn't have cousins, so there wasn't even anybody close to you who was killed in Vietnam or injured in Vietnam?

NC: No. The most personal knowledge I had of Vietnam was when I was working in the Labor department and we had quite a few Vietnam veterans that I worked with. And that's where I –

CO: You had to get them jobs?

NC: Well, there was that, but also because the state gave preference to veterans in hiring, we had a lot of veterans that I –

CO: So you literally worked with them.

NC: Yeah, that I literally worked with. And some of the things they said and did I wondered about. But anyway. I did not have any close relatives. My brother was on a ship going to Korea when that stuff was going on, but my father got him off the boat.

CO: What about the women s movement? Do you remember or did you ever read or did you know anyone who read the *Feminine Mystique*?

NC: Oh yeah.

CO: You read it?

NC: Oh yeah, sure. Oh yeah.

CO: You did?

NC: Oh, I did.

CO: Well, I can count on 2 fingers the number of women I've talked to so far who did.

NC: Really?

CO: I'm just delighted that you did!

NC: Oh yeah, Betty Friedan and then you know, by the '70s, I was –

CO: What did you think about the book?

NC: The *Feminine Mystique*? Yeah, I thought she had a good point. Who was that other woman – golly.

CO: Which other woman, the one who writes something?

NC: Yeah, not Susan Sontag. Not – oh, I can see her now she was quite flamboyant. But she wrote a lot about the –

CO: Gloria Steinem?

NC: She was another one. Actually, I got to know a woman who worked closely with Gloria Steinem. And that was very, very interesting, but this woman also worked in the Jimmy Carter Campaign and a lot of other stuff. But anyway –

CO: Somebody else in the women's movement?

NC: Oh yeah. This was a woman I met through a person who became my very good friend when I was getting my divorce – or right before. Actually, it was the result of my going on a trip with her. I met her when I was teaching – I taught briefly for one year, which is why I know Christopher Curran – at the nursery school near Memorial Methodist Church. And that was the year that I decided – well right after that, that I decided I was getting a divorce. But I met this younger woman – 10 years younger than I am – and we hit it off and she was very much stronger feminist at that point than I ever was or ever will be probably. But Becky and I – she had a lot more grievances than I think I did. We headed off to New York to visit with this woman that worked with Gloria Steinem, and stayed with her for a

few days and had a great time. It was when I came back from there that I walked off the plane and said “you know, I’m getting a divorce.” (laughs). There's a different way to live!

CO: So you didn't really have strong feelings about the women's movement in the late '60s and '70s?

NC: Not the kind of thing where I go around burning a bra or carrying any placards or anything else. I certainly –

CO: What do you think the legacy of the movement has been? Did it help the cause or did it hurt the cause of equality?

NC: It raised consciousness, and that's probably a good thing. But I think that there were other things that were probably not terribly productive in terms of –

CO: The cause of equal rights for women?

NC: In some of the spirit of the thing, where I think – I think at times NOW – militancy never has appealed to me in the gay – as we say gay friends, and I am totally supportive of gay marriage or whatever else, but when they got to be militancy, it’s my way or the highway – I'm never comfortable with that.

CO: So militancy in any cause – but you didn't feel that way about the civil rights movement?

NC: Well, I thought Martin Luther King had it down so well in terms of non-violence. In terms of a very, what to me is a truly Christian approach to it, which is you stand up for what you believe and if you lose your life because of that, than that’s the best thing you can do. But if you go out and take up arms – I couldn't go with Malcolm X for example. Or the –

CO: The black power movement –

NC: Yeah, the Panthers or any of those kind of – the Weathermen, the guys that were at the Chicago convention. I don't think that kind of disruption of our social fabric advances us usually. I mean –

CO: Counterproductive, sort of?

NC: Yeah, I mean I'm totally opposed to some of the French kind of – at the barricades kind of thing. Didn't work!

CO: Well, that kind of ends the history section.

CO: You might have many values, but what is the core value that has shaped your life and that has really – that has been sustained throughout your life?

NC: Wow. Core value... [pause] It’s almost like that golden thread. I don't know, it comes out something like: Getting to know something about why one's here. Knowing. Something about knowing.

CO: Okay, so a quest –

NC: Yeah, I think that there's just a core there of questioning, wanting to know. I think I started out with what was I like as a child, and there was an inquisitiveness there. And I think I've just always been seeking something, always looking, never quite satisfied, but not –

CO: You're a quester, always questing, –

NC: Yeah, that sort of thing. It's a core value for knowledge, it's just valuing that.

