The University of Baltimore is launching a two-year investigation called "Baltimore'68: Riots and Rebirth," a project centered around the events that followed the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and their effects on the development of our city. UB administration and faculty members in the law school and in the undergraduate departments of history and community studies are planning a series of projects and events to commemorate the 40th anniversary of this pivotal event. We are currently working with the Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History, The Jewish Museum of Maryland, Maryland Public Television and the Enoch Pratt Free Libraries to pursue funding for projects that may include conferences, a website and a library traveling exhibit.

Your potential participation in an oral history project would contribute to the very foundation of this project – the memories of Baltimoreans who lived through the riots and saw the changes that came about in response to them. Your life story can fill in the limited knowledge we learn from newspaper accounts and the television footage.

If you choose to participate in the project you would be interviewed by students from the University of Baltimore. They will ask you questions, but your memories will determine the direction of the interviews.

If you agree to serve as an oral history informant in this project, you will meet with a team of undergraduate students. The students will take a still photograph of you. In addition, if you have a photo of yourself in or around 1968, we would greatly appreciate it if we could borrow it, scan it, and return it. We would reserve the rights to reproduce those photos and use them on the website, conferences, exhibit or publications.

The students may conduct the interviews at a location of your choice, or you may meet them at the University of Baltimore Langsdale Library for your interviews. During the interviews, your recollections will be recorded in two forms: audio and video. The students will be responsible for operating the equipment. You can expect the interviews to last for a minimum of 30 minutes each.

Sometimes talking about events that occurred decades ago will unearth forgotten memories. Undoubtedly, some of those remembrances will be negative. We greatly appreciate your willingness to take the risk of exploring a potentially painful past so that your life experiences will be recorded.

After the interviews the students will transcribe your oral history. They will provide you with a copy of the transcription for your review before the transcription is published. The transcription, video and audio

records will be archived in the Langsdale Library Special Collections and will be accessible to the public. Your name will be attached to these documents. The University of Baltimore may use your image and/or your words in any future documentaries, exhibits, conferences or publications. Participants in the oral history project agree to waive their confidentiality.

If at any time you are uncomfortable with participation in the study, you are free to drop out. Participation is strictly voluntary. While your participation is requested and highly valued, you are free to decide whether or not to continue participation at all times. You may decline to have your name published with your reminiscences

If you have any questions about this project, please feel free to contact me at 410-837-5296. Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth M. Nix, Ph.D.
Visiting Assistant Professor
History and Community Studies
The University of Baltimore

I have read and understand the information provided above, and consent to participate in the study. I have also been given a copy of the informed consent for my records.

[redacted]

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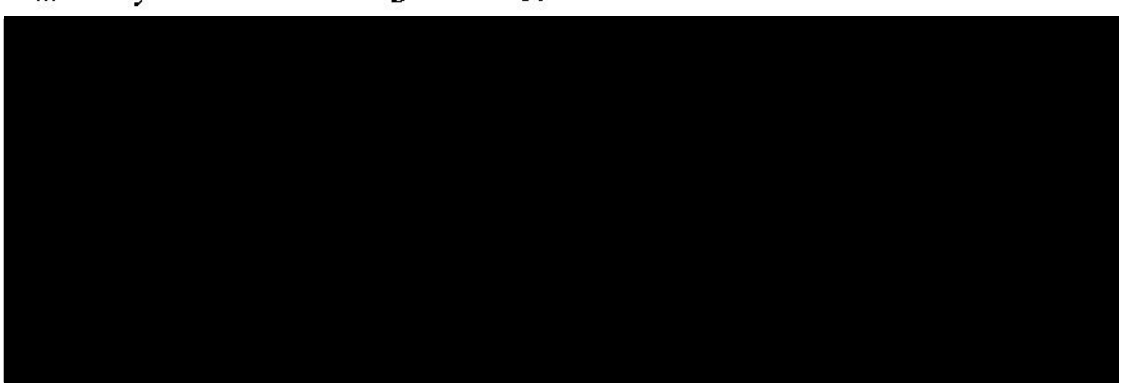

Interview with Carole and Bill Evitts

April 12, 2007

Nyasha: So I'm going to interview you together, so you know, feel free to come in whenever. And your name is Carole Evitts.

Carole: Evitts

Nyasha: Evitts. E-V-I-T-T-S and…

Bill: Bill, William J. officially but Bill

Nyasha: Ok. So where were you in 1968, what was your situation, where did you live, what were you doing? You know that sort of thing.

Carole: We were in graduate school at Johns Hopkins. We were living in the Cambridge Arms apartments, well actually they had just become Wolman Hall, which is a dormitory at Hopkins. We were on the top floor overlooking the city, a lot of the tall buildings that are down there now weren't there then so we could see, from our apartment, we could see all the way across the harbor, the Domino sugar sign, we could see the Hopkins hospital, so we had a bird's eye view of the city.

