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**Old Trenton Oral Histories
Grace Womack & Jean Lynch (14 April 2015)**

**By Nina Brossa
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Link to audio files:

<https://archive.org/details/GraceWomackAndJeanLynch41415>

Interviewer: Ok so let's get started, can you just check that the video is on? These are going. Okay so we did the consent form and now it is time for the fun part- the interview.

Grace: Yes

Interviewer One: Okay so [0:30]

Interviewer: You already had... mentioned to me that your name is Grace but your full name is... What is your full name?

Grace: Grace M Grace M Grace May- no, M Grace M. Womack... There she is!

Jean: Hello! Hi

Grace: That's where you will get all your information. She gonna take your picture too...

Jean: Oh my God. No.

Jean: Hello Ladies. Mom tell me you're conducting a survey [1:00] or something?

Interviewer: Yes I have just started interviewing her so... [overlap]

Jean: Oh okay, alright then I am on time then I said let me go help my mom (laughter), cause she call me and told me about it

Grace: When we move I forgot all about it.. We came from Virginia. Oh Lord, please.

So you got it?

Interviewer: We just started

Jean: My name is Jean

Grace: This is my oldest daughter [1:30]

Interviewer One: Well it is nice to meet you. I'm Abby and this is Alex.

Interviewer Two: Hi

Interviewer One: And we are both sophomores at the College of New Jersey.

Grace: Oh wonderful!

Interviewer One: So we just went through the consent process and now we are ready to start the interview so.. So Grace can you tell me when and where you were born?

Grace: Okay...Halverfax Virginia... Ah I say that was September the 16th [2:00] 1928... in Halverfax Virginia

Interviewer One: Ok... Okay and... so now can you tell me how long you have lived in Trenton?

Grace: Yes.. [laughter] Maybe she can I can't ...

Jean: We came in October the 5th 1959

Interviewer One: So you came in 1959?

Jean: yes... and you were born again in what year?

Grace and Jean together: 1928

Grace: September the 4th- September the 16th 1928 [2:30]

Interviewer Two: I was born September the 4th...[laughter]

Grace: Oh

Interviewer One: Okay so... and where have you lived in Trenton? I have a map if you would like a map, if not...

Grace and Jean: Um No

Jean: When we we um we came, um we stayed with my aunt, my father's sister in Lawrenceville um off of um [clicking] Lawrenceville road. [3:00]

Interviewer One: Ok

Jean: And then we uh we bought a house on um it was 29 Stockton Street and then from there we moved to 21 um Landsing Street and then from there we went to 22 Ellsworth Avenue so we've we've had...Trenton all of Trenton

Grace: I'm so glad she's here... because I could never get it all together [laughter]

Jean: Yes yes yes [3:30]

Interviewer One: Okay so for this project in particular um we're really interested in the history of old Trenton um and that's a nine-block neighborhood that was an important business district in the past. So here's a map of what that looks like so this is the old Trenton neighborhood, so we have North Broad Street here and then East State Street, so that's really what we're focusing on... so for this project its um...

Grace: Okay...Oh okay in that area...

Jean: In that area [4:00]

Abby: Ya so what you remember about that. So so what do you remember about this neighborhood from 1945 to 1965?

Jean: Um well when we came up, we were all young. I was 13 and ahh we were pretty much kept in. We didn't get to go out because we were from the South and um the only people we knew was [4:30] the neighbors and ah our aunts and we were not allowed to mingle... okay so all

Commented [1]: There is some overlap between the two here, I think that would be more clear if you had an annotation to indicate that. I would recommend putting [overlap] between Jean's line and Grace's line.

we knew about um East State Street is that ah the Bell Telephone Company was on East State Street, there was Dunhams, there was ah Lint Brothers, ah there were movie theatres and basically once we got up to some age we were allowed to go ah ah [5:00]by ourselves...but mainly we worked 'cause we were a working family from the South, so we would go to the farm where we were out of school, and when we weren't in school we were home...

Abby: Okay...Okay... Right

Grace: Definitely

Abby: So when your children were working what were were you doing? Were you working as well?

Grace: [clears throat] Come to think of it I I've forgotten this how long I did work. But I but I used to work. [5:30]

Jean: Ya you worked like...

Abby: So between like 1945 and 1965... during this time...

Grace: Okay

Jean: Well 1945 wes was on the farm

Grace: Wes was on the farm

Interviewer One: Ok you were working on the farm or...

Jean: Oh yeah

Grace: Oh yes

Interviewer One: So what kind of things but was this in Trenton?

Jean: No in Virginia

Grace: In Virginia

Interviewer One: So you moved- right right right- so you moved you came to Trenton in 1959. So what were you- when you moved to Trenton what were you-? Were you working when? Were you working when you came? [6:00]

Jean: You started working at a cleaners.

Grace: Yes ah what's the name of the cleaners? Lord have mercy

Jean: The cleaner that was on um um Calhoun Street and is still there ah Oh God I can't think of it. I go by it all the time ah I can't think of the name of that cleaners.

Grace: That's [inaudible] ah don't ah remember the name. "Something River now "Midtown River". I don't how many times I go by I used to work at it

Jean: I know ya ya that was so [6:30] long ago good Lord were all in our season as far as memory

Grace: [laughter]

Jean: [laughter] Only the hardship remains.

Grace: Yes the goo the good [phone rings]...

