

ASBURY PARK AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSIC HERITAGE PROJECT**INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT**

Interviewee: Rose Johnson [RJ]

Interviewers: Jen Souder [JS]
Kathleen Melgar [KM]
Charles Trott [CT]

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Time: 12:00 P.M.

Place: Asbury Park Senior Center, Asbury Park, NJ

JS: When we've been talking to all different people from around the area, most people still in the area. We just have a few questions we normally start with.

RJ: I lived most of my life in Asbury Park. In fact, I was born in Monmouth, Long Branch. At the time, it was not Monmouth Medical Center, you know; Monmouth Hospital. I was born there, raised in Asbury. Matter of fact, my mom – we had Fitkins, which is Jersey Shore now; Fitkins Hospital – my mom, went all the way to Long Branch. I couldn't figure: if I'm here in Asbury, why not go to Fitkins, why go to Monmouth? So, two of the kids out of seven was born in Long Branch. The rest were born at Fitkins Hospital, which is Jersey Shore now.

JS: Two out of seven?

RJ: Yeah.

JS: Just to back up, could you just tell us your name and when you born, if you don't mind?

RJ: My name is Rose Johnson. I was born, I had a birthday Saturday past. May the fifth. 5-5-1944. Just turned 74.

KM: Happy birthday!

RJ: Thank you!

JS: And you were born right here in the same location?

RJ: Born in Long Branch, raised in Asbury Park. All my life, I left Asbury one time. I was married, so I moved to Washington, D.C. I lived there for a while. Complicated,

For more info about the APAAMHP, contact Jennifer Souder - wardjennifer77@gmail.com

complicated. Living in Washington is complicated, but I managed to get a job in Washington.

JS: So you remember what year you moved to Asbury Park?

RJ: From 1944... that's when I was born. Remember, I said I was born here.

JS: Oh, you were born here.

RJ: Yeah, and raised here. Washington was way back, years.

JS: So Long Branch was just the hospital?

RJ: Yeah, just the hospital.

JS: Sorry, I got confused.

RJ: Yeah, just the hospital I was born in.

JS: What street were you born on?

RJ: It was right over there across the street. Atkins Avenue. Atkins Avenue.

JS: Can you tell us a few memories from when you were a child?

RJ: I went to Bangs Avenue School, and stuff like that. I remember a lot, with the kids that went to Bangs Avenue School; we had a lot of school. My favorite one was May Day. May Day was a special holiday for the older kids in school. I'm surprised they don't have May Day anymore. We used to dress up; we had the May poles, and we put the ribbons around there. All the kids were out in the yard at Bangs Avenue School. I remember that.

JS: I remember my mom talking about that, doing the May Day dance.

RJ: Yeah, it was like a holiday. We dressed up, and all the kids came out, and we got the May pole stick, and put the different color ribbons around, and everything.

JS: Sounds like fun. What was Springwood Avenue like when you were a kid?

RJ: When I was kid, Springwood had a lot of places – restaurant, stores. We had a store called Fisch's Department Store. Nahan's Shoe Store. Oh my god, before you hit Main Street going to the other part of town, we had a lot of stores. Grocery, Georgie's Grocery Store. We had grocery stores, restaurants. All the way down, was something.

JS: Do you remember any particular music that you enjoyed listening to, or places you liked to go?

RJ: I just liked to go out, especially went I got to be a teenager. I went to the Turf Club, it's called Leo's Turf Club. I could walk there, it was right there. They had all kinds of groups that come, the bands that come. It was just a nice nightclub. Then they had the Capitol – they had different bars. The Capitol, before you get to Big Bill's; that was Neptune. Then we had the Orchid Lounge in Asbury. They had all them. I enjoyed them all. Like a woman, it's kind of scary to walk on Springwood by yourself. We didn't have no problem with that. We could walk to the bars and stuff like that. Matter of fact, you could walk by yourself, nobody would bother you.

JS: That's nice.

RJ: That was the good old days; that was good old days.

JS: I remember Cliff Johnson talking about that, he said there was respect when you walked down the street, and everybody kind of helped each other.

RJ: Yes, they would help you. Yes. And they would protect if you were by yourself. They'd protect you, make sure you're going where you're going.

JS: So you said, Turf Club, Capitol, Big Bill's, Orchid Lounge...

RJ: There was the Two-Door. Have you heard of that? Remember that? The Two-Door?

CT: Yeah, I don't remember where it was, but I remember the name.

RJ: Yeah, the Two-Door. There were so many, I'm trying to think... The American Legion. It really was a lot, I'm trying to think of all of them.

JS: Elks Club?

RJ: Elks Club.