Bill: Wolman Hall runs the entire block between Charles and St. Paul on the south side of 34th and as Carole said we were on the top floor, so from St. Paul, Light St, all the way to the east we had a terrific view of downtown, the city and the east side. I recall on a clear day we could see the Key Bridge, all the way out where the Beltway, where Francis Scott Key bridge, you know where the…

Nyasha: So you lived together?

Bill and Carole: Yes.

Carole: We were married. We were fairly newly weds then.

Nyasha: So when did you get married?

Bill: Got married in ’64, this was the spring of ’68 I had gotten a…Carole is a native Baltimorean, grew up here in the city, saw the school desegregation and everything that happened here. I first came to Baltimore as an undergraduate at Hopkins in 1960 and we were married right after I graduated, went to University of Virginia in Charlottesville, where I got a master’s degree and then doubled back in Fall of ’65 to come to Hopkins for my PhD studies. We were just finishing that up really in the spring of ’68, by that Fall I had been teaching.

Carole: And right before the assassination of Martin Luther King, I had been approached about doing the, helping with the dedication of the Kennedy institute. That’s what it was called then right?

Bill: Yeah, it wasn’t Kennedy Krieger yet.

Carole: It wasn’t Kennedy Krieger then, it was just Kennedy and I was supposed to go down to the hospital for an interview, it was the Monday

Bill and Carole: It was the Monday after Palm Sunday,

Carole: ...but events changed that.

Bill: That would be the 8th, yeah would’ve been the 8th…

Nyasha: And where did you…did you guys have jobs? Did you work somewhere?

Bill: Well you were, were you at Margaret Brent that spring?

Carole: I was, yes, I was just student teaching at Margaret Brent elementary school.

Nyasha: How do you spell that?

Carole: Brent, B-R-E-N-T.

Bill: Margaret Brent, yeah. Named after a colonial woman of Maryland, I happen to know.

Carole: St. Paul and

Bill: 26th

Carole: 26th St.

Bill: And I was a full time graduate student on a fellowship at Johns Hopkins in the Department of History

Nyasha: And do you remember where you used to shop?

Carole: Well because we had limited access, we had a little car but we used to go to a Giant store out in the county and we'd shop of course at Eddie's on St. Paul Street cause we could walk there but that was not my favorite place to shop. New ownership now, so…

Bill: Yeah, that was pretty much it. There was still a drugstore right in the neighborhood, the Black…the Greenway pharmacy it was still there

Carole: The Blackstone…oh in the Greenway

Bill: Yeah

Nyasha: So before the riots what kinds of interactions did you have with people of other races?

Bill: Hopkins was still pretty segregated at that point, not by policy necessarily; there just weren't a whole lot of African Americans at Hopkins. The civil rights movement was very much in the swing, I figure that, and I happen to know as a historian, that 10 years after Brown in 1964 only 1.2% of African American kids in the old slave states had actually made it into, what's defined by the government as desegregated schools, had you

grown up in Baltimore where the schools had been desegregated fairly successfully, pretty quickly

Carole: I had African American friends from high school, there were not very many in my high school but I did have African Americans friends in my circle in high school.

Bill: You went to Eastern.

Carole: I went to Eastern high school which is…and its interesting because we just came back from living in Buffalo, New York where Bill taught at one of the SUNY universities up there and we were at a reception at the historical society in Buffalo when we started talking to people we didn't know. You started talking to someone, tell them what happened.

Bill: Well she said I'm actually from Baltimore, and I said oh really so is my wife and so am I somewhat and I said what part did you go to high school and she said Eastern, and I said ok, so did my wife. Well it turns out they're classmates.

Carole: We were classmates and I hadn't seen…

Bill: Worked on the same school play.

Carole: Hadn't seen each other since high school graduation and that was a few years. And she had since, and this is my African American friend who had gotten her PhD in public health from Johns Hopkins and a PhD in American studies from Buffalo

Bill: There weren't a lot of African Americans in the circles we traveled; I mean you'd worked with some African Americans and some of the others

Carole: At Hopkins

Bill: At Hopkins when you were working with Bob Scott's summer camp …charge of the building but I don't recall any African Americans, certainly in the history department in

graduate school, there was one African American in my class, undergraduate class in Hopkins in ’64 and..

Carole: Of course Margaret Brent was mostly minority children and I would say for me I came from a family that thinks pretty liberally you know, but I was very surprised, I probably shouldn’t talk about this. I was not happy at that school cause there were a lot of teachers there, a few, particularly one who I thought didn’t belong teaching in a racially diverse school who had opinions that weren’t particularly helpful for children, if you know what I mean. And I remember one day, someone had done something really, really good in this class and she didn’t have much positive feedback in her life and I remember she said I wanna kiss you goodbye and I leaned and she kissed me on the cheek and she gave me a hug and I was told that was not appropriate. You know. But that didn’t represent the school that was just one teacher in the school, I was just student teaching. I’ll tell you another story later when we get into, after…

Bill: The civil disturbances

Carole: The civil disturbances, yeah

Nyasha: So basically there weren’t a lot of African American students at Johns Hopkins

Bill: No.