Jean: Ya the hardship remains so but then she [phone rings] fell down the stairs and broke her neck and found out she was an epileptic so she didn't work from that point on [phone rings] so

Interviewer One: What year was that?

Jean: Sorry this is the pharomic hold on. Hello [7:00] ... Hi this is Jean, her daughter. She has a visitor can I take a message... which ones are they... yes yes yes thank you thanks for calling uh-huh bye [click]

Grace [overlapping with call]: I didn't work.... Ah what year that was I couldn't never tell you... but I tell you the hospitals didn't even take notes

Jean: Ya

Grace: Jean I done forgot [7:30] when ah out there fell down the steps. I- I don't remember.

Jean: Well um I know you don't but let me think it was early 70's. I would say 1970. Ya 1970

Commented [2]: A made a similar comment earlier, but it may be beneficial to indicate that these lines are overlapping with an [overlap] indication

Interviewer One: Alright so going back to this old Trenton this old...Trenton neighborhood so I know that you came in 1959 um what was it like back then? What do what do [8:00] you remember about- like what were the streets like, what were the people like?

Grace: Old Trenton

Jean: Excellent

Grace: Beautiful

Jean: They were beautiful. There was no we didn't have no problem with robberies and um ah you could leave your children home and didn't worry about someone coming to your house. Well at that time when we left our children in the home they stayed there... if somebody knock on the door just let them knock [8:30] ...and don't open the door, don't answer the phone...we were very disciplined and that included everyone that was around us. And then the neighbors, if you did something it was just like down South, if you did something your parents knew about it before they got home.

Grace: They did ya... ya... don't do nothin

Abby: Right

Grace: [laughter]

Jean: So it was this is like [chuckle]

Grace: Yes indeed

Jean: Yeah. The neighbors was able to discipline you... and then your parents [9:00] would discipline you from being disciplined by the neighbor...

Grace: Oh yes...[laughter]

Interview One: Right and this was in Trenton?

Jean: This was in Trenton

Grace: This is in Trenton

Commented [3]: I am fairly certain that she is saying "your parents knew about it before they got home" instead of "your parents found out."

Jean: Absolutely

Grace: [laughter]

Jean: Absolutely

Grace: Oh yes

Jean: Yes yes yes and when um we didn't have any problems with the men... because they were from the old school... so if-if-if you got a ride with a young male ah man they would take you were supposed to go to make sure you were safe. [9:30] It was safety. Now...

Grace: No... oh oh yeah... you better not not get in the car. What? Yous- he can live next door but don't trust him.

Jean: Ya so it was it was... quite- quite different than what it is now. Just reminded us so much of the South from where we came...because that was there as well...so it was great...really great mmm-hmm.

Grace: Jeesh...Yeah [overlap with Interviewer One]

Interview One: Right...Right...Okay

Interviewer One: What were the businesses like during this time when you first moved to Trenton? Did you shop there? Did you what were they like? [10:00] Can you describe them?

Jean: Ya. I can because she would always send us to do shopping... umm

Grace: Yeah [chuckle]

Interviewer One: Where did you send your children out shopping?

Grace: Now they had to go to the main stores. Now nothing- nothing shabby. And they were very good kids uhh that's where they were raised, they were raised...

Jean: Well mainly they didn't have the neighborhood stores [10:30] like they have now... no no they were mainly furniture stores, clothing stores like Briars down on on still, I think it's still on Broad Street. Ah there was ah ah a Five and Ten... there was store where you would go in and get your soap and powder and all that kind of stuff, and it was stores like that. Dresses, you could go buy your clothes. Like I said Lit Brothers and Dunns was downtown and ah [11:00] couple

other stores. Um Ne ne Neman Marcus was there... [overlap with Grace and Interviewer One] on the State Street yes yes...

Grace: [overlap] They have now no... yes there was there... really. yes... it was nice

Interviewer One: Really?

Jean: So we were we were able to get on the bus and sometimes we would walk...

Interviewer One: And this was in the Early 60s?

Jean: In the early 60s... and and ah til I gotta to know when I guess til the 80s when they all started closing up or whatever...

Interviewer One: Wow... Right

Jean: But it was it was nice and we would go and get what we needed to get. They would give us the money and the managers and the salespersons were all courteous... very nice... ya ya. And they didn't have to worry about- I'm quite sure they had some that had tried to shoplift and all that kind of stuff but it was very rare...

Grace [overlapping]: Very nice...very nice...very rare very rare

Jean: Yeah, 'cause we was too afraid of our parents...[laughter] we were too [11:30] not only me, us, but my sisters and brothers in the six of us. And we just like everybody else like I say... right...

Grace: Jean [laughter] Oh no...and the rest of and the other families th there kids...but everybody they didn't hmm hm...

Jean: cause they were from the same generation...yeah...mm-hmm

Grace: I-Indeed...and you respected everybody. I don't care if you was a cow and and he next to you you respect him he respected you, you respected him...[12:00]

Interviewer One: Right right

Grace: [Overlap with Jean] But now Jeesh...it's completely sad it really is...

Jean: But now... it's completely...yeah yeah

Commented [4]: I think for this section it would make more sense to show the back and forth by switching between Jean and the interviewer, instead of using ellipses. To me, the ellipses indicate a pause in speech rather than the back-and-forth nature of this interaction.

Jean: My mom could take us anywhere... we could go anywhere... and um we there no peep there was no crime I want this I gotta have that there was none of that because... we knew not to showoff... in the streets [13:00] we were well disciplined.