CO: Okay. When you start talking about your family, you raise so many issues – we've already talked about religion, but was religion important?

NC: Oh yeah. Religion was important. It was certainly – yeah, very significant.

CO: You started off as Baptist?

NC: Mmhm. I started off as Baptist, and I can remember being 9 years old, and there was a revival in the Baptist Church, and my mother said "Well Nannette, don't you want to join the church?" And I was thinking "Well, do I want to join the church?" It hadn't crossed my mind. And I said "Sure, I can go up there and get baptized." I remember that.

CO: SO you didn't have any particular internal interior compulsion to do it?

NC: I don't think so. There may have been part of me that resented it a little bit, cause I was thinking it wasn't until you got to be 12 till you reached the age of accountability (laughs). I didn't want to push that, but (laughs). I don't know why I think of that, but it's just – yeah, I think I took it rather seriously.

CO: Okay. So religion was important in your family, and your grandparents were Baptist, your mother continued to be Baptist?

NC: Yeah, she did. I do think my grandfather had grown up in the Methodists Church, but I'm not sure how active they were in the Methodist church. So that's you know. I just don't recall my grandparents as being what I would call institutionally minded Baptists or anything.

CO: Your grandparents?

NC: My grandparents, yeah. Oh, my mother was definitely very much tied into the institution of the church.

CO: Okay. And you married a man who was Methodist?

NC: No, he had been brought up Baptist.

CO: So why did I insert Methodist in there?

NC: Because Bobby and I joined the – when I was married the first time – we joined the Methodist Church that was in our little neighborhood. And we just visited it, and we liked it. There was a very good minister there, he's the one who helped me get through – got me eventually to the therapist that got me through my divorce and all that stuff.

CO: What do you discern as the chief difference? I know the doctrinal differences between the Baptist and Methodist church, but what for you was the biggest difference between those two denominations? Why do you think you all chose a Methodist church?

NC: Well, I chose it because we had tried a Baptist Church that was right there practically in the middle of the Emory campus, and I always felt very uncomfortable with just the fire and brimstone preaching kind of thing. I needed something with a little more intellectual content, and that's what I got at the little Methodist church we went to. And when we moved back from North Georgia Hills Road to very close to the Emory campus, we went to Glenn Memorial and that was populated with Emory folk. There was a much more intellectually challenging – I mean they talked about some serious issues there, not fire and brimstone. And just reciting the 10 commandments and going over. So I just needed more – you know, we were reading Paul Tillich and Tielhard de Chardin and all the current Reinhold Niebuhr.

CO: So can you tell me what *are* your religious beliefs? I know the fundamentals of the Christian faith, but what are your spiritual religious beliefs?

NC: Well Christopher and I talk about this sometimes, cause my husband's basically an Atheist. Or he is – he would say he is an Atheist. But we talk about it some. I think I need to be a part of the institutional church. It keeps me grounded in some kind of connection with that, which is bigger than me. I believe that there was a historical Jesus, I don't – I have no belief in virgin births or the resurrection of the body. I don't think that Jesus was risen from the dead 3 days after he was crucified. I do believe that God gave us a gift, and I just believe that. And that gift was Jesus. And certainly the spirit of his ministry or his life reveals an awful lot If you spend your time with it.

CO: What is it in the Episcopal Church that you find suits your needs right now?

NC: Well that I don't have to believe in the virgin birth (laughs). Or to be a part of my church or to take communion or do whatever. I mean I can recite the Nicene Creed. I mean I don't mind reading that, but there's an openness to the church, and also a depth of commitment of I think the teachings of Jesus that I don't always find in other churches. Other churches to me in many instances, have felt more committed to Jesus meeting the expectations of people that are more selfishly motivated. That sounds kind of pious or something. I'm not so much criticizing other people's way of being, but I'm comfortable in the Episcopal Church because that's closer to how I believe. And I don't always agree with the Episcopal Church either.

CO: Do you find – the centerpiece of the church is the Eucharist. Do you find that has any particular meaning for you?

NC: Yeah, but it’s ineffable. I can't describe it. I do find it meaningful. I find that communion both with my fellow parishioners and feeling like “well people all around the world are partaking of the body of Christ and the blood of Christ” and I understand that's all symbolic, but it’s meaningful to me.

CO: What was the most profound spiritual moment of your life? If you're an unbeliever, I don't know if you can –

NC: Yeah, our priest talks about sometimes that well all of us have had this moment, when we feel like we've had this spiritual event or change. I can't say that. I feel like most of my life, it's just a progression. It's sort of the same way I feel about well these special events, like Christmas, Easter, all these things, aren't particularly meaningful to me. Because I see life as this progression.