Nyasha: And you had high school friends who were African American and you taught African American kids. And how would you describe the racial mood in Baltimore before the riots?

Bill: Interesting question. Baltimore had desegregated about as quietly as any southern city desegregated. You probably know that story. Polytechnic high school was desegregated two years before the Brown case because of the old separate but equal rules,

they could easily prove there was nothing equivalent to the Polytechnic A course anywhere else in the city and they weren't very well going to be able to set up a Jim Crow version of that. So there was like 8 or 9 African Americans students to go to Poly in '52. I remember an editor of the Atlanta Constitution, down in Atlanta, years before Brown had written an editorial saying one these days it'll be Monday, referring to the fact the Supreme Court decisions fall almost always on a Monday those days. And he was saying guys this is coming, its coming. Anybody who's been following cases since the 1930s knows that this is coming, that Plessy v. Ferguson is dead and that the school desegregation at least, if not all segregation is going to be found unconstitutional. So Baltimore was kinda ready for it and the school board actually had made plans for it, they had already done things like take the department of Negro education and basically just blend it with everything else. Took the guy in charge of the Negro education division and just made him an assistant superintendent back in the late '40s. The armed forces had desegregated, this was a juggernaut you could see coming if you wanted to. And so when Brown came down, you remember the original Brown case was May of '54, but they didn't make a decision, they had finding, but they didn't have a remedy and they took another of year of testimony before in May of '55 they came down with that now notorious phrase with all deliberate speed and left up to federal judges in the specific areas on the grounds that they knew the local conditions. Well, while everybody else was hanging on, Baltimore just quiet, the school board met under the late Walter Suntheim, who just passed away within the last few months. And they said ok that's it, and they already kinda had a plan and they met very quietly, it took them two or three weeks, they just said ok here's the plan, we're gonna start desegregating in the fall of 1954 and they

did. And with very relatively minor disturbance, they pretty well just pushed it right through and there you went. So you know, Baltimore on the one had, it had a huge free black population in the days of slavery. It had a very established African American community and a lot of local leadership; I still think the spheres were awfully separate though, I don't think there was a lot of black/white interaction. A good person you might want to talk to is a guy named Matt Krenson, we haven't spoken, he was a political science professor at Hopkins who studied a lot of this stuff as background. But I would say in '68 the racial mood in Baltimore was not extremely friendly but not overtly hostile either. I think that there was a black community that sort of had its own clubs, institutions, interactions, entertainment districts and everything and there was a white community, ditto, but the overlap was not extensive. Still there were still…If you were buying a house in Guilford or other neighborhoods I know in the '60s, the deed of sale contained a restricted covenant saying you would not sell this house to and it was a long list

Carole: Including Jewish people

Bill: Including Jews or Arabs or whatever. But of course these have been unenforceable since about 1950, it was a federal supreme court case called Shelley v. Kramer that said you can write 'em but the courts can't enforce them. But that was sort of the attitude. I remember the first black umpire in the major leagues, and I went to a baseball game with your father and your next door neighbor Eddie Sertel who said some embarrassing things yelling at this Black umpire at the old memorial stadium, but he was, Eddie by that point with those kinds of comments was out of step

Carole: Out of step, yes.

Bill: I think most Baltimoreans were firmly there with desegregation at a principal level, there just wasn't a lot of racial interaction. Is that about a fair description dear, do you think?

Carole: I remember feeling sorry in a way for the African American girls that were at Eastern because they were really minority in number you know but I think the atmosphere there was, I mean of course, it was fine, but it was I'm sure a tough thing for them that I didn't understand until now, I look back on it and I can't imagine what they had to go through coming from…because it was an undistracted high school

Bill: Right, citywide.

Carole: It's citywide and so they were, some of them traveling great distances to come to Eastern out of their community.

Nyasha: And what do you remember about the assassination of MLK?

Carole: I remember watching it

Bill: The news on it. Thursday, it was Thursday night April 4th, I was studying in the Eisenhower library, B level to be exact and somebody, I forget who it was, might've been Peter Colton, but I don't remember. Somebody came and told me and I thought holy…I mean '68 by the time it was over was an immensely awful year, America just seemed to be coming apart, politically and socially and culturally and anti-war protest was spilling over into a larger sense of discontent with the way everything was run, Lyndon Johnson decided not to run, MLK was assassinated in April, Robert Kennedy was assassinated in June, later that summer at the democratic national convention in Chicago was the scene of tremendous disruption and it was hard to know who to be more exasperated with, the protesters who were perfectly willing to resort to violence and kind of arrogant in their

self righteousness and on the other hand the police and the judges in Chicago, were just ham-handed in dealing with them. And it really was I thought a very dark year for America.

