



Yale Gordon  
College of  
Liberal Arts

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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.

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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.

**University of Baltimore**  
Division of Legal, Ethical,  
and Historical Studies  
1420 N. Charles St.  
Baltimore, MD 21201

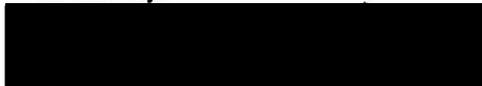
T: 410.837.5323  
F: 410.837.5336  
[www.ubalt.edu](http://www.ubalt.edu)

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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

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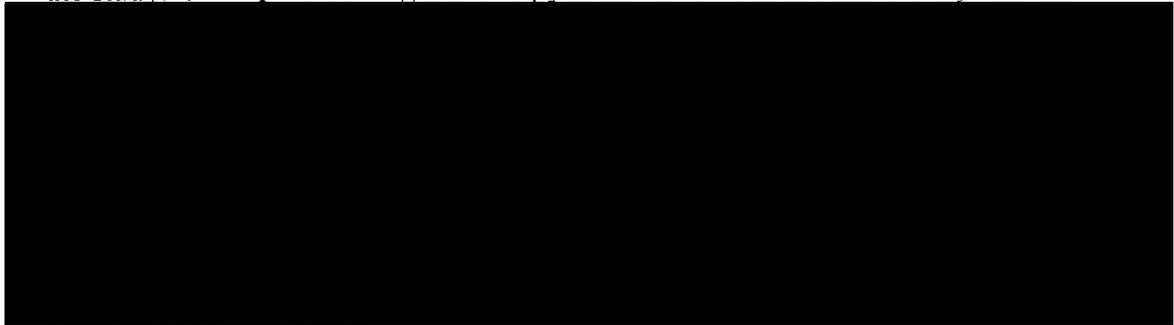
Sincerely,



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

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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.



Participant Printed Name



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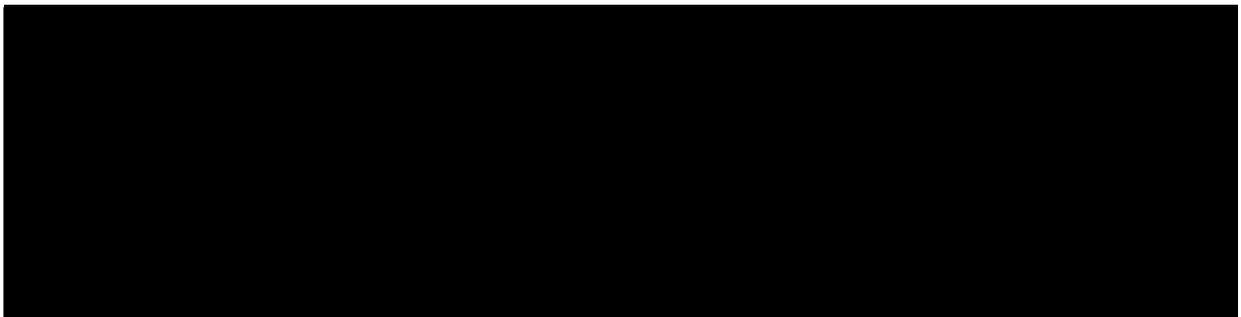
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February 20, 2007

Sharon Pats Singer

Ida Pats

Betty Katzenelson

Owners of Downes Brothers Pharmacy 800 Block of West North Ave.

Another neighbor who did not want to be identified

Eric Singer

Valerie Wiggins - Interviewer

Bashi Rose- Interviewer/ Equipment

[Several minutes of arrangements, taking pictures, etc]

**Valerie Wiggins:** To start out with, I think maybe we should introduce everybody. My name is Valerie Wiggins and I am going to be interviewing you. I am a senior here at UB. I plan on graduating in May. I am a history major and last semester I took Professor Nix's class where we were doing this as a project, and I am continuing as an independent study, so that's why I am continuing these interviews. I am working toward my degree. If you could just introduce yourselves.

**Sharon Singer:** I am Sharon Singer, and I am, let's see in 1968, I was 16. I grew up living on North Avenue here in Baltimore, and I lived through the riots, the 68 riots. I guess that's all you need to know for now. I am now married, a housewife, have three boys, and that's where I am.

**Ida Pats:** Are they taking your picture, are they recording this?

**Eric Singer:** Is that ok? Like I said, it is just going to be in the file so if people want to come back and see how the riots were, then your story will be on record. It is nothing more than that.

**Ida Pats:** Ok So what do I say? I am Ida Patts.

**Valerie Wiggins:** and you owned a business, with a house above.

**Ida Pats:** We owned Downes Pharmacy. We lived there for 18 years. At that point we were forced out because we were burned out during the riots. And what else would you like me to say?