CT: Right behind the Turf.

RJ: Also, the Elks Club, we had a lot of parades. The Elks Club had a lot of parades. I remember going to the parade down Springwood Avenue. A lot of parades. One *[inaudible]*... we had a tall man, he was about seven-foot, marching like this. I had to go see him all the time! The clown. We had so much. I even remember – you've heard of Boston Way Village, right?

JS: Mm-hmm.

- RJ: I remember Boston Way Village before it was built. It was just flat ground. It was like circus.
- JS: What was it like?
- RJ: It was just flat. They had a field where the circus came in. The Village was over here, as you went across here and go to the circus. They had circus everything before they built it. I remember that. I was young, but I remember.
- JS: You went to D.C.; around what years were you in D.C.?
- RJ: That's when I got married. That's going back to the '60s.
- JS: So when you left for D.C. and then came back, did it feel similar on Springwood Avenue, or did it change?
- RJ: It didn't change a whole lot, in '60. Now, before the rioting. Something happened. I was not here. I had a boyfriend who lived in Georgia; I would divorce him. Me and my daughter would go to Georgia every year. The very year that the riots hit, guess what? I was in Georgia. I thought, "Oh my goodness, I got to go back to Asbury Park...!" I call home, because on television down there, it said "Asbury Park..." It was like everywhere, Asbury. I was trying to figure out what Asbury they're talking about. I did not know that it was New Jersey. Then I called my dad, my mom, make sure they're okay and everything. They said they're okay and stuff like that. I said, "I'll be home soon." I said, "Well, we're going to stay a few more days, because I don't want to come when," you know. So I wasn't there when the riots happened, but my dad, my mom, my sister, my brothers – they were here. They could tell you about it. I came after. I came home after the rioting was over with.
- JS: That must have been pretty shocking to come back to.
- RJ: Yes. Because the stores that you go to, it was all messed up. I felt so bad. How could you destroy the town that you live in?
- CT: By the time you got back, there were no stores. No bars.
- RJ: No, no. These were places that we went to. Our places. They tore it up.
- JS: Leading up to the riots, do you remember any changes around? Did the vibe change, or was it shock to you?
- RJ: It was shock, I really didn't know. Nobody was prepared for that, nobody. It hit us just like that. Nobody was prepared for that.

- JS: Whenever I heard people talk about the riots, I just can't imagine seeing that change so fast. I'm going to back up a little bit.
- RJ: Go ahead.
- JS: Your parents, are they from Asbury Park originally?
- RJ: My mother was from Georgia. My father's from South Carolina. They met in New Jersey and got married, and had seven kids. Five boys and two girls. My family's maiden name is Thompson. The Thompson is my family.
- JS: Do you know what brought them to New Jersey?
- RJ: No. I was trying to figure. My mother, there was nine sisters. My father, he's a chef cook. He was the man at... I'm trying to think of the place, the hotel... Molly Pitcher? I'm trying to think. It's in Red Bank.
- CT: Molly Pitcher's?
- RJ: Yeah. My father's a chef cook. My mother did raise me, she raised us how to raise the kids. I remember our brothers, they had a little job at a bowling alley. They set pins up. They set the pins up in the bowling alley. That was a job back then. I remember I used to be an elevator operator. Back then, you'd say, "What floor?" I'd be doing like this – "Second floor," that's what the operator did. That's what I did.
- CT: What year was that?
- RJ: Oh my god... I was a teenager.
- JS: Maybe '60?
- RJ: Yeah, something like that. I was an elevator operator.
- JS: And where was that?
- RJ: Right in Asbury, right downtown. Asbury... Mattison Avenue. Right, it was on Mattison Avenue. It was a place that people go to the office and stuff, of medicine. So, that's how I got my job. I catch myself when I'm on the elevator, I say, "What floor you want to go?" *[laughter]* I say, "Oh my goodness!" Because that's how I did. All I did level, second floor and level – on the floor, you know.
- CT: Was the building near Steinbeck's at all?