Carole: When Wallace shot?

Bill: Wallace was later'72 I think. He was starting to run for president in '68 but it was the '72 that Wallace was shot, we were already living in Roanoke, Virginia when that happened, but anyway it was Thursday night and I closed up pretty quickly and ran home. And you'd already heard, you'd heard it on the news and we just were sort of ashen about the thought of what was going to happen. Eventually of course I guess there were riots in about 100 cities. Baltimore's quiet on a Friday and you were thinking good for Baltimore, Washington had had trouble.

Carole: But I thought…Washington, the problem started on a Friday night…

Bill: But not here…

Carole: But not Baltimore. But I thought you know, good for us, I hope it stays that way but I doubt it so this a terrible thing to say. I went to the grocery store bright and early the next morning to get supplies and we were playing Bridge that night

Bill: Saturday night

Carole: Saturday night with neighbors, graduate school friends from the building and again I go into my kitchen and I could see out over Baltimore, and we were playing bridge, I would just go out to get cokes and things and say good Baltimore, nothing's happening and then I went in and out of my kitchen window what appeared to me then was the entire skyline of Baltimore on fire. And I just stood there and I mean I was pretty young, I was pretty protected as a child and this was the real reality you know, I was

terrified and I didn't feel all that safe from it. I mean I could see it and I was in the city, I mean it was way over there but I was in the city. And was it…so we all forgot about Bridge…is that when the curfew hit that night, that we weren't allowed?

Bill: I don't think the curfew hit until the next day. I mean we'd turned on the news and we had watched what was going on, I could see the dome of the Hopkins hospital lit up in flames and Carole was scared that maybe the hospital was on fire, I thought probably not. I mean Hopkins hospital in those days had so far been sort of, was kind of an oasis in the middle of the black neighborhoods of East Baltimore, it was a refuge for a lot of people. The public health nurses that radiated out from Hopkins were often the only medical care people that neighborhood saw, the emergency room was…you know its February, it's 25 degrees out and you've got a raging fever and you're in alley someplace and you know you're in trouble and you've got someplace to go. And so Hopkins had a sort of a zone of safety around it in 1968 that I think isn't there anymore.

Carole: The hospital

Bill: The hospital, the hospital. But I mean we could see flames just everywhere, we could hear sirens and so forth

Carole: On Saturday

Bill: On Saturday night

Carole: There was a curfew, we were not…no one was allowed out

Bill: By Sunday you mean. Saturday night was when we first saw

Carole: Right, right

Bill: Then by Sunday they put a curfew in and we went up on the roof of Wolman Hall with a bunch of the other graduate students, someone had a police band radio and there

were alarming reports going on all around, Brown had been in DC, one of the leading black radicals, and he and a couple of other guys and a car full of guns and ammo were supposed to be on the road to Baltimore.

Carole: That was reported

Bill: The rye joke of the day, was somebody said wow, we managed to combine, they looked over the fire damage, we managed to combine Palm Sunday and Ash Wednesday. The curfew was on by Sunday night I think…

Carole: I'm not sure, seemed like it came faster but probably Sunday. And we, that meant when that came on we were not even allowed to go on the roof of the building that was outside. Whenever the curfew started I was very nervous because of the way the building was, it was like this…

Bill: Like a saw tooth pattern, with indentations, you know, like little sort of square Ls sort of went in and out all the way up the building, we were on an indentation

Carole: So if somebody went on the roof, they could shoot us in our bed. I mean that's how paranoid I was getting because…and I'm going we gotta move the bed, we gotta move the bed and he's going you're crazy, you know. And just then we heard BANG! What was that, you know. And then we hear…by this time you had

Bill: This was Sunday evening

Carole: You had the National Guard

Bill: The National Guard was in the area with police

Carole: The National Guard was up and down the street and they were turning around, they were coming down what Calvert?

Bill: They'd come out on Charles I think and then turning back down St. Paul so basically, Homewood campus is about the northern end of the area that was really under lockdown and being patrolled by the National Guard

Carole: I mean we're looking out our window and there are tanks

Bill: Armored personnel carriers and tanks

Carole: Armored personnel carriers going

Bill: I mean we could hear shots in anger, we could hear police reports on the roof of snipers in a certain area and we could hear gun shots

Carole: I'd never heard a gunshot in my life of course and then we hear this big bang that was real close to us and we turn on the TV and a reported sniper on…

Bill: graduate student housing…

Carole: graduate student housing across the street

Bill: At Hopkins. McCoy.

Carole: McCoy, that's where it was. And we're like oh my god, see I told you we should move our bed, I know we're gonna get shot in our bed. And then we hear the National Guard coming up the steps of our building to the top floor and up to the roof, and they arrest someone on the roof. And I'm going, I told you so, I told you so. What it turned out to be, thankfully, was a stupid graduate student who wanted to go up to see what was going on, but that was a violation of curfew so they arrested him.