**Valerie Wiggins:** That's good for a basic introduction.

**Neighbor:** I'm nobody.

**Valerie Wiggins:** You're nobody? You don't want to at least say who you are? OK.

**Betty Katzenelson:** I'm Betty Katz Nelson and I am Ida's daughter, Sharon's sister. I also grew up on North Avenue and was 13 at the time of the riots.

**Valerie Wiggins:** Ok. And the reason I am wearing this nice little disguise it that I work full time for the Army National Guard. This is my full time job. I just came from work, so pardon the uniform. You've already said your business was a pharmacy

**Ida Pats:** Yes.

**Valerie Wiggins:** Could you tell me a little bit about the business?

**Ida Pats:** What do you want to know?

**Valerie Wiggins:** Where was it located?

**Ida Pats:** It was located the 800 block of West North Avenue in Baltimore.

**Valerie Wiggins:** And you had it for 18 years?

**Ida Pats:** Yes we did.

**Valerie Wiggins:** Do you want to say any more about the business itself?

**Ida Pats:** What do you want me to say?

**Betty Katzenelson:** Well, it was a pharmacy. And it sold liquor and it sold candy.

**Sharon Singer:** Well, originally let's put it this way, when they first moved in to the pharmacy, you got the pharmacy in what year?

**Ida Pats:** 1950.

**Sharon Singer:** Ok so in 1950, and in 1950 the area, North Avenue, was a white area, and in the store, the store was in the middle of the block, it was owned by someone else, and they bought it. In fact the woman who worked in the store continued to work there, the woman behind the counter, Miss Davis. She continued to work there and that was it. We lived upstairs and my brother was born in 1950. I was born in '51. That's all we knew was North Avenue. That was our home. The store itself was basically on the first level. It had in it at that time a fountain. The fountain had ice cream and sodas and things like that, really fun kind of things. And the store had patent goods and medicine, and the pharmacy was in the back.

**Betty Katzenelson:** Like an old-time pharmacy.

**Valerie Wiggins:** Like what you would see in the movies.

**Sharon Singer:** Like an old-time pharmacy. Right. And then as the years went on, the neighborhood did change and it became a mixed neighborhood, let's say. And at some point the fountain became something that was more of a hindrance, and they took it out. I don't know what exact year that was. Do you remember what year that was?

**Ida Pats:** They put the liquor in

**Sharon Singer:** They put in liquor

**Ida Pats:** Because the neighborhood changed.

**Sharon Singer:** Because the neighborhood changed, it was an adaptation to the neighborhood. And it was beer in the coolers, and so they took out all the ice cream. The ice cream was just in a case at that point. Bars and cones and things like that. The store was like a multipurpose kind of place, because the customers who came into the store, not only were they customers, most of them were regular customers. And they would come in and have a place to buy their ... There was no Rite-Aid, there was no big box stores at that time. That was the place where they could buy their prescription drugs and get their toiletries, and then it was a place also, even though there was a bank on the corner, which was Union Trust, they could get their checks cashed because they did not have accounts at the bank. Ok. So it became a check cashing place and it became a multi-purpose kind of place. My mother did the taxes for people during tax season, right in the middle of the store. She would sit there at the little desk and she would fill out, everybody, they'd be waiting in line just get their income taxes done and that was separate little business there, part of the business.

**Betty Katzenelson:** And the line would be out the door on check day

**Sharon Singer:** Now what happened. What she means by check day. It became the third, when the people in the neighborhood at that point got welfare checks, not all the people in the neighborhood, but whoever did. And the line would be out the door to cash the checks. Why they didn't use the bank, I don't know.

**Betty Katzenelson:** I don't really know.

**Ida Pats:** The banks didn't accept them and they didn't accept the banks.

**Betty Katzenelson:** They weren't customers of the bank

**Sharon Singer:** They weren't customers of the bank. And they had a trust in my parents, in fact so much so that my parents had a little file box, and in the file box were just file cards with people's names on them, and if they didn't have enough money to buy their toiletries or to get whatever they needed, my parents would write their names down and they would get it on account. No interest or anything like that, it was just a very trusting kind of system, and it was a place where they would get something...