- RJ: There was a Steinbeck's.
- CT: No, but your building, where you were – was is near Steinbeck's?
- RJ: Yeah, across from Steinbeck's, yes.
- CT: Okay.
- JS: What was Asbury Park like then?
- RJ: It was fantastic to me, because we were beach kids. We could go to the water all the time. We could go to the water all the time, to the beach and everything; we were kids. Our time, we didn't go to the beach like at a certain time of day. There was still, like, a lot of people... my father parked in the evening. That's the time we went to the beach.
- JS: Any particular area on the beach?
- RJ: Around Fifth Avenue, something like that. How do I remember that, Fifth Avenue?! Yes, but that's how we got to the beach. We had a lot of movies, too. The movies – Savoy Movie, Mayfair, St. James, the Paramount. They're all the movies that were in Asbury.
- JS: So many!
- RJ: So many.
- CT: And the Lyric?
- RJ: And the Lyric! And the Lyric. You remember!
- CT: *[inaudible]*
- RJ: All the movies in Asbury Park. Savoy was the cheapest one, I think; the Savoy. You know, you only paid a quarter or fifty-cents to go to the movies. We had a lot of movies. I remember *Psycho*. You remember *Psycho*?
- CT: Mm-hmm.
- RJ: I remember when it came out, it was at the Paramount. They had like a body, a dummy, laying right in the thing, right in front of the movie! *[laughter]* *Psycho*, you know what I mean? I remember that, I was so scared!
- JS: I wouldn't forget that, either! What was the boardwalk like then?

- RJ: Oh my goodness, we had so many rides! At the time, Asbury Park beach was the place to go. There were busses from New York City – I mean, busses coming in to the Asbury Park beach. They had the Funhouse, To Hell and Back. I used to ride To Hell and Back, I was so nervous; I was really was scared on To Hell and Back. It was like, you're riding through the Funhouse, and the next minute you know, the man's jumping out of the casket, all that, the bats coming down towards you! Oh, it was so like... wow! We had a lot of people, I remember that. A lot, a lot of busses come to Asbury Park just to the beach.
- JS: During that time, people that were coming to the beach would come over to Springwood Avenue?
- RJ: Not really. Not really, no. I'm trying to think. The beach had its own certain crowd. You know? Because they had so much on the beach; the Merry-Go-Round. I remember that. It was nice. They loved the ocean. People come from New York and stuff; they do that now. They love the water. That's why people come down to Asbury Park.
- JS: In the different clubs we were talking about, do you remember any particular musicians or shows?
- RJ: Oh okay... I can't think of the man, he was a blind man that played the organ.
- JS: Is that Sammy Pugh?
- RJ: Yes, Sammy Pugh! I used to go see him at the Turf Club. Yes. They had different shows that came down there, artists that came there, and stuff like that.
- JS: How did you find out about them, just word of mouth?
- RJ: Word of mouth; people tell me. Then I got used to it, then I find out who's going to be there, you know. He was a regular.
- JS: He's come up a lot in these interviews.
- RJ: He was a regular.
- JS: If somebody was visiting, walking down Springwood Avenue today for the first time, what would you like them to know?
- RJ: I would tell that Asbury Park isn't the same as it used to be. You have to be careful. I wouldn't want them to walk around. The town, it's not 100% safe. I lived here, and I know, I don't want to be walking around by myself down there. I don't know what would happen; we have too many gangs and stuff that's affecting Asbury. It's affecting Neptune

too, but Asbury and Neptune are just like *this*, you know. I'd say, be careful. Safety is the best word I can say.

JS: What about any of the stories you were just sharing? Would you want them to know anything about how it used to be?

RJ: Yeah. How safe it was. We didn't have to worry about any of that. Like, me? Walking down the street, ten-o'clock at night, going to the bar? Nobody knows you. In fact, people said they protect you, if they see you, they look out for you.

JS: You went to Asbury Park High School?

RJ: I went to Asbury Park High School. Okay. Asbury Park High School, at my time, was one of the biggest schools. There was all these schools, let me see: Interlaken, Allenhurst, Wanamassa, all went to – we all went to Asbury Park High School. Our graduation class was like four, five hundred kids. We had so many kids in Asbury. When they started building other schools, that took away from Asbury.

JS: When you graduated, how big was the class?

CT: The population of the school back then, in '69... I was there from '64 to '69, was probably... I remember the figure 1,200. About 1,200 students, all classes and grades. Senior class; that'd be about right.

RJ: Yeah. It was big.

JS: Any stories from Asbury Park High School you'd like to share?

RJ: One time... I'm trying to think. I did the cooking class. We all had cooking class, boys had shop, stuff like that. We learned all this stuff, you know. Even Bangs Avenue, the teachers, they'd beat you in school! We don't have that. They'd say, "Put your hands out!" And they got a ruler! I'm not going to tell someone to put your hands out and you're going to hit me. Every time that ruler came out, I'd do like this; every time. I'd be doing like, I don't want nobody hitting me on my hands. They were real strict. The teacher was real strict.

JS: Were they mostly black teachers or white teachers?

RJ: Mostly black teachers. Mostly black teachers in Bangs Avenue.

CT: In Bangs Avenue.

RJ: Yeah, Bangs Avenue.