Grace: mm-hmm...anywhere anywhere...oh no... I [inaudible] absolutely not

Interviewer One: Right right...

Jean: Yeah

Interviewer One: So do you remember any specific times you spent in the old Trenton neighborhood? Um whether there were any like during Christmas time or...any were there any festivals going on? Is there any specific memories you have?

Grace: Oh

Jean: If there were if there were, we didn't go.

Grace: We if there were didn't go I didn't either. We-we you- see the family [13:30] was important. Ahhh we didn't in Christmas, Mother's Day, Father's Day, whatever day, Birthdays, we-we-we done- We was happy, and we try to make- I try to make the kids happy, for blue we had we were really happy... but now they-I don't know what has happened [chuckle]

Interviewer One: That's awesome

Jean: Ya I I don't remember any any festivals going on [14:00] ... there and the only festival that was the fair...the fair we would go to the fair...

Grace: No... the fair yes...to the fair Oh yes now that a memory...

Interviewer One: [inaudible] see

Jean: Now that was in a Hamilton in um ah, off of Greenwood Avenue...

Grace: Yes

Interviewer One: Okay

Jean: It was a fair every year they would have the fairs so we would go to things like that and if the park would have um um Mother's Day celebration Father's Day [14:30] celebration ah the kids from the schools they would put on shows and show how they did that sort of thing. That's what we would go to. We wouldn't go to any other stuff. It was like family-orientated stuff that we would go to.

Interviewer One: Okay, were you involved in any of the arts and culture scene in the area?

Grace: No [coughs] I wasn't. No weren't were we?

Jean: Ah uh... I don't think so. [15:00] Uh ah th the arts like

Grace: I don't think so

Interviewer One: Like in this old Trenton area do you remember um it being where there murals anywhere, was it-do you remember anything about the art culture in this area?

Jean: No I didn't see anybody painting like they do now. They paint on buildings and all that kind of stuff. I don't remember any of that.

Grace: If they did, [15:30] we didn't go.

Jean: Ya it was in an area that we weren't ...in, okay?

Interviewer One: Okay... okay.

Interviewer One: Okay, now I have a book of photos from old Trenton during this time and they are arranged in order by date so I'm going to show you some of these pictures and I want you to stop me if there is something you remember from these photos or if there is something interesting, if it sparks a memory... um, so first we have- so this [16:00] is a photo of... North Broad Street

Jean: [inaudible] pictures [inaudible]...

Interviewer One: um and this is July 22nd 1940 and what's visible is... right right right

Grace: We were still...

Jean: We were not even here before this. We didn't come until the fifty-

Interviewer One: So let's skip forward to... so this is between we are not sure if we think it's between um 1946 and 1955. So this is East States Street [16:30]

Grace and Jean: [laughter]

Grace: We still wasn't here. We didn't get here til 1959...if that's if- that's in the

Commented [5]: again this isn't a huge difference, but I hear her saying "we still wasn't here" not just "we wasn't here."

Interviewer One: Okay...Okay

Interviewer One: Um that's 1950, 52, 54, Okay so this is 1960. This is East State Street looking east from Broad Street...December eleventh [17:00] ... to twelfth 1960, and you can see the Yards department store...Woolworths, S.S. Creskyto... Katie Kelly, Parklane Greeting Cards and the Broad Street Bank sign

Jean [overlapping with interviewer]: Mmm-hmm... mm-hmm... mm-hmm mm-hmm... all dead yes...

Grace and Jean: Yes

Interviewer One: So if you guys remember this can you tell me um a little bit more about this great snow that we have pictured here? Do you have um, memories of that great snow?

Jean: I think that was the time that um that the great snow was [17:30] so so much and um a salesman came to the door... and he was selling wigs...and my father politely asked him to leave...I think one of us let him into the house... and um he would not leave, and he kept calling my mom Grace [18:00] and he said "Don't call my wife Grace, that's Mrs. Wolmack"... and "Oh okay well Grace don't you like this one... wouldn't you like this one? You look good in that one." He said "I've asked you twice, I'm not gonna ask you again" and so he said "Alright, alright, I understand, but I just want Grace to try on this one"...my father- my father left the room came back with a double barrel shotgun...

Grace: Oh... oh yes [laughter]...[laughter]...[laughter] It was [inaudible]... [laughter]... [chuckle]... [laughter]... [laughter]...[laughter]

Interviewer One: No way

Jean: That's how strict [18:30] our house was ...and he said "You've got til the count of three to get out of here... cause your trespassing and I can kill you and get away with it"...so the guy was like taking his time so my father went *click*...and the man looked and turned my fathers like this he jumped over the stoop into the street

Grace: Yes it is... he did...[laughter]...[laughter]...[laughter]

Interviewer: Oh man. Did he take his stuff with him?

Jean: No. He left so he left, we had all the wigs... [19:00]

Grace: [laughter]

Interviewer One: That's hysterical

Grace: Lord we had more wigs

Jean: That's the other then the snow we couldn't go out after this man.

Interviewer One: Oh right, and this is at the same time as the big snow.

Grace and Jean: Yes

Grace: The big snow ya

Jean: He thought- He knew everybody would be home so he gone to come and make some money.

Grace: Yeah but see he should've...

Jean: But he picked the wrong the house...

Grace: Yes he did... [laughter]...

Interviewer One: Sure did... Oh man

Interviewer One: So...