**Betty Katzenelson:** I guess where you would call it sort of like a lay-away thing

**Sharon Singer:** But not really, like a neighborhood store. Just a neighborhood store.

**Valerie Wiggins:** So the people who would cash their checks there normally would purchase items from there also. It's basically

**Sharon Singer:** And if they didn't have enough money toward the end of the month, their name would go on a list, and ok, you can take it, it's on account, and you're good for it. Ok. So that's the way it was, it was just a neighborhood business, and when we grew up, all I knew growing up was that, that was my home... We would come home from school and go to work in the store. That's what I did. And I don't know. I would be down there and waiting on customers and talking to people, and it was great. I enjoyed it. I liked it and didn't know anything different. And I continued when I went to high school. I went to Western in the city. At that time it was down on Howard and Center Street. I would take the bus.

**Ida Pats:** That was after the riots though.

**Sharon Singer:** No. That was before the riots. And the riots occurred during the middle of my high school, my four years of high school. Because I went ninth and tenth grade downtown, then during, I think it would have been during eleventh grade, '68, I graduated in '69, ok so, at that point, when it became  
Let's go back a little bit. In the '60s we went to a Jewish day school, so we would get on the bus in the morning and it would take us for hours, I don't know how many hours were we on that bus! So we would go every day and this way we did not have Hebrew School at night. It would just be: we would go to school, come home, work in the store, that was basically what it was.  
And then junior high I would go and get on the bus, walk from North Avenue to the corner on Eutaw Place, get on the bus and take it from there to Garrison Junior High School which was Liberty Heights and Garrison, a little bit past Liberty Heights and Garrison back then. It was pitch black out when I would leave in the morning, and by the time I came home it was pitch black out, basically and I would come home and do my homework, I think I would do my homework, I don't remember, all I remember was I would be in the store, and that is what would happen.

**Ida Pats:** Well, you and Betty did your homework, Harvey did his homework as soon as he got home, immediately he did it. The girls, they would watch television on that bed on the third floor

**Betty Katzenelson:** Second floor

**Ida Pats:** Forever.

**Sharon Singer:** We slept on the third, we didn't watch TV up there

**Ida Pats:** Didn't I fall asleep upstairs?

**Sharon Singer:** That was Payton Place. That was alter on. We would watch Peyton Place and she would fall asleep.

Now let's get, let me just tell you a little bit about remembering my mother and my father. My mother worked. I mean she got up in the morning and she worked from, before the store even opened, she would get us ready for school, did our lunches and all of that sort of thing. We'd go downstairs and put our little potato chips in our lunch bags and out the door we would go, and she would open the store for work. Then my father would get up later, and he would come down later, but she really was the proprietor, let's say, of the store, and he was the pharmacist of the store. That was sort of how it worked. That was basically-- their life revolved around everything to do with the store.

**Betty Katzenelson:** Totally, because the house was there upstairs.

**Sharon Singer:** Because the house was upstairs, and it was the purchasing, and the inventory and the bookkeeping, and everything involved with the running of the store.

**Ida Pats:** It was midnight, did we close at midnight?

**Sharon Singer:** And then at eleven o'clock the store would close, at twelve on the weekends.

**Ida Pats:** That's when they would come up and start their homework. That's when the two of them would start their homework. They'd watch TV and then...

**Betty Katzenelson:** No, that's when we would have a late night snack, whether it was from Nate's and Leon's across the street, or Chinese food, or whatever it was

**Sharon Singer:** It was a very interesting childhood, Let's put it that way.

**Betty Katzenelson:** It was different.

**Sharon Singer:** It was different from your typical childhood. But I enjoyed it because the customers were friendly and fun, and we had people to talk to and things to see and do. I never thought about race as an issue at all.

**Ida Pats:** They were the customers

**Sharon Singer:** They were the customers, just people who lived there, whether they were white, whether they were black, it never, ever crossed my mind. It was just fun for me. So I think what happened was, when the riots came, I don't think that we really thought that I don't really think that we thought that anything bad was going to happen. It was a trusting kind of thing where this was our neighborhood, and it just wouldn't happen, they just wouldn't do this, and it never occurred to us.

And I think that that was part of the issue with my father because I remember before the riots, it was very tense after Martin Luther King was killed, it was a very tense situation, tension in the country, and you know, one of the women who was working at Lou's bar up the street, I remember a black woman named Brooke, and she came into the store, remember her, and she came back and she said to my father, and I was standing there, and she said "You know, you'd better get out." And he wasn't really listening to that, because he never thought anything was going to happen, and sure enough, the next day, because I believe that was I don't remember the day of the week that it was

**Ida Pats:** It was on a Sunday

**Sharon Singer:** It was on a Sunday. I think she came into the store literally on that Saturday before this happened.

**Betty Katzenelson:** I never heard that before.

**Sharon Singer:** I was standing there, and I was, you know, I just wasn't believing what I was hearing, and I went to sleep like any other night. I got up. I was driving at the time. I had just gotten my license, I had just turned 16 in December, got my license in December, and now this was April. So, that Sunday morning, we went shopping, I took you in the car, it was Sunday morning, and I was going to pick up my sister Betty...