Bill: The original bang turned out to be a cherry bomb I think.

Carole: Probably the building next door, somebody threw a cherry bomb. But I mean everybody was on pins and needles and the next day when we were allowed out during the day, we went in to the drugstore that was in the bottom of the McCoy building at

Hopkins and there was our arrested friends sitting there like this having breakfast. What in the world happened? He said, I heard all the commotion and for some reason I thought if somebody's up there I'm gonna take 'em out. I'm just gonna go up there and save the building or whatever and so he said I don't know if I'm shaking by the experience I've just had or because how stupid I was if somebody had really been up there with a gun. You know, but that…

Bill: So he dashed to the roof and then the National Guard came along…

Carole: and arrested him.

Bill: and said you're on the roof, you're under arrest and he said no, wait, but he was under arrest. And they had set up, the courts actually set up hearings rapidly. By the time the whole disturbance was over, most of the curfew arrests, particularly, like 85% of them had already been processed. So he was basically told by the judge that he was a jerk and given a fine and cut loose. By morning he was in and out of the judicial system.

Carole: So obviously I didn't go down for my interview, the next morning. When I finally did go down it was very interesting. I eventually ended up driving down Lombard St. where a lot of the delicatessens were. And this is my own personal opinion, but it looked very much to me like certain delis or stores on that block were burned down, or set on fire or left alone, and I've drawn all kinds of personal conclusions as to why

Maria: You mean deliberately

Carole: Yeah, people who were nice to other people you know, would cash checks or whatever, you know. But I mean, when I was at Margaret Brent, one of the things that really caused me to think differently about things, there was a little grocery store, tiny little corner store right across from my window. That store raised the prices raised the

prices once a month when welfare checks came out because they all came out I think at the same time, not they're staggered, but how could that man live with himself, you know.

Bill: He knew people had deep cupboards, and by the time the welfare check came around and they had to go out and buy food, he'd jacked up the prices that day. Then he'd bring 'em down

Carole: But I had an interesting phone call during what we call them civil disorders

Bill: Yes it wasn't a riot, it was a civil disorder

Carole: During the riots, one of my 2nd grade students somehow found my phone number and called me. He said Ms. Evitts, I said so and so? How did you get my phone number? He said I'm just calling you to see if there's anything I could get for ya. They were looting stores and they wanted to know if I wanted a television. And I said to Bill, that was such love in a way but that was…

Bill: I thought Rockefeller would love this kid, he saw it as an economic opportunity. He was…

Carole: Lucky I had that phone call

Bill: He was looting to order, that was really amazing.

Carole: And so I thought a lot about what was the motivation, I mean, triggered by Martin Luther King but I think it's very complicated. You know some people I think got caught up in some thing, some people believed in Martin Luther King and they're angry and other people were just caught up in this, whatever was going on. I think it's a very, do you agree that it's not a simple

Bill: Yeah it is. I think it's certainly a lot of pent up frustration, if nothing else and of course the tragic part is that the very neighborhoods in which the African-American community lived were the most severely damaged.

Carole: And around Hopkins Hospital…

Bill: There was no attempt to take over city buildings or the civil authority, there was no attempt to seize the water plants or anything, it was pretty much just anger. One of the more interesting outcomes of it was that this was a major step forward in action in the political career of Spiro Agnew, who in 6 years went from being the president of the Dunbarton Middle School PTA out in the Rogers Ford neighborhood of Baltimore County to being Vice President of the United States. Normally Democrats totally ran the state of Maryland and Agnew was Republican and he ran for Baltimore county executive at a time when there was huge outrage over the scandals of the current administration, so that a lot of people crossed party lines to vote for him. Like my roommate in college back in the early 60's was the son of a Finnish immigrant steelworker, union member from Sparrow's Point, now there's a demographic description the guy is gonna be a Democrat for life. He was working for Agnew because he thought the guy who was in office was such a crook and Agnew won. This automatically made him a leading Republican in the state and a couple of years later they put him up for governor. And in another complicated story which I could go into, which is kind of irrelevant to Martin Luther King, the democrats self-destructed in front of him and in a plurality, in a tightly contested primary they put up for governor a guy named George P. Mahoney, a construction executive who is primarily a racist, his only plank was anti-open housing legislation. His slogan was your home is your castle, defend it. This guy was such a jerk

that knowing everything I know about Spiro Agnew, I'd still vote for Spiro Agnew. So all of a sudden, Spiro Agnew is governor of Maryland and he was governor during the riots and instead of sitting down with the moderate leaders of the Black community and try to understand stuff, basically he saw a great opportunity to call in the African-American leadership and just read them the riot act and yell at them for this event that had happened and it sort of made him a national law and order celebrity standing up for the right and for that and some other complicated reason, Nixon tapped him to be the vice president of Kennedy in the summer.