Jean: Oooh

Grace: Wooo. [19:30] And one- one of my kids felt so sorry for him that they do they opened the door for him quick.

Jean: Yeah... we did we opened that door and he jumped clean over the stoop and into into the street. Yes he did.

Grace: Yeah Yeah opened the door...[laughter]

Grace: You got to trust me my husband was getting madder than mad

Jean: Yeah yeah

Interviewer One: Oh my God

Jean: My father ran the house strict, he was strict he -whatever he said went, even if it was wrong.

Grace: [laughter] [20:00]

Jean: So... we didn't get to you know you can understand we didn't get to go many places...we couldn't hang out with other kids...there were no kids coming to the house and all that so...

Grace: So...No... No...

Grace: And I didn't have no ladies coming to see me...

Jean: We were- We were very sheltered... by him

Grace: Yeah

Interviewer One: Right

Jean: You know he said "I'm going to protect my girls from these maniacs out here"...this that and the other...

Grace: [laughter]... and he did...

Jean: He would tell us horror stories and all that kind of stuff so it made us very afraid so we never got to until we got into our teenage [20:30] and start going to school and meeting other people there we started branching out but we still like "Oooh I can't go-no I can't go there, I got to go home and find out if I can go."

Interviewer One: Right right

Jean: Yeah so but we remember that area there yeah that was a great area...

Grace: Yeah so that's a Wols, is Woolworths still here? ...it's gone

Jean: mmmm

Interviewer One: What was Can you tell me more about Woolworths since you remember it? What do you remember about that store?

Grace: It That's where we do where we used to do a lot of shopping they had some literally everything [21:00] in there

Jean: Mmm-hmm

Interviewer One: What do you remember buying there?

Grace: Well so uhh...our clothes and...you had the kids clothes and they had umm that good old-it's not anymore, I call it dish detergent...all that good stuff...I mean that household stuff was very nice it wa- but today it look like it, I don't know what what it's not as good as it was back then...

Jean: Our clothes...the kids clothes...yeah we would get all that stuff... household stuff...no [21:30] hmmm

Interviewer One: So some other things that were pictured in this um in this photo here there was Yards Department Store, S.S.. Kresky Co. do you remember those places?

Jean: Well yeah I do. I do, back then those days there was still segregation going on and um... yeah

Grace: ...[laughter]

Interviewer One: This was in the 60's...the early 60's?

Jean: ...Yes...

Jean: ...Yes, yes...yes yes

Grace: Oh yeah...

Interviewer One: ...You could talk more about that that would be- [22:00]

Jean: That was still going on so certain stores we didn't go in, and if we did go in, we were followed around. You know like... you weren't suppose to be in here this is too high end...for you you can't afford this...

Grace [overlapping]: ...like you gone steal something...[laughter]...yes

Jean: That type of thing... cause that happened to me by me. Being the oldest, um, they would send me and ah then I would- once I started getting teenage age I wanted to get out of my mother's clothes [22:30] I wanted to dress like the other kids...and I would go in um they would follow you and you know they pretend like they weren't, but you know. You know when somebody's following you because that's what you take with you when you come from the South...you never let go of that.

Interviewer One: ...Right... Right...hmm

Grace: Oh no

Jean: Cause you've experienced it... so you know how it feels when you know a Caucasian is dogging you

Grace: ...you've experienced it...

Interviewer One: Right and you said you were thirteen?

Jean: And I was thirteen.

Interviewer One: Okay [23:00]

Jean: Yeah I was thirteen so by the time I hit fifteen, then I was able to go and get my clothes and that was the closest place to us downtown...

Interviewer One: ...And you remember what it was like...cause you were old enough..

Jean: I remember yeah...I remember and at that point I I I ah I developed a hate because down South you knew where they were coming from, you knew you had to stay in your own place...and when you come North you like "Okay North means freedom [23:30] ...and and

you'll be able to go and enjoy what their kids are enjoying" and and you know certain fields certain things you wouldn't go into but um...

Interviewer: Right...right and...

Grace: It was it was ...

Jean: But when you come up here it's like okay freedom but it's still there and those little old were the worst. They were the worst... "Whatcha doing in here gal?"

Grace: ...[laughter]

Interviewer One: The white women?

Jean: Yeah yeah

Grace: Especially the older ones [24:00] the old ones

Jean: And and and they had they picked the wrong one... I'm my father's daughter...

Grace: yeah oh yeah definitely...[laughter]

Interviewer One: Taught you well

Jean: ...Ah yeah... yeah yeah yeah

Grace:... oh yeah oh yes... yeah...

Jean: And I turned around asked her, "Who you calling a gal, you old wrinkled up pool bag, what's wrong with you? Don't you- I will-" [chuckles] and I got in her face and she was like "Security security security" I said "Yeah, you better call security."

Grace: ...[laughter] ... [24:30]

Jean: And then when they came and they were "What's going on here young [inaudible]?" I said "This woman um why whatcha you doing in here gal, she disrespected me. I have money." I pulled the money out. I said "I have money, I can pay for what I'm gonna get. I'm not gonna steal anything cause I've got to go home to my parents... And they know I'm stealing before I even get there"...

Grace: ... [laughter]...[laughter] Yeah, 'cause somebody gonna tell them... somebody [laughter]

Jean: So he made- he called the manager and he made her apologize [25:00] to me... and...

Grace: ... 'Cause she shouldn't said shouldn't say those things...

Jean: Yeah and then they said "Well you pick out whatever you want and it's on the store" and I said "No, I don't want you given me nothing, I have money."