**Betty Katzenelson:** I was at Hebrew School.

**Sharon Singer:** She was at Hebrew School, all the way out Park Heights Avenue, and we were going to pick her up after we went shopping. We went shopping a Slater's, I do believe, that, which is now, right near, it's not there any more.

**Ida Pats:** Right on Whitelock Street?

**Sharon Singer:** Not on Whitelock Street. It was out where Pimlico racetrack is, and we went out there, and we went shopping, and we picked Betty up, and we came down...Now 83 was just opened, I believe, at that time.

**Betty Katzenelson:** It was brand new.

**Sharon Singer:** And I came down 83, I'm 16 and I have this big car, and I'm driving, and I'm coming down 83. We turn off on the exit which is North Avenue. Make a right to go towards the house, you could see the neighborhood, it's a couple blocks up, right off of, near Mt. Royal. And the whole block was in smoke and flames. That was the point that we freaked out. Now, we didn't know what was going on. My father was sleeping because it was Sunday morning, and we were like, "Oh my God! You know, is he ok? At that point I am thinking, I've got to get home. The streets were blocked off. There were masses of people in the streets. And masses ... All I saw were masses of black people in the street. That's all I saw.

**Betty Katzenelson:** And flames.

**Sharon Singer:** And flames. And they wouldn't let us get past, so I knew the back roads, and went around and came down to the Esso station was, which was there across the street. There was my father, waiting for us, standing in the Esso station. I will never forget that. He got in the car, and we left.

**Ida Pats:** We picked up...

**Sharon Singer:** We picked up the Eisenbergs.

**Ida Pats:** They had no car

**Sharon Singer:** They had no car and no way to get anywhere.

**Ida Pats:** They had the jewelry repair shop.

**Sharon Singer:** Yeah. The Eisenbergs had the jewelry repair shop two doors down, a couple doors down

**Ida Pats:** Which is in the picture.

**Betty Katzenelson** [to neighbor]: Weren't you in the car with us?

**Ida Pats:** Yeah. She was in the car. She had no transportation. She came down.

**Neighbor:** I came down. I had been shopping with you. Your father and all three children and my husband [*inaudible*] standing in front of the Esso station. My daughter was in New York.

**Sharon Singer:** So they were all waiting. They piled in the car, and we left.

**Betty Katzenelson:** And then we saw Harvey. Harvey was coming down because he had been in Umber [UMBC] Harvey was coming down the street.

**Ida Pats:** that was Sunday morning though.

**Betty Katzenelson:** But he had gone to study or something, and he was coming down the street and we hollered, "Harvey!"

**Sharon Singer:** Everybody. And we took the two cars and we went to my aunt's house.

**Neighbor:** That's right.

**Sharon Singer:** And that was the end of my life as I knew it, let's put it that way. And it was just like a surreal kind of ...day. Because

**Neighbor:** She knows everything. You know everything.

**Sharon Singer:** I remember it, I lived it, so I do remember it. After that I had nothing. I had no clothes, I had no anything.

**Betty Katzenelson:** And no income because their source of income was burned.

**Sharon Singer:** And I think at that point you learn what's important. Number one: well besides your family and your life – insurance is important, because my father did not have enough insurance.

**Ida Pats:** Well, he had insurance, but they said it was co-insurance. They said co-insurance, at that time, so you are insuring half of it. [The Goodman-Gable-Gould Company, Certified Public Adjusters, One Charles Center, Baltimore, Maryland 21201]

**Sharon Singer:** And who is insuring the other half?

**Ida Pats:** Well it was very little.

**Betty Katzenelson:** I thought there was a clause about in case of riot or something. Was there a clause like that?

**Sharon Singer:** No. There was nothing about riots back then.

**Betty Katzenelson:** Because they had not happened yet.

**Sharon Singer:** There wasn't enough insurance to cover what was lost in the house and the store, very little.

**Ida Pats:** Nothing. Maybe ten, who knows, maybe five thousand. Maybe none.

**Sharon Singer:** Now what is interesting is that before this time, the City of Baltimore was going through urban renewal, and we were excited about the prospect of having the store move across the street because they were going to just upgrade the entire, gentrify, they didn't call it that ...

**Ida Pats:** Mid-City Development Corporation.

**Sharon Singer.** There you go, you remember that. Mid-City Development Corporation was going to develop this property across the street, and the whole block and we were going in. We were going to have a larger store, and it was a very exciting kind of prospect.