CO: So the church calendar doesn't hold a lot of meaning for you?

NC: Not a lot, but every now and then, you know, like Father Steve will point out something about – if you look at for instance, the Advent Season and the birth of Jesus, what it does reveal to you in not the sense I used to think of it. And I think "well, yeah, that makes a lot of sense to me. I can buy into that."

CO: So you don't necessarily feel a spiritual presence within?

NC: Yeah, I think sometimes I do. Sometimes when I'm outside – but I don't have this strong sense of – I have more a sense of oneness with the whole schmear out there.

CO: So nature does that for you? Nature gives you –

NC: Yeah, it's kind of like that. It's, yeah, it's kind of like dirt and dogs and (laughs).

CO: Something spiritual about that.

NC: Yeah. But no, I don't think I have this – I distrust like ecstasy and things like that. I'm very distrustful of that.

CO: So when you feel drained, what do you do to restore your inner – not just physically drained, but you feel like exhausted emotionally, exhausted within. How do you renew your strength?

NC: Hug my dogs and get outside.

CO: So the dogs are a big –

NC: Oh, they're an enormous support system for me. I don't – you know, they get too many trips laid on' em I guess, but it's like one of these Belgium's relatives did therapy work at the site of 9/11 event, and Eli was the only surviving therapy dog from that, and he's been given a special award by the AKC because the people that were working at the site were so wounded, but they could come up to Eli and sit by him and talk or cry or hold onto him. And get some comfort, whereas talking to any person didn't give them that. So I don't understand that, but I know the experience. I mean, I can't tell you why that happens, but I can relate to it.

CO: Have you had anything that you would consider a miracle?

NC: No. Not miraculous. I've encountered what felt like very strange events and I think Jung was onto something and we're getting much closer to this with guys like Damasio, who I absolutely adore, talking about being conscious. And that most of what human being is from the unconscious. Our consciousness is just a miniscule part of our being. But if I had another life to live and start over

again, I think I'd spend a lot of time dipping more into the Jungian stuff; I'd love to read the Red Book and explore that. But I'd also like to know a whole lot about – I think we're on the edge of really getting a better handle on conscious – how consciousness arrives, what it is, and the ingredients. The things that are coming from just our chemical or our makeup as human beings. I think that's exciting. And I certainly think it's God given, and the whole evolutionary thing. I think that's wonderful.

CO: So it sounds like your religious beliefs have changed over time?

NC: Oh yeah, they have definitely – they've changed. They've just kind of expanded. I think they've just – it's not that I feel like I've given up anything, it's just that it got bigger. It got more based in reality or something. I don't know.

CO: Do you believe in the afterlife? Do you think there is life after death?

NC: Lillian Smith left me with this one too: I think it's memory. I really do. I think about my own end of life. I have no need for an obituary, I have no need for a grave site or – I mean Christopher and I have a place reserved at St. James, where our ashes could be put in the ground. But most of the time I think you know, I don't have a need for that. If my children wanted to come over and scatter my ashes around up in some of these hills that I've tromped on, that would be fine. But I really do think its in memory. And there's something out there about, you know if I were a Mozart or Beethoven or Shakespeare or somebody like that – although it's their works that have lived on, it's not the person. And no, I don't count on sitting by – you know, in the heavenly clouds or something. I don't count on that. It's not something that – I think that the ashes or dust or whatever will just become again apart of what's out there.

CO: So in what way to you does memory survive the person? You mean in other people's memory of you?

NC: Yeah, in whatever memory they have of me. Or – it's a little like – it just occurred to me, if there's a butterfly that's fluttering somewhere in South America or whatever, that reverberates across the world. There's not much I can do about that, but it is apart – and I feel like I'm a part of this world. Apart of what God created. I'm just there. But as far as an afterlife, I have no idea. It's not something I'm banking on.

CO: What experience in life has given or gives you the greatest joy?

NC: There's no way I can speak to that. I don't know anything about what's the greatest joy.

CO: Well it sounds to me like your dogs give you a lot of joy.

NC: Well my dogs – probably relationships with a very few people and – yeah, that's the source. Yeah, that's it. Its relationships, animals and people. A very small number.

CO: Do you feel at peace? You said earlier you feel calmer –

NC: Most of the time I feel very much at peace. Yeah. I don't want to be too peaceful (laughs). Then I'd be – I'm not ready to die I don't think yet. That would be real peace, so I don't want to be too peaceful. I want to get agitated about some things.