Interviewer One: Right

Jean: And so it was there. It was there so I never went back into that store because I didn't know if that lady was still there... but I didn't want to have cause I probably- and I used to hit people back then...I used to hit them before I could think.

Grace:[laughter]...[laughter]...

Interviewer One: And this store you were talking about was- was that [25:30] the Woolworths or the S.S. Kresky...?

Jean: It was Dunhams.

Interviewer One and Grace: Dunhams .

Grace: Yeah Dunhams.

Jean: Yeah it was Dunhams mm-hmm.

Interviewer One: Okay um wow that's really interesting. Are there any other stories that you particularly felt that you faced some discrimination, or you felt the segregation in/around this old Trenton neighborhood in the 1960s?

Grace: But to tell you the truth I felt I- me myself that all of us like that, [26:00] but it all of them wasn't cause you get the you know sad that you have to get a certain feeling to live but so I had got that that feeling I just gonna hate everybody well well that wasn't right... but...

Jean: No [inaudible]... But my mom is a sweet sweet person when it comes to outside. Now she's a different person at home...

Grace: [laughter]

Jean: Okay but when [26:30] she meets someone she's very pleasant very sweet you you see that...for yourself right that's how she was with everybody...and um they didn't perceive her to be a threat and ya know that they didn't have to be show their true colors you know so she was very sweet and whatever she needed she got it because of her sweetness [27:00] ... so she didn't have that she didn't have that problem and they would come over and see if she needed anything or ahh as the years went by she had more of that group than our group

Interviewer One:Yes...right...right

Grace: Yes indeed I sure did

Jean: To be real...[overlap] and so she wanted she could get anything she wanted um but because they would just love her and when she would go to the hospital and visit the the the [27:30] um the sick and shut in she would charm them this very nice and pleasant so she never presented that side she kept that side to herself

Grace:Yeah

Interviewer One: Right

Jean: I didn't know how to do that

Interviewer One: So...

Grace: No no she didn't know how to do it but I knew one use both of us [laughter]

Interviewer One: Do you think it had something to do with um having lived in um Virginia for longer facing... that discrimination...

Jean:Yes...Yes yes

Grace: ...Yes yes... [28:00] yeah cause when you are born and raised somewhere you know

Jean: Yeah yeah yeah so it stuck with me for a long time because when I went to a to junior one I was in a classroom full I think it was about five five African Americans and the rest were Caucasian and um... I looked a hot mess I looked like a pickaninny [28:30] there's old pictures of us so and I would be called names and they would have them when I walk in they would like ooh ooh here come the scab here come the scab you know that sort of think so that didn't do anything but infuriate me even the more

Grace: ...Yeah [inaudible]

Interviewer One: Right

Jean: So but as years went on and um I got into church and um I decided that I'm not gonna let them take anything else [29:00] from me

Interviewer One: Right

Grace: Right

Jean: But now it's like ehh its fine how are you... I get along I'm fine I'm fine...but that was not a good experience for me

Grace: ...yes...yeah yeah fine

Interviewer One: And that's school that was in Trenton

Jean: Yes Junior One

Grace: Junior One

Jean: Southern and um well it's Martin Luther King now but it was Southern in Princeton

Grace: Yeah

Interviewer One: Okay

Interviewer One: So were there any other stores [29:30] um like even Kitty Kelly or Parklane Greeting Cards do you have any memories of going?

Grace: Kitty Kelly

Jean: Well if they were there we have no reason to go into them...no no I don't remember no no we didn't have no reason to go

Grace: ... No I don't remember Kitty Kelly

Interviewer One: Okay so I have another picture now from December 24th 1962 and this um you can see the Hol Holiday decorations and Parklane and Shorewood storefronts [30:00] um do you remember walking in old Trenton at the time seeing these decorations?

Jean: I'm sure they were there

Grace: I'm sure they were there but...

Jean: hmm no it don't even stir my memory

Grace: mines either

Interviewer One: Okay no problem let's see, I think I have one more... so this is September 7th 1963 this was the Brazilian you can see the Brazilian festival banner...

Grace: No no we didn't go I didn't go we didn't to that no

Jean: [in the background] no no we didn't go [30:30]

Interviewer One: Okay what about the Broad Street Bank? This appeared in a lot of the photos that we took... and these came from the Trenton archive...of the Trenton Public library, did you go to the Broad Street Bank?

Jean: ... Yeah yeah

Both Jean and Grace: ... yeah yeah

Jean: We had um an account there

Interviewer One: Okay can you talk more about that just...

Jean: ...I don't know they just went and set it up they took care of the money part and we had an account there

Grace: yes we did

Jean: And dad would go and put money in [31:00] it and I guess it was for whatever we needed but then we fell on hard times and he had to go and um take it out so that's what I remember from from that

Interviewer One: Do you remember anything else about that bank or just it was the place you put the money in?

Jean: Well you've got to understand my dad did all of that we he was in control... he took care of everything he gave mom no money because [31:30] he thought would just save it somewhere

Interviewer One: ... Oh okay

Grace: [laughter]

Jean: And put this hand take a little bit...he thought I would too I'm not gonna spend all this money...