**Betty Katzenelson:** Well the investment had been made into that also.

**Sharon Singer:** And my father, my parents put a lot of money into that, and that was completely lost.

**Ida Pats:** Never materialized.

**Sharon Singer:** Never materialized. All of a sudden...

**Ida Pats:** To this day.

**Sharon Singer:** All of a sudden they decided not to do it.

**Ida Pats:** I don't know what the reason, but it wasn't...

**Betty Katzenelson:** Well, after the riots, everything changed.

**Sharon Singer:** Well, after the riots, everything changed. So that was just money lost.

**Ida Pats:** They went out broke.

**Betty Katzenelson:** Well it wasn't just money lost. It was their dream lost.

**Ida Pats:** The whole dream

**Betty Katzenelson:** That was what they were going to do.

**Sharon Singer:** Exactly. But I think that my parents at that point, it was a survival kind of thing, at that time. They have kids that are young, and they have to just go to work, and get on with it. Nobody was giving them anything. There were no kind of ...

**Betty Katzenelson:** They didn't have that support like today when they send...

**Sharon Singer:** It's also not like now "Oh my God! Katrina happened! I'm entitled to this, that and the other. There was nothing like that. The city just completely turned their backs on all this. You know, they weren't responsible. They weren't this, they weren't that. We weren't entitled to anything. Ok. So what do you do? You get up and you go to work. And that's what happened. So.

**Neighbor:** She remembers everything.

**Ida Pats:** She's got a good memory. I have blocked everything out, as if it had never happened.

**Sharon Singer:** Now I go to school. Okay.

**Ida Pats:** I can't answer any questions.

**Sharon Singer:** Well this is a real dilemma. I mean she actually -- I don't know what it's called because I am not a psychiatrist or a psychologist, but she actually has this complete mental block of the entire, her entire life...

**Ida Pats:** I don't know what happened.

**Sharon Singer:** ...in the store and the riots and that sort of thing.

**Valerie Wiggins:** Everything before the riots?

**Sharon Singer:** Everything about North Avenue, she has completely blacked it out of her mind totally. And she lived it every single day. And I think the reason that it was blacked out was that it was her life, it was such a traumatic thing. And here everything they worked so hard to build up from the time they were first married to the time ... and here they have three kids to raise. Just never materialized. And here it was gone. Just in one day. And nobody was helping them. The city wasn't helping them. They had no support.

**Ida Pats:** What happened with the city: when they left, that was when everything was looted out. It was not good.

**Sharon Singer:** They were told that the store would be watched after the first immediate day of the riots.

**Ida Pats:** Right. It wasn't.

**Sharon Singer:** And at that point the house was not burned, when we left. But by the time we came back the next day, it wasn't watched.

**Ida Pats:** Everything.

**Sharon Singer:** The whole house. Everything was burned, including the store.

**Ida Pats:** Even the store. Everything was out. They looted everything. Everything was empty.

**Sharon Singer:** And so what did we do? We had no where to go. So my parents went to a motel. The three of us went to my aunt's house.

**Betty Katzenelson:** Aunt Janette's house.

**Sharon Singer:** And I had to use my cousin's clothes, I remember. And luckily we had a ...

**Betty Katzenelson:** I had that one dress. I wore it like every day. I go to school, I wore that dress.

**Sharon Singer:** And basically we wore the same clothes every day. Different smells, different feels, different everything. And that's how we went on.

**Ida Pats:** And we had purchased – two years before when they said that there was going to be urban renewal, we purchased the house. There were tenants in it.

**Sharon Singer:** Luckily, they had purchased a house near Reisterstown Road Plaza. Because when they had to move to Mid-City, they wouldn't be able to live upstairs. So they had purchased this house and were renting it to...

**Ida Pats:** We leased it out, and then the riots come, they were on the lease, and we couldn't move in.

**Sharon Singer:** That's why we didn't have a place to go.

**Valerie Wiggins:** So eventually that's where...

**Sharon Singer:** Eventually she...

**Betty Pats Singer:** That's where she still lives to this day.

**Sharon Singer:** But what I wanted to say about going back to school.

**Ida Pats:** They let you go back.

**Sharon Singer:** They let me go!

**Ida Pats:** Wait a minute. You couldn't go unless you lived in the city.

**Sharon Singer:** Well, we didn't really live anywhere. We lived at Aunt Janette's. She was in the city on Jonquil Avenue, so I used her address and we went to school.

**Betty Pats Singer:** And I could walk to Pimlico from there.

**Sharon Singer:** I only had the one year to go. When we went back to school, which would have been the following Monday, because I don't even think I stayed out a day of school.