Carole: But I think it was, I don't know whether Saturday night or Sunday night, we had a friend who went to the University of Virginia who lived in Towson. And he called us when he got home from driving up from Charlottesville and said he was terrified because his profile in the dark could be mistaken because he had extremely bushy, curly hair. And he said I'm driving down Joppa Rd and people are out there like standing guard…

Bill: With guns

Carole: With guns. He said I was terrified that I would be shot driving down my drive way or something. And then other people would call and say you're in the city, well nothing's going on you know. I said well, we can see it, it is. So there was, there was, it was just mixed.

Bill: Some suburban communities like very insulated were like what, something happened downtown last night? And others they were panicked out of their mind that somehow you know the black population would come spilling out of Baltimore city would be raping and pillaging or something, I don't know what they were thinking. There

was a guy next door to our friend Carl in Towson, said he actually had some kind of a gun, a big sort of huge gun mounted on a tripod in his driveway.

Carole: But you know, we were not in Baltimore very long after the riots and I think back, I'm trying to remember when some things happened and when some things didn't because it used to be , was it 25th St. where certain services…

Bill:…North Ave.

Carole: North Ave, where certain services were available to people south of North Ave but not North of North Ave.

Bill: North Ave was sort of defined then as the boundary of quote inner city so certain programs were designed for that kind of, social programs

Carole: Was it the Homewood community project or something that, you know, just bringing children from south of North Ave to see grass, you know the front lawn

Bill: Playing on the athletic field

Carole: Playing on the athletic fields so kids could see grass but we were gone from Baltimore after that for quite a while

Bill: Moved in August

Carole: And…

Maria: You moved in August of '68?

Bill: '68. To Roanoke, Virginia. And family was here so we would come back for visits but we didn't live again in the city until 1983.

Carole: And let me tell you about the first newspaper I opened up, just a little aside. I opened the newspaper…

Bill: In Roanoke, Virginia…

Carole: There is an ad in the newspaper

Bill: In the entertainment page

Carole: Right. For a Klan meeting, in the paper, outlined in black

Bill: Curious enough

Carole: And I looked at Bill and I said where have you brought me? You know, and he started to laugh, and I didn't think it was funny at all. What's so funny? And in order to get to the Klan meeting that was advertised in the newspaper you had to go down the Booker T. Washington memorial highway, which he [laughter]…But we…

Bill: It was over in Bedford county which is chronically plagued with rabies and animals and Klan-ism among the whites in those days, I don't know if the two were related or not

Carole: The Klan hit two of our friends while we lived in Virginia. One because he was, one was the school board person and they didn't agree with his school policies.

Bill: Integrationist stand

Carole: The other one, a faculty member's daughter was dating an African-American and they burned a cross on her lawn. So it, you know, was all around us down there but…

Maria: To go back to what you said about your friends in the suburbs, do you think that the, I mean you said you were watching TV at the time also, to see the national news, I mean did you think that there was an accurate portrayal in the news of what was going on in Baltimore and I mean any news, local news, national news. Because I mean you were right there but…

Bill: I don't know, we had a friend with a police band radio so we knew some things. I don't really have a clear impression of what I thought about the news coverage either locally or nationally. Of course as I said, I think it's about 100 cities that got disrupted

Carole: But in Baltimore, the news broadcasting here, you know its been 40 years and I was so stressed. I was really afraid for a lot and then I calmed down, I think there was a lot of sort of what's really going on and trying to keep people posted but you know, a report would come out and it was proven not to be true so in a way I think it hyped it up a little bit. But I don't thin I can answer you fairly cause I wasn't paying enough attention. I was too; I wanted to know if, you know…

Bill: And it's just become a matter of fact piece of national history now. Its worth remembering, it was an astonishing shock to see that much of the city on fire you know, to see that kind of breakdown of civil order and deaths and gun shots and property damage in the many millions. It was…it was…it was, the closest thing we actually saw to a casualty though, you have to remember 1968 was sort of the era, front end of the mini skirt era and it was near the end of this, when the national guard was just about done and they would come up to Johns Hopkins and turn around. And it was a truck full of guys in National Guard uniforms coming up there, and a graduate, I guess she was a graduate girl, yeah cause there were no undergraduate women at Hopkins in 1968, crossing the street in a very short skirt. One guy craned around so he could see and he fell out of the truck, his friends sort of caught him and he was hanging out the back of the car. That was the closest to an actual casualty that we saw

Carole: But that question you asked, that's a very interesting and important question, you know, and I just don't know the answer to that really because I wasn't paying enough attention. I know it was constant chatter, it was you know, in a way, when 9/11 happened, I'm thinking oh this is a lot like the beginning of the riots in Baltimore, just constant news and speculation and…But I do remember that they quickly, when it was a reported

sniper on the roof of McCoy, I think it was McCoy building, they came back fairly quickly and verified that it wasn't really that shot, it was a firecracker. So you know, but I don't feel qualified to answer because my head wasn't there

Maria: Well it's a question that we've asked everyone but the reason that I brought it up also is because you had mentioned something about how your friends in the suburbs didn't particularly have an impression of what was going on.