Grace: ... He thought I he thought I...he he he was right too I sure was gonna spend all that money

Jean: Yeah so he took his money that's my money I work for and I'm gonna do what I want with it and that was that. I mean back then, the man was truly in charge ...in control

Interviewer One: ... In control

Jean: In control yes [32:00]

Interviewer One: Actually I have one more picture here this is East States Street between 1963 and 1965 and you can see the Crosby Diamond Rings, Taylor Pork Roll sign, and Planters Peanut and you can see this one has a lot of people walking in it...

Jean: ...Yes

Grace: ...yes it does I I didn't go to things like that

Jean: we didn't go we didn't have no reason to go to a diamond ring store... Taylor Pork Roll...

Grace: [laughter]

Interviewer One: So who were the people going to these stores? [32:30]

Jean: I don't know

Grace: I don't know I don't know um well I don't see any African Americans in there in the picture

Jean and Grace: [laughter]

Jean: If there are they are very light very light

Grace: Very light skin

Jean and Grace: [laughter]

Jean: I'm just keeping it real

Grace: I told you when I saw you I like we live we we have to [33:00]

Jean and Grace: [laughter]

Grace: Oh Lord but really it's not like it used to be its just people everybody just I don't know

Jean: Oh yeah

Interviewer One: So tell me about that, how did the neighborhood change?

Grace: Whatcha mean uh oh how did it change? Oh my goodness. Whoo

Jean: I'm trying to think how it changed it changed so quickly

Grace: And uh and fast it look like [33:30] ... when we move when we move from down there was it the sea of the same?

Jean: ...um

Jean: Where

Grace: In Virginia

Jean: No she's not talking about Virginia

Interviewer One: In Trenton

Grace: That's what I'm trying to find that's I know she talking Trenton but when neither she said when change which now what which one you talking about changing Trenton or Virginia

Interviewer One: Seeing the change in... Trenton, so when you moved in 1959 [34:00] and make it now compare it to today.... so it sounds like there is a lot of things so if you could talk on a couple of things

Jean:Trenton

Grace: ... Trenton oh please... oh please

Grace: Ooh

Jean: First of all the drugs.

Grace: The drugs.

Jean: Drugs is one.

Grace: Drugs is one.

Jean: Now drugs was introduced into the urban neighborhood that's where it was introduced and um... by the time it escalated in the 70s it was [34:30] it's was through ...

Interviewer One: So it came in the 60s

Jean: It came in the mid to late 60s yes

Grace: mid to late 60s

Jean: And that's when it began to change uh no longer would you keep your your in front of your house clean no paper garbage and all of that kind of stuff uh robberies started happening and all that other stuff kind of thing so ...

Grace: It just don't make no sense [35:00]

Jean: it just changed from that and that was just the beginning that was the beginning

Interviewer One: Okay

Jean: Young boys getting hooked on that stuff very early

Grace: Very early.

Jean: and uh started with our young men and they couldn't couldn't they realized they couldn't and get the stuff you know it was coming in... from the outside and being [35:30] planted into the neighborhood and showing em how and it was it was bad too because... they used our people to trap our people

Grace: ...Yeah... [laughter] yeah they did

Jean: Now you know it could have been happening in the other neighborhoods but it was kept secret, it wasn't as- they still kept [36:00] neighborhoods clean and this that and the other but in our neighborhood it just- it-

Grace: It looks like they went nuts.

Jean: And still today you can tell still today certain areas I don't go into because... of that and you know what's going all you have to do is look around

Grace: ...No

Interviewer One: Right

Jean: And so it's still happening today but now they got the stuff down there and there's like uh ooh

Grace: [chuckle] [inaudible] it don't make no sense [36:30]

Jean: Yeah so that's what it is

Interviewer One: So we talked about the drugs and sort of the robberies what's another um change you saw from the 60s to now?

Jean: Well the women started taking control of the house

Interviewer One: Interesting

Grace: And that was a mistake.

Jean: That was a mistake.

Grace: Yes indeed, a big one.

Jean: Yeah they start taking over because they got tired of the man trying to control them and tell them what they can do [37:00] what they can spend and and this that and the other and now you don't have to work I'm working you're supposed to stay in the home blah blah blah blah blah blah blah and once that started and the woman start taking over the kids start acting like they don't have any sense cause when the man was in control you know when he spoke

Commented [6]: "control them and tell themm what they can do"

Grace: [coughs] all he had to do was grunt [coughs]

Jean: Yeah yeah yeah yeah like my mom used to say [37:30] when my father would come home even if we had a cat and he wanted that cat out of there all he had to do was throw his hat in the house and say get out and the cat would get out

Grace: [laughs]

Jean: That's how much power he had now a lot of the stuff I didn't agree with because I felt bad for my mom because she didn't have a say in anything and um so but it was order

Grace: But it was better...better

Jean: ...it was better. We were disciplined [38:00] you know and we didn't um we didn't um have to worry about sneaking in the house sneaking and all that kind of stuff sneaking this person out. And for God Sake no boy sleeping in the house with me really

Grace: [Laughter] No good

Jean: No you [inaudible]

Grace: [laughter]

Jean: It's because the power has changed

Grace: The power has changed right

Jean: The authority has changed

Grace: Yeah [38:30]

Jean: If you go back they didn't have all that

Grace: they- no. And all these these babies

Jean: And if a boy come visit you he have to sit over there and you over there

Grace: [laughter]

Jean: And dads over here and moms over there they don't do that anymore

Interviewer One: Right

Jean: It's done I mean it's ridiculous and I tell my kid oh Lord like my daddy say I pay the cost of being the boss now you want to be a boss, you get out their get your own house [39:00] and do whatever you want is but as long as you here... you will obey and like I say it was so much better the power shift

Grace: ... that's right

Interviewer One: Right

Grace: Yeah but something something...