CO: Are you certain of anything?

NC: Yeah, there are certain things I feel very certain about. But you know, certain parts of what seems to be reality.

CO: Something you feel certain about?

NC: What do I feel certain about... I feel pretty certain that – that there's so much more to explore in this world, and there are people who will be doing that. That gives me a lot of comfort and hope that there are certain events that indicate to me that I can feel certain that life will go on, in some way or another.

CO: So whatever cataclysm comes about in the 2012, life will go on (laughs).

NC: (laughs). Yeah, I guess it's things like Steven Pinker saying there's a decrease across the whole of our earth – there's a decrease in violence. That makes me feel certain that there's some real – that we've got a built in need to survive. And that's a nice certainty, to feel hopeful about that.

CO: So that we're evolving – that humankind is evolving –

NC: Yeah, that at our core, we're not evil basically. That there's a lot of evil in the world, but having lived through the Holocaust and other things that have profoundly affected me, I think I can still believe that there's something that's really good about us. And about our world.

CO: This assumes that you believe in a God –

NC: Yeah.

CO: When you meet that God, what do you want God to say to you? What do you want to say to God, and what do you want him to say to you – or her – to say to you?

NC: Hmm. What would I want to say to God... Well, I guess I would want to know "well, how did it all start? Why did you wrought, and what hath thou wrought?" And I would like to have a pat on the head and say "Good and faithful servant." I guess. Yeah. But not that I've achieved that, but with life, be patted on the head and say "you gave it a good try." (laughs).

CO: So what do you think are the most vital values that people ought to observe?

NC: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and all thy soul, and second liken to it love thy neighbor as thyself. I just think you can't get much beyond that.

CO: Only these two hang all the laws prophets and whatever?

NC: Yeah, so that's where I am.

CO: Just a few left

NC: I'm hanging in.

CO: This is a question about cause and effect. To what extent do you think that your life, where you are now, is a result of decisions you have made, and to what extent do you think it has been due to circumstances beyond your control?

NC: Well you come w/ a certain set of genes. I've talked about how who I am is partly affected by the fact that my ancestors lived together in close proximity; we're sort of an inbred group. I think that has had its effect on me. But I think I had choice at some point that I could extend my bad feelings about my mother, or I could decide to leave it and go on and take responsibility for my life for the rest of the way on out and say, you know, I've got choices. They don't have anything to do with my mother, and I think that was a really good thing to realize. I think there were certain things I could not have changed. I couldn't have changed the family I was born into, but yea, I have had a lot of points where I could make decisions.

CO: sounds like you think it's pretty much some of both.

NC: Yes, it's definitely some of both. I mean I've got to believe there's some free will around here.

CO: What period of time in your life was the happiest, most gratifying time for you?

NC: Now. Having gone through Christopher's illness. I think I learned a lot going through that experience, then getting on the other side of that experience. I calmed down enough to say, you have to learn how to live in the moment. And realize how to have a better feel. I sort of had a picture of how our lives might have gone, what direction they would have taken, we had talked about retirement out in Texas in the hill country. That would possibly have been a good thing, but I don't think we could do that now. It wouldn't matter where I am, but that I be intensely alive in the moment.

CO: when was the illness?

NC: Before we moved here. We moved here as a result of his illness.

CO: What was the unhappiest time?

NC: When he was sick. It was very, very, very scary. That night when he went septic after his surgery. We went through three years after his surgery when he nearly died twice from a kidney stone that was not your usual kidney stone. One night he'd got up and went in the bathroom, but I knew he was down on the floor. I called 911. His eyes were rolling back in his head. I learned a lot from that in terms of what's important; how you deal w/ stuff. How you deal w/ people in hospitals, all kinds of things I didn't know about. Yea, I learned a lot from that. We'd rather not have gone through the experience, maybe, but I think ---phone rings---anyway there's probably a certain amount of strength and knowledge that you gain from that.

CO: What was the saddest event?

NC: I don't know for certain. I've experienced a lot of sadness around [death]. When my grandfather died I was very, very sad. I was very, very sad when I was going through my divorce and dealing w/ my children. Very very sad when my daughters lived w/ their dad. I exploded with grief when Ieper died two years ago; a year ago; two years ago in January. When our dog died that carried so much of the time, all the trauma. Those were the times I remember being sad. Ironically, it was not the loss of my parents. I was sad when I lost my mother, but I'm not sure I experienced a lot of sadness when my father died. I was not close to my dad.