**Betty Pats Singer:** Right. No. We went right to school.

**Sharon Singer:** I just was going to school like a normal day. And as soon as we walked into homeroom (and I was in a very small A-course class at Western, so it was maybe fifteen kids in that class – girls) and we were all very close and we had been in the same class since ninth grade, and never had any kind of racial tension. I mean I went to school with black kids, Chinese kids, white kids. Never. There was never any kind of tension. I

walked in that day, and we're in home room. And we happened to have been in -- my homeroom teacher was a history teacher. And you know, everybody was kind of removed from the riot situation, except me. But they all had two cents to put in -- you know what was going on and this and that. Well, I had a girl in the class, a black girl named Debbie, I won't use her last name, and she was a leader type of a person. She was loud and had her voice, you know she was just out there, and she said, she got up and she said, and she was very militant about it, "And I want you to know that they got -- they got exactly what they deserved!" I was like ... I started crying. I had to leave the room. I'm crying now, but that one thing cut to me like nothing else could cut to me. And I was fine until then. I was fine with what I saw, and I thought "What is happening in this world? These are not the people that I thought I knew." It was very traumatic.

**Valerie Wiggins:** That just a couple days could change so much.

**Sharon Singer:** One day. So. That's all I have to say.

**Betty Katzenelson:** I heard a similar comment, but it wasn't right then. I didn't talk to anybody. I didn't tell anybody in my class what had happened. Here it was. It happened on Sunday.

**Sharon Singer:** And you were young. You were thirteen.

**Betty Katzenelson:** I was in junior high at Pimlico. I was thirteen in eighth grade. And I didn't say anything to anybody. It wasn't until a couple of years later in high school. Same high school; it was at Western, and this girl was going on about: it was still civil rights and unrest and everything going on. Maybe it was the next year, actually. Maybe it was ninth grade. And she was saying, "You know those people exploited, those people who had stores down there exploited the people around." It hit me. It was like a half year later, or six months later. It was the first time I had heard somebody just cut like that. And they were all talking about how they were so unfair to the blacks in the area, and I was like "What are you talking about?"

**Sharon Singer:** This girl was from a middle class black family, never was subjected to anything to do with the riots and nothing to do with poverty because she did not grow up in a poor household. Her parents both worked. She was well educated. And for her to say, to be on that side versus this side, I just didn't know where that was coming from. It just didn't make any sense to me. And the fact that my father and mother had a store and had from nothing, and had this store in a neighborhood that was a white neighborhood and then just by the sign of the times, it changed and they stayed down there and were a part of the community, I don't understand how that is an exploitation. So that was very hurtful.

**Ida Pats:** She remembers everything.

**Neighbor:** She remembers.

**Betty Katzenelson:** But I think the hardest thing afterwards was everybody was displaced within the family. My mom was out of her job and what she did. My dad was out of his job and what he did and what we all knew as our house. Nobody was anywhere near where they had been, mentally, physically, emotionally. We were all in different directions and just wondering what the next day would be. You can't describe – it wasn't turmoil because we just kept going. Like the next day we went to school. It wasn't turmoil at all.

**Sharon Singer:** Until things...

**Betty Katzenelson:** But nothing was right. Nothing was -- there was no stability.

**Sharon Singer:** Nothing was the way it was before that day.

**Valerie Wiggins:** Your comfort zone was completely demolished.

**Sharon Singer:** Well, everything we knew was completely gone.

**Ida Pats:** But then they looted everything.

**Valerie Wiggins:** Did you ever go back?

**Sharon Singer:** There was nothing there

**Betty Katzenelson:** Well the first,...There was. We went back. I have some pictures we can you show what happened.

**Sharon Singer:** This is when we were told they were watching the store.

**Betty Katzenelson:** After everything had been looted.

**Ida Pats:** They said they were watching it. But they didn't watch it, and the looters were just wild. It was nightfall.

**Sharon Singer:** The city said that it was going to be guarded and it, first of all the National Guard was down there...[to Valerie in her National Guard uniform] You weren't down there. I didn't see you. A little before your time. The point is they were there but they were told they couldn't do anything. They were told they couldn't use...

**Valerie Wiggins:** Right. They weren't allowed to use...they were allowed to put magazines in their weapons but they weren't allowed to use it.

**Sharon Singer:** Weren't allowed to use it. But yet. The mayor, I think it was D'Allesandro at the time.

**Ida Pats:** It was D'Allesandro.

**Sharon Singer:** In Little Italy they were on the roofs with rifles. That was ok. So. You know. Had we known, maybe we would have done something differently, but I think that it was just the – the whole thing – here is your community, the community supports you, you support them, and that’s the way it should be.

Betty Katzenelson: And it didn’t work out that way.