Carole: They're watching you know, but some people didn't even, if you were in the county, they were listening to these news reports and I'm sure some of 'em felt so distant from it, it'll never come here. We're seeing it out our window and I remember even my parents calling me and I said this is real, this is really happening, you know. Some people I don't think out there were really believing it

Bill: Your parents lived in an area where they couldn't see any of this; they were…lived over near Herring Run Park, I guess that neighborhood would be called Bel Air, isn't it. And they had just heard it on the news, of course they were in a low lying area, and they couldn't see downtown or anything so they called us and…

Carole: Disbelief…

Bill: Yeah…

Carole: Disbelief…

Bill: Did they call us or did we call them? I can't remember

Carole: They called us

Bill: I think so

Carole: But it was real and I just couldn't imagine what it would be like to be living in the neighborhoods that were on fire, you know. I just started thinking about the children

and the families that were in that neighborhood and was anybody gonna innocently get caught up in gun shots or fires burning or whatever and with how many houses were burned I don't know. But I may have the front page of the Baltimore Sun with the story on it

Maria: You kept it?

Carole: I think I still have it, we threw a lot away when we moved but if I do I have your cell phone, I'll give it to you.

Nyasha: Do you know what neighborhoods were affected, like specifically and what your impressions were if you saw them.

Carole: Before or after?

Nyasha: No during, or after the riots

Carole: Well I of course went down when things quieted down eventually to the Hopkins hospital area and it was pretty bad and then you know drove down Lombard St.

Bill: We could see from our window, I have no idea really what the west side looked like because again, our view, because of certain tall buildings that were already there, was pretty much from St. Paul, which becomes Light St. to the east of that, so we could sort of gauge what neighborhoods were affected.

Carole: There were a lot of fires in that direction that I, you know, I don't know.

Maria: Hopkins Hospital was most prominent in your memory

Carole: In my memory because when I looked out the window that first time and saw the flames, I could see the Hopkins hospital dome silhouetted in flames

Bill: The flames were that high

Carole: And I was terrified that the hospital was on fire and then Bill said no, no, I'm sure it's not the hospital, something about all the patients but there was the dome silhouetted by flames

Maria: And so you went there after the riots

Carole: About a week

Maria: About a week after

Carole: Was it a week, was it that long?

Bill: It was about a week, it was about a week after. Certainly you know, you were going in that area on your originally scheduled appointment the Monday of the…

Carole: And I was told which streets to drive down and which ones not to, to come for my interview

Nyasha: I was gonna ask, the interview was with who again?

Carole: The Kennedy Institute

Bill: They were planning a special event

Carole: Yeah, it's Kennedy Krieger now but it was just Kennedy back then, they were dedicating the building or something like that and they asked me to help with the special event cause I was doing special events in graduate school…deciding whether I wanted to be a teacher, which I decided I didn't.

Bill: Carole had worked on the inauguration of Lincoln Gordon, the president of Johns Hopkins, that's how her name had come up over there and actually you were kind of interested by the possibility, because you're very good at special events, you're intrigued by it. But after this it was like, don't think I wanna go down that neighborhood everyday. It looked like, still looked like a war zone and would for quite a while.

Carole: I'm sure you have a lot of questions for people who stayed here after about how it changed the city and the development and attitudes

Maria: We do, but how much did it change just in the time, until you moved away?

Carole: Well even when we came back years later, you know, I think, I think, I think, one of the things that it did for some merchants was make them aware

Maria: In what way?

Carole: In the way they do business in certain neighborhoods, you know, you're an outsider coming into a neighborhood with certain attitudes that aren't necessarily friendly and I don't know, I don't know but I sensed a little bit of rethinking where your values, anyway that's not making much sense…

Bill: There was a lot of optimism about the civil rights movement in the Kennedy and Johnson years. You've got the civil rights act of '64, you've got the voting rights act of '65, and its hard to remember just how blind sighted most whites were by what happened next starting with the Watts riots, and the rise of guys like H. Rap Brown and the Panthers and all of a sudden the dream of integration that had been driving everybody, a large segment of the African-American community stepped back and said no. You know, you know we want something more than just to be quietly absorbed into white middle class America. It was a sort of great puzzlement trying to figure out, a sense of almost betrayal and you had part of liberal minded white Americans like what the hell went wrong here, I mean why are they so damn mad, we've been trying very hard for the better part of a decade since the Brown case to overcome what is clearly something wrong in our society, and you know, I think the feeling at the time was where is this coming from, why isn't there more gratitude, why isn't there more optimism? So I think that whole

period in which the Martin Luther King riots were won it caused white empowered America to have to step back and rethink what it meant to be an integrated society. You know desegregation is one thing, then integration seems to be a further step, they're not quite the same thing. And that it was just not going to be as straight forward, you know how we thought it was easy to create a successful biracial community, as we thought it was gonna be. As we thought it was gonna be.