Jean: ...They expect you to know your daughters' pregnant

Grace: And a and a and next thing you know ...

Jean: ..your son is in jail...

Grace: He's in jail and next thing they having another baby

Jean: yeah yeah

Grace: It don't make no sense it's just-

Jean: It's because of the power

Grace: The power

Jean: It's no longer there

Grace: Cause you knew your Daddy would've what what [39:30] mmmm-mmm oh Lord

Jean: So compared to now to then we couldn't even use the telephone we couldn't open up the refrigerator without asking.

Grace: Oh yes

Interviewer One: Without asking your father?

Jean: Yes well my Mama would say ask your dad so we knew not to put her in that because then he would get angry with her.

Grace: So

Interviewer One: How did you feel about the relationship [40:00] between your husband at this time was it just-?

Grace: I think I think that man was a blessing now uh really I wish it was still going on now cause maybe some of these kids [sound]...

Jean: But as far as you she didn't like it

Grace: No I didn't No I didn't like it but I tell you and I would have left my husband, but I had nowhere for my children to go and I wasn't [40:30] going to leave my kids. So I stayed right there. Like a lot of women would leave their children not me leave my kids just like this lady ah it's so sad the baby on the highway and burned the baby up did- did y'all read that?

Interviewer One: No I haven't heard that.

Jean: Yeah she had mental issue she was smoking that stuff... she was smoking that stuff

Grace: ... [Indistinctive noise] Yeah

Jean: And she smoked so much of it that... [41:00]

Grace: ...that oh yeah that was her problem

Jean: Yeah that was her problem no normal person, no mother will set her baby on fire

Commented [7]: I believe she is saying "kids" and then is sighing.

Grace: And I'll take you through it I mean it was that was

Jean: It's because of what she was doing

Grace: [deep sigh] Well Honey I've got news for that sister she gonna suffer she gonna have to pay her price she probably paying one now cause she still in jail. I mean really

Jean: Yeah

Interviewer One: So what are your hopes [41:30] for the Old Trenton Neighborhood in the future? I mean we talked about the past in the 60s what is now, but where do you see this old Trenton neighborhood going? what what would be your hope for it? Because you've seen it in the beginning, you've seen what it's brought in- been turned into, but where would you like to see it go?

Commented [8]: She says a little bit more after this. She says "Because you've seen it in the beginning, you've seen what its brought in, turned into, but where would you like to see it go?"

Grace:Hmph I don't have no hopes

Grace: I would like to see it go back to where it was [42:00] but that's impossible because men and women are not the same and most of them leaving [inaudible] manning and then boyfriending and they girlfriending and everybody's in the house together I mean that's crazy they don't get married no more, they don't believe in marriage. "No I'm gonna live [42:30] with my boyfriend no no no no [inaudible] so I don't think it ever do you think ever get back like it was?

Jean: Ah no no

Interviewer One: Even if you don't think it will go back, what do you hope?

Jean: I would hope that first of all ah between the mayor the legislation and the police force uh that they done [43:00] so crooked now to allow all of this to take place... to destroy the uh neighborhoods and and and and ah there's just no control...the ones that are responsible have no control they're not they're not doing what is required of them when they take office first of all they looking at [43:30] that almighty dollar that's the root the love of money is the root of all evil and they have just just like the police for one for instance for one thing they know what's going on in Trenton. They're they are getting paid to look the other way, and then when they wanna do something then they go out and try arrest somebody [44:00] and do this and do this and do and everybody that's in jail is not guilty everybody- all these young men in jail all of them are not guilty, there are some innocent people because they have to show something in their planning and you hear this. Everybody is not lying. They are planting evidence on you now once you get

caught they say “well so and so’s over here and we just took care of business [44:30] oh and go and get them that sort of thing so the ones that are in control they need to do what they are suppose to do: the right thing. And once you take prayer out of the situation once you tell God you step aside we’ve got this now when they did that...yeah it’s it’s been going downhill ever since so we need to get back to [45:00] the normal order and I hope and pray that it does but it’s going to take something so very tragic in order for somebody to say okay this is enough to try to get back some of what we’ve lost.

Grace: ...Yeah...No...It took it out of school yeah

Interviewer One: Right

Jean: Look at all the beautiful homes that they are building okay they’re beautiful... but your house don’t look no better than the one that they didn’t rebuild because you’ve got all this garbage in front of your home [45:30] so you’ve just got a glorified garbage dump

Grace: ...Yeah well

Grace and Jean: [laughter]

Interviewer One: Right

Grace: Yeah cause where daughter talking where she live some some men their house is full of garbage and they never put the garbage out the garbage...

Jean: He’s a hoarder. He’s a hoarder the person’s a hoarder but out front you’ve got all this garbage out front and

Grace: [laughter]

Jean: But so I I I I just don’t

Grace: I don’t know [46:00]

Jean: It’s in God’s hands

Grace: Yeah yes

Interviewer One: So just another question: how would you describe Trenton's art and culture scene now, nowadays? I know that you had mentioned in the past that you weren't really too actively involved in it, are you aware of it now?

Jean and Grace: No

Jean: Where is it

Grace: Yeah yeah but

Interviewer One: You you need the address

Grace: Yeah I want to know where

Jean: Yeah where is it

Grace: [same time] where is it?