**Sharon Singer:** And there were people coming in from out of town into organize the riots. So it wasn’t just the people in the neighborhood. But I think the people in the neighborhood, the customers, were the ones who really lost out in the end, because they had no more stores to go to. I mean we lost out, but luckily, thank God, for my parents, they were able to pull themselves up and get skills, and my mother went to University of Baltimore when she was close to 50 years old to get her AA degree in accounting. She had never gone to college, but was really good with numbers, and she worked for USF&G for a lot of years.

**Ida Pats:** Twenty.

**Sharon Singer:** And my father, thank God, was a pharmacist because his parents who came from the pogroms in Russia came over – they didn’t want to be doing what they were doing, but they did it to support their family and bring them up. Nobody gave them anything. They weren’t entitled to anything from what they thought. They just all worked really hard and wanted their kids to get a good education. And they demanded that of their kids to get a good education, well the boys any way.

**Ida Pats:** The boys for sure. Well the girls knew they had to go to school and then get a job.

**Sharon Singer:** Go the commercial course. No academic course.

**Ida Pats:** We never went to what you call an advisor in the school. We never went to guidance. You get married, you have your children and your husband works. But times have changed. It’s no more, how you say “and obey.”

**Betty Katzenelson:** But it is amazing how it could change so quickly. Because, like Sharon was saying, before that it was fine and it was fun, and it was positive, and you weren’t scared to walk around. You could just walk through the store and just walk up and down the street. It was never the sense of, “Oh my God! What are we doing here? Everybody else went out to the suburbs!” Other people say to me, “Oh you grew up there?” But we never

**Sharon Singer:** But we never thought of it that way because we were part of the community.

**Betty Katzenelson:** But to go from it being just fine and walking around and doing what ever you were doing, to suddenly– Boom, it’s gone and everybody is running and bleeding and burning.

**Sharon Singer:** And everybody is talking about you – you, you are bad.

**Valerie Wiggins:** Where before you were helping to support them.

**Sharon Singer:** Right. Well we never thought of it at all.

**Betty Katzenelson:** The prices came from the price book. You put them on the thing. It wasn’t like we made up the prices. That’s what the things cost.

**Sharon Singer:** So what did you have to add? Anything?

**Neighbor:** I remember when he found the work in the drugstore, in Towson, I forget the name – Korvette’s..

**Sharon Singer:** He got jobs wherever he could get a job working in the pharmacy. The E.J. Korvette’s was on Perring Parkway.

**Ida Pats:** It was Korean Vets and that’s where they got Korvette’s. It was eight Korean.

**Sharon Singer:** It was E.J. Korvette’s “Eight Jewish Korean Veterans.” They came back from Korea and they started the store, and my father was able to get a job because he was a pharmacist. I mean a lot of these people who were grocers and that sort of thing were not as fortunate in getting jobs, but you know a lot of the people, like Betty was saying, who had parents or uncles or grandfathers with stores down in the inner city, you know they didn’t know about the riots. It was foreign to them. They were in the suburbs. And so it was something that really wasn’t happening to them, because they were able to just take themselves out and leave there. We lived there. We lived within the community, and we just felt very violated.

**Ida Pats:** That’s a good word for it.

**Sharon Singer:** Violated. So that’s basically the story of the riots, as I saw it.

**Valerie Wiggins:** I think in all that you answered all the questions.

**Neighbor:** She remembers so much. She has such a mind.

**Sharon Singer:** I lived it. I mean, my God. I was sixteen.

**Neighbor:** I am surprised you remember all those things. You were young, very young. She remembers everything.

**Valerie Wiggins:** It is lucky that it wasn't while you guys were sleeping at night.

**Sharon Singer:** Well, my father was sleeping.

**Betty Katzenelson:** Didn't somebody call him and tell him to get up? I think that's what he said.

**Valerie Wiggins:** I was going to say, was he warned to leave?

**Betty Katzenelson:** Somebody called and said, "It's burning at the corner." It was that bank. Union Trust. Union Trust was on fire. Somebody called him and said the bank's on fire.

**Valerie Wiggins:** And was the whole block destroyed?

**Sharon Singer:** The whole block was destroyed and it was all taken down. There is nothing there. We'll have to drive by and see.

**Betty Katzenelson:** But that's the thing.

**Ida Pats:** Mid-City never developed it.

**Betty Katzenelson:** The city wanted that block demolished anyway. So it was very convenient for them not to help and not to step in and not to stop any of the burning. I mean, how convenient was that? They didn't have to pay for any of our houses. They didn't have to pay for any of us to leave.

**Valerie Wiggins:** They didn't have to relocate you.

**Sharon Singer:** People paid money on the Mid-City and that was all lost and nobody reimbursed anyone. So it was all very sad.