Carole: We're still not there

Bill: No, we're still not there. You know, Don Imus anyone? But I think the reaction to King, certainly from the white side was wow, things were not as good as we thought they were going to be. Some people felt I think a little angry, some people felt ingratitude, some people were just puzzled, some people thought it was a power grab by people who were irresponsible extremists, and why was anybody listening to them, it was a lot of unsettledness. But it wasn't just the King riots, it was that whole year, and indeed everything from Watts onward

Carole: And don't you think there were a lot of people in our community that just didn't know that much about relationships you know what I mean, they never thought about it and this made them think, you know, the assassination of Martin Luther King made people really start to think about what was going on.

Maria: And how did this change your interactions with African-Americans in Baltimore, if at all?

Bill: It didn't.

Carole: Not ours you know

Bill: First of all because we moved shortly thereafter again, because we only visited the city intermittently after that, we didn't interact with African-Americans much at all, cause when we'd come back we'd go to visit family and relatives and old familiar haunts, and so forth so in the meantime Hopkins admitted women, there were more African-American students going there and we moved back in '83 when I took over the Alumni relations program at Hopkins and by that, you know, Baltimore was significantly a different city by then. You know, our kids went to an integrated public high school in Towson, you know out in the area where the guys used to have guns in the driveway cause they were scared that the African-Americans were gonna come out of the city and fire bomb their 3 bedroom ranch house. You know, by that time, although again, a small minority, Towson was pretty much integrated and successfully so. In fact the president of the student body at Towson was African-American.

Carole: Coming back this time, cause we just came back again, the neighborhoods are so much more integrated than when we left, I think.

Bill: Yeah, yeah.

Maria: And when was it when you left, I'm sorry.

Carole: '91

Maria: '91

Carole: Just you know, you don't even notice it anymore to me. Don't you think there's a little more progress there? But I really think in my circle back then the assassination was a real wake up to people to start thinking about these issues. They were beginning to articulate the issues in a way that people could understand what they really were, you know.

Bill: In this context it's interesting to remember that what King was up to then wasn't exactly, wasn't a desegregation issue, it's interesting to think what would have happened if King had lived because he was turning into a more broad based social critic of America talking about poverty in Chicago and really having a harder time in Chicago, when he went there, than he'd had in Selma, practically. And he was in Memphis for garbage worker strikes, it was a labor issue and although most of the garbage men were, maybe all of them were African-American it was about economic justice and other things, so he was starting to branch out a little bit.

Maria: And he had given a speech against the war also the year before

Bill: Yeah, yeah, so…

Carole: We just look at…and then I think one of the things that really made me think was then Robert Kennedy and look at some of the things he fought for and he was assassinated, in June…

Bill: Yeah it was in June

Carole: Civil rights

Bill: So it was like I said, '68 may have been the worst year ever, certainly in my lifetime it was, that was a very discouraging year. Personally for us it was wonderful; Carole was pregnant, I got my first job teaching college, our son was born in January of '69, but in a sort of civic way, 1968 was the pits

Carole: I think it was the year I grew up, faced the realities of life, you know, I had been pretty protected, taken care of…my parents just, I had polio as a kid and so, not that they overly protected me, but I felt safe, I always felt safe and the night after Martin Luther

King was assassinated I realized I wasn't really safe. You know, I was afraid and totally, it wasn't in my control, there was nothing I could do to stop it, you know. So…

Bill: Was it a sense of personal threat or just that the whole world was a lot more dangerous?

Carole: It was both for me, it was personal threat and anger at people, and the world and politics, and you know, well this another conversation

Bill: Of all the many categories in 1968, optimism was certainly something that was wrecked that year

Carole: Right, but you know that some of the guys that were apart of that fist integration at the Poly A course, they're still alive, and there is a great little documentary that some Poly students who graduated last year did about the integration of Poly, right?

Bill: Reginald Lewis museum will have that

Carole: Yeah and we could give you the name of, who's the history teacher out there that helped with that?

Bill: A guy named Dennis Dutris

Carole: He's a current history teacher

Bill: You know the historical society for the past year or two too has been working with I think mostly high schoolers but maybe under to come in and talk to people who remember the civil rights movement, they've got a lot of interesting interviews, they get the kids to ask questions about these people who were involved in the desegregation efforts from the '40s, '50s and onwards so they might have some interesting stuff, now whether they touched the King riots or not, I don't know. But you might want to talk to the Maryland Historical society, Education Department

Maria: Ok

Nyasha: Is there anything else about the riots that you remember, that stuck out?

Maria: You guys have actually answered a lot of our questions without us having to ask you

Bill: Well it was a stunner

Carole: You know you're standing there and you can't believe this is happening, you know. The end of innocence

Maria: Wow. Well thanks so much

Bill: Thank you guys