CO: What have been the most crucial decisions in your life?

NC: when I decided to go to Young Harris because of the places it took me. Then when I decided to divorce my husband, that was a big turning point. When Christopher and I decided to marry, that was a turning point.

CO: Are you satisfied w/ the life choices you've made?

NC: Yes, because they came out of my being who I am; how I grew as a person. I don't know anything else.

CO: What about mistakes or regrets?

NC: There are tons of mistakes and probably a lot of regrets, most out of being an imperfect human being, where I could not meet my own expectations, where I should have been better, kinder, more loving, and had a greater capacity for all that.

CO: Is there an area of life where you feel that more, with your parents, your children?

NC: I don't have regrets about my parents. With my children I probably wish maybe I'd been a better parent, but I don't even know how to describe that, since, knock on wood, they turned out to be good parents, good people, caring people. I just think in some ways I was fortunate. I could dredge up a lot of things I regret, but I don't want to.

CO: If you could live life over again, is there something you would do differently? For someone who just identified now as the happiest time in life, I don't know why you would even . . .

b [laughs] maybe it's just out of tiredness, I'm trying to think of something, like maybe there's some wine I have not drunk, maybe if you know, if I had a sip of a $300 bottle of wine, would that improve my life a whole lot. There are books I've never read, recipes I've never cooked, will never get to…. I've never been downhill skiing. I've always thought I'd like to do cross-country skiing. So, yea, there are things out there that I'm sorry I haven't done and won't get to do, but that's ok. I'm not going backpacking up through the Appalachian trails.

CO: Has there been a single individual who has changed your life?

NC: There's not just one. Lillian Smith has changed my life. My grandparents changed my life. My therapist changed my life too. She did.

CO: Was this someone you had a sustained relationship with?

NC: Yes, she got me through my divorce. And she and her husband who was also my therapist, together they got me through my daughters leaving. They worked w/ me and Christopher through the first years of our marriage. I got a lot out of therapy, both individual and group therapy. There were 10 years of my life that I did that. And I am grateful to the state of GA that I had health insurance at that time. It wouldn't have worked that way this day and time.

CO: What's your biggest worry now?

NC: Probably that there are forces in the world that could bring us completely to our knees, and I don't know if we can avoid those things. Everything from atomic bombs to natural disasters. Actually there are dark, mythic things I'm afraid of.

CO: What has been the greatest source of inspiration? What inspires you?

NC: That's funny. The person that popped into my hand. Glenn Gould's *Goldberg's Variations*. It has to do w/ things or people or books that have stirred my consciousness. Things that make me look at things differently.

CO: *Goldberg Variations*? I don't know what that is.

NC: I'll play you some in a few minutes. I listen to it most days. I'm sure Christopher wishes sometimes I wouldn't. I've done it for years. It's sustaining.

CO: I will look forward to hearing that. What are you most proud of?

NC: Proud of? Probably children and grandchildren, both step and my real children. I'm proud of them. That's an easy answer.

CO: how do you want to be remembered? What do you want your legacy to be?

NC: well, I'd like to have a legacy that somehow or another I moved things along a little bit. But I don't know what that would be.

CO: so you want to know that you made a change, a difference?

NC: yea, in somebody's life, or something. I don't know.

CO: ok. Is there anything your family, your children, your friends don't know about you that you wish they did?

NC: No. I don't think so. I can't…. That's a question I think I'd have to ponder for a while. I've been accused of not being self-revealing. But I don't know why. Because I think I am pretty self-revealing. I can't think of anything.

CO: you feel like they know you well enough.

NC: yea, sometimes I think they know me better than I know myself. I'm not sure I want to know what they know about me. Because they experience me in a different way than I experience myself. But yea, sometimes I wish that I could hear what my children say about me among themselves. Like we hear from them sometimes, "Mom, why in the world do you have four dogs?" And that kind of thing, I wonder what they think about their mother as I live and have lived. I would be curious about that. And I think that's the part that other people know about you, is probably more important than what you know about yourself. Because they see what you do in a totally different way from how you see it yourself.

CO: Is there anything we've left out?

NC: I can't think of anything. I think it's been pretty comprehensive.

CO: Ok. This one is hard for everybody. You don't have to answer it if you don't want to. What would be the title to your life story?

NC: It would be kind of like Don Quixote, some kind of quest. Looking for . . . one of Damasio's books I like, the title is *Looking for Spinoza*.

CO: Well that does seem to capture the person you've revealed. I think we're finished.