**Betty Katzenelson:** That's right. Who took the money for that development?

**Sharon Singer:** The developer. Was it Henry Knott?

**Ida Pats:** I don't know. It was some people, no, Embry? These people now have jobs in the city government.

**Sharon Singer:** It just makes you wonder.

**Betty Katzenelson:** Not the money piece, but also the city and where was their head. You know, why was it so convenient for them?

**Sharon Singer:** It was okay for that block

**Ida Patz:** To be underinsured.

**Sharon Singer:** Yeah. Everybody was underinsured.

**Eric Singer:** Like Hurricane Katrina

**Sharon Singer:** That's what I'm saying. I look at Hurricane Katrina and I see people demanding this and entitled to that, and I'm thinking, "Why?" Okay. Where's that money coming from.

**Valerie Wiggins:** There wasn't all the FEMA support where you are declared a federal disaster area and people come in and help you.

**Sharon Singer:** No. There wasn't any of that back then.

**Betty Katzenelson:** There was no disaster area. It was just gone.

**Ida Pats:** In fact, my family. They threw a shower, like you're a newly wed.

**Sharon Singer:** Because you had nothing.

**Betty Katzenelson:** Dishes. People brought them blankets. As if it was a wedding shower. It was their anniversary. That next anniversary, and they gave them a shower.

**Eric Singer:** Grandma, do you remember at all what those first couple of nights were like in the motel?

**Ida Pats:** You know I can't even remember where we were, and I think Mrs. Eisenberg said that we were across from the old Giant on Reisterstown Road.

**Sharon Singer:** Where the bowling alley was, and Gino's .

**Betty Katzenelson:** Where I used to have my birthday parties.

**Sharon Singer:** There you go.

**Ida Pats:** It was a motel and we stayed there a couple nights, and then we went to live with Uncle Albert and that's when I had the gall bladder attack.

**Sharon Singer:** It physically and mentally affected my mother.

**Ida Pats:** And the doctor said that was because...

**Sharon Singer:** It was stress related.

**Betty Katzenelson:** A couple days later she had a major gall bladder attack and had to have her gall bladder removed, which in those days was not a light surgery.

**Ida Pats:** I have scars to prove it.

**Sharon Singer:** I remember, do you remember this? We were at Reisterstown Road Plaza, and you were there, near the Hecht Company? In the Hecht Company. And you saw Miss Davis. And you couldn't face her and you went running and you ran into the men's room.

**Ida Pats:** Might be. I don't remember that.

**Sharon Singer:** That's how much she was affected by it.

**Eric Singer:** And Miss Davis was the woman who used to work in the store.

**Sharon Singer:** She used to work in the store

**Betty Katzenelson:** for years and years and years.

**Sharon Singer:** She just couldn't face anything. Very traumatic.

**Ida Pats:** It wasn't the usual.

**Valerie Wiggins:** Oh no. It's definitely not the usual.

**Sharon Singer:** Any other questions for us?

**Valerie Wiggins:** I don't have any additional questions. Is there anything else that you think of that you might want to add?

**Ida Pats:** They did not take care of anything, and when we left it was completely looted out.

**Valerie Wiggins:** And it was looted and then it was burned?

**Sharon Singer:** So.

**Sharon Singer,** [to neighbor]: I thought that for you having gone through the Holocaust and then having to go through the riots. It was like a double whammy.

**Neighbor:** What can you do?

**Sharon Singer:** You have to survive.

**Neighbor:** Absolutely. You cannot do anything.

**Valerie Singer:** So in your case you were basically moved there after the Holocaust? You had set up your business?

**Neighbor:** I came to America. They brought us to America after the Holocaust.

**Sharon Singer:** And they set up their business.

**Valerie Wiggins:** And you set up your business there, and obviously you lost your business also.

**Neighbor:** Same thing. We were neighbors.

**Valerie Wiggins:** And you lived above your business also?

**Betty Katzenelson:** I think probably you had a sense, maybe more than we did, that maybe something was going to happen?

**Neighbor:** No Nothing.

**Betty Katzenelson:** Did you not take anything.

**Neighbor:** Nothing. Not anything. Your father was in front of the gas station, and we came back from shopping.

**Sharon Singer:** And that was it. Life as we knew it was over at that point. That was that and start anew. I loved living in the city. I loved it. I loved going out and I went to the Peabody she said (I didn't love that so much). I used to take ballet. I took the bus everywhere. I used to get on the 13, transfer to wherever I wanted to go. I never thought anything of it. "You live downtown! It's so scary!" Scary?! But, you know. That day was scary.

**Valerie Wiggins:** I thank you today for sharing your stories.