Jean: Have you ever heard of any arts or things going on in Trenton [46:30]

Grace and Jean: [laughter]

Interviewer One: Well that says something itself so...

Jean: Thank you that's what I'm saying... [laughter] where is it?

Interviewer One: ...Right

Interviewer One: So how do you think How could the arts and culture in Trenton be improved?

Jean: Okay well um um ah they have the War Memorial Building. What's it for?

Grace: [laughter]

Jean: What what A- Tyler Perry plate [laughter] [47:00] outside my building? That's four years ago five years ago he comes down and takes all this money and and and his plate what about ballet? Something that's gonna cause your mind to to think a different way... and orchestras something now that's art to me, that's

Grace: ... Yeah

Interviewer One: Yes

Grace: Yeah but that been wait [inaudible]...

Jean: ...Tyler [inaudible] man cheating on a woman [47:30] and a woman beating up her kids, that's, that is not helping

Grace: No it's not no

Interviewer One: No

Jean: Ballet like Philly

Interviewer One: Yeah

Jean: You have to go all the way to Philadelphia... in order to see a wonderful, hear a wonderful orchestra and a singer...they have it cause they advertise it on T.V. all the time

Grace:Yeah...and they have it quite often.

Grace: yeah

Jean: But so Trenton what is the world we live in [inaudible] You have the building [48:00]

Grace: And then why is the mayor [inaudible] and then the other mayor we had, you remember him?

Jean: No

Grace: Yes you do Mac

Jean: Mac oh God Jesus that was the black eye that was the biggest blackest eye Trenton had ever- oh don't get me started on that [inaudible] Oh God

Interviewer One: What year was he mayor?

Jean: Huh what he was uh-hh

Grace: Last year wasn't it

Jean: Last year Jackson just started [48:30] you know now he's in prisons

Grace: Yea they put his butt in prison

Jean: He's in prison

Grace: He no good

Jean: He he but that's what I'm saying the mentality of the people of Trenton he shouldn't have been never been mayor. He's a hoodlum fooling around with Joe Joe

Grace: Yeah and Joe Joe... Joe Joe told Magnum I'm gonna bring you down and he did

Jean: ...Was a criminal he charged with raping a fourteen-year-old girl with a coke bottle why would you be associated with [49:00] a rapist

Jean: But no before that Joe Joe helped him get in... but once the trial thing come in... he told I'm gonna bring you down and he did

Grace:Yeah... he told I'm... he did

Jean: So it serves him right he should've never gotten in bed with that bum

Grace: [laughter]

Jean: Oh oh God I couldn't they they believe I live in New Orleans [49:30] so and I come from Trenton but I still say they should not have made him mayor

Grace: They they shouldn't have voted for him, I didn't vote for him.

Jean: They should not have voted for him I said he was thug

Grace: Yes a bum that's what he was

Jean: A thug, he he had no idea.

Grace: And he still have no idea, he's in jail.

Jean: Hiring his family members, and decent honest people need jobs. [50:00]

Grace: But but he gonna paid

Jean: And and he

Interviewer One: its sounds to me that the real hope for Trenton is good leadership

Jean: Yes

Grace: Yes now you've said it that's it

Jean: Yes good and honest leadership

Interviewer One: I mean that's what you have told me

Grace: [same time as Jean] Yes oh yeah it is true Good and honest leadership

Jean: [same time as Grace] Honest and good leadership and God [inaudible] leaders

Jean: And doing the right thing

Grace: Right Thing as long as it's wrong it's going to stay wrong [50:30]

Jean: Common sense will tell you that you do right do right you don't need to read the Bible God instills that in us anyhow...to do right... we know when we are doing wrong...because our conscious will nag saying you know that's not right

Grace: ...Anyhow...right...wrong...not right

Jean: His giving you the gift to do right

Interviewer One: Okay so last question: is there anything else you would like to share with me that I did not ask [51:00] you about old Trenton in the 60s? Or something else that you thought of but you just didn't have the opportunity to share?

Grace: Well so far my mind hasn't been [inaudible] no everything has been beautiful, and I hope I have answered most of your questions

Interviewer One: You are the expert. You both have helped me so much um I'm'

Grace: I'm glad she did come.

Interviewer One: Thank you so much. And I'm still recording so just so I have record

Jean: Oh you are recording Oh my God [51:30]

Grace: Oh yes she Oh Virginia that's all you're not in trouble

Jean: Oh Lord I'm fine I'll speak it again I've got no problem I told too much as it is

Grace: Now you don't talk as much as your mother do, so don't worry about it. But it was very nice today I am so glad that you all came initially she call me and I say what she said she come she said do you remember when and I said no I don't remember when [52:00] I left from Virginia and she ask and I say why she then went on to tell me I said oh my goodness you should've told me that last week I said I could've had a whole week to think [laughter]

Jean: Yeah Yeah so that [inaudible]

Grace: Now but bu but I had to tell her that

Interviewer One: Yeah so and so your Ms. Womack Ms. Womack's oldest daughter and your name again is?

Jean: Jean Lynch [52:30]

Interviewer One: Okay thank you guys so much, I'm going to stop my recording...

Grace: Oh and thank you

Commented [9]: Hey sam! I didn't have too many edits you did a great job transcribing things accurately. I put the time stamps in so you wouldn't have to listen in again, but the rest of my suggested edits are in the side comments. If you have any questions about my edits let me know.

Commented [LP10R9]: