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Interview With Lois Carol Fishbaugh Rebetsky

Patricia A. Cavanaugh: Interviewer
November 12, 2007

How old were you in 1968?

I was 15, going on 16, almost 16.

Can you state your full name for us?

Lois Carol Rebetsky

And in 1968, was that your name?

No.

What was your name in 1968?

Lois Carol Fishbaugh, Fish-ball!

Can you spell that for us?

F-i-s-h-b-a-u-g-h

What would you situation in the 1960's?

I was a teenager, I was going to school, right.

Where did you live and go to school at?

I lived in Lansdowne which is in Baltimore County, Baltimore Maryland, and I went to Lansdowne High School.

**Where did you shop at that time, or can you remember your family shopping ?
What stores they would visit?**

Um, 16, well, we either shopped downtown Baltimore or out towards Catonsville.

Before the riots, what kind of interactions did you have with other people?

Other races?

People of other races?

I went to school with, with mostly Caucasians, but there were some black people.

Were any of them your friends?

Not close friends, but certainly we were all friendly.

How would you describe the racial mood in Baltimore before the riots?

Well I think, where I grew up in Baltimore County, which was, and it was right outside of Baltimore City it wasn't that far into the county I think people, at least at my school we all accepted one another, and it didn't matter.

What, if anything, do you remember about the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King ?

I don't remember much about it, to tell you the truth. I know, I know it happened and he was speaking and he got shot, but I don't exactly remember all the, how it happened but I do remember the riots in Baltimore after that.

And how did you hear about the riots starting?

We heard about it on television and on the radio and there was a curfew and there was looting and in Baltimore City and burning, you know, and that was all on the TV.

During the riots, the information that you received, primarily came from television?

Television, radio and the newspaper, Baltimore Sun.

And you watched the TV coverage of the riots?

Right.

What are your impressions of the reporting of the riots?

I guess back in those days, it was, it was um, uncommon for there to be such fighting and looting in the streets especially in Baltimore. So, I think it was very, it was, everybody was consumed with the news about it, so it was a lot of coverage on it.

How do you think the national news portrayed the situation in Baltimore?

I don't really remember that. Yeah.

What was your impression of the neighborhoods that were affected?

Well, I think, it was everybody was afraid. There was a lot of angry people on the streets and they did loot and burn stores and houses. I know we were all afraid, even though we lived right outside the city and there was a curfew so, by time, I think the curfew was eight o'clock at night. So you had to be in the house, everybody locked their doors cause we were afraid they would come up from the city and continue looting and burning up where we were.

We were just about, I guess we're just about 4 or 5 miles out of city

Did you see National Guard Troops in your neighborhood?

The only National Guardsman I saw in my neighborhood was Leroy Benson. He was not stationed to work in my neighborhood, but he lived down the street and he was my sister's best friend. I remember how afraid we all were that he would get hurt during the riots. He was stationed in Carroll Park.

So the presence made you and your neighbors feel afraid, is that what you said?

Yeah I think everybody was afraid and cautious and like, and you had to the off the streets, and in the house. Locked the doors and see what happened

And what was the mood in your area during the riots? Was that the general feeling?

I think that was the general feeling, yeah.

How did your life activities changed your date of the riots?

We stayed off the streets and stayed in the house.

What would have normally done differently?

Well we would have been out, walking to the store, taking the bus and going downtown. You wouldn't do that. You know.

How do you think Baltimore changed after the riots?

Well, I think there was a lot more resentment after the riots actually, because, people were forced to take sides between black-and-white where, I think before then, it wasn't as much.

And how did your immediate neighborhood change?

Well, I don't know how the neighborhood changed, but in, in school, I don't think, I mean people that were our friends were our friends. And you know matter of fact, my school bus would go down Washington Boulevard and pick up, in a predominately black neighborhood (down where Linda and Joe lived) it was right before there was all black and that's where we knew a whole bunch of black kids that didn't change. I mean, cause we all rode the bus together and took classes together. So if you knew the person, and if you did not know them, I think you were more afraid, yeah, yeah.

In your experience, what businesses were affected by the riots?

I don't really remember. I know there were small shops downtown, that people would break into and they were looting and just taking clothes and TV s they were taking TVs and stuff like that, they had it on the television taken appliances, small appliances, electrical, radios and TVs, and stuff like that.

And did your interactions with people of other races change? You kind of answered that already.

I don't think so. Not with people that I know. People that I didn't know I would be more leery of , I guess

I did notice something different later. You used to be able to ride on the bus take it all away from Lansdowne down to Baltimore city but then people got um really mean. It was really black and white and like I was on the bus one day. There was these black boys on

the bus. There was this girl in front of them and they kept hitting her in the head and calling her names. You would never seen that before, and the bus driver was even afraid, afraid to say anything.. But before that people would not do that openly, at least not that I saw.

What was your street address?

1927 Victory Drive.

Thank you.