- CT: By the time you got to the high school, I think that might have changed a little bit. I think for me, I don't know about you. You saw more white teachers in the high school.
- RJ: Yeah, in the high school, yes.
- JS: Did most of your friends from high school stay in the area?
- RJ: Yes. I keep in touch with a couple of them that live here. One of my friends, she's retired. We call each other on our birthday. We went to school, grammar school together.
- JS: That's great to have those lifelong friends.
- RJ: Yeah.
- JS: And when the park [Springwood Park] went in, and this building [Asbury Park Senior Center], do you have anything you want to share about when all this changed here?
- RJ: I was happy, for the park, you know. In fact, last year, the park was really every Monday night. I be coming out here every Monday, got one of those chairs. They had nice... the place is packed.
- JS: It will be this summer too.
- RJ: I'm glad when they have the sign so we know who's coming. Yes, because they have the sign that lets you know who's coming, who is down there, bring your money. They got food trucks and everything. They have a lot of cops around, too, but that's okay – to keep the thing safe, you know what I mean? I was there when Ray Goodman Brown; I remember them, the Moments and stuff. I go back with Billy Brown and all that. I was thrilled to see them, you know! I remember the groups back then used to sing on the corners. Street corners. They always sang. I remember Leon... I can't think of it... Fisch's Department Store with Mr. Fashion. That's where they started at, Mr. Fashion.
- CT: Right. Carl Williams.
- RJ: Carl Williams started at Fisch's Department Store.
- JS: And then went on his own?
- RJ: Yeah, then went on his own. I remember that.
- JS: So you used to hear a lot music, just people on the street corners?
- RJ: Yeah. It was nice, because it was doo-wop. Back then, it was doo-wop, they get together and they be singing on the corners.

- JS: Sounds amazing. I'm picturing it. *[laughter]* Is there anything else, anything you want to share? I'm sure there's a lot; the things that jump out at you. Anything on Springwood Avenue.
- RJ: Oh my god. I just remember, you know... the grocery store. I remember my mom sending me to the grocery store, and everybody knows everybody in the store. I said, "I'll pay you next week." They'd take credit, you know. The welfare, they had state welfare on Springwood. County welfare, they deal with the county, you didn't have to go to the other welfare, because the county welfare's there to help you if you need anything. Kids need shoes and stuff, they'd take care of that. I remember all that stuff.
- JS: That was after the '70s?
- RJ: No, right before the '70s.
- JS: I've seen pictures, but after the '70s, there was not very many open businesses at all?
- RJ: No, I think they destroyed a lot of the stores. Once you destroy something, it's very hard to start it over again. They talk about starting over, but it's hard. When you destroy something, it's very hard. I guess they're doing the best they can.
- JS: It's very difficult. So much change. So did everybody just figure out... If you were going to hear music, you want to listen to music after 1970, where did you go?
- RJ: After 1970... We still had Big Bill's. I'm trying to think. The Orchid Lounge. I always loved to go to the Orchid Lounge. That was one of my hang-out places, the Orchid Lounge. Then Big Bill's, I liked Big Bill's too. They had people come in, played the band. Orchid Lounge had stars come in, so I like that.
- JS: Towards Neptune? Big Bill's was towards Neptune?
- RJ: Yeah, Neptune, yeah.
- CT: It was actually in Neptune.
- RJ: Hmm?
- CT: Big Bill's, as I remember it, was *in* Neptune. Springwood and Drummond.
- RJ: Yeah, Drummond Avenue and Springwood. We used to not go home. People don't go home after the bar. They go to the diner. There was a diner right here on Springwood... Atkins... There was a diner way up there we used to go to. That's where we would hang.

Everybody had to eat after the bar. Had to eat. We don't come home early. The bar closed, and now we have to go eat.

JS: So that diner... here's Springwood, and that's Atkins. We're right here. [points to map]

RJ: The diner, the one I went to, was Neptune.

JS: It was in Neptune.

RJ: Yeah, Neptune diner.

CT: We had an Asbury diner, too.

RJ: Yeah. Which one was that, now?

CT: If I'm not mistaken, it was Asbury and Main. Asbury Avenue and Main.

RJ: Okay. Everybody had their own pick of diners, wherever they wanted to go.

JS: Were they open 24 hours?

RJ: Yeah, some of them were open 24 hours. For me, go at 2:00 in the morning, go home!

CT: Do you remember Sunny Hunny's?

RJ: Yeah.

CT: It wasn't really a diner, but they served... Sunny Hunny's was on Springwood... where was it, I don't remember exactly. I could walk to it, but I don't remember the name of the street. [laughter] I say, "It's right here," but I don't remember. It was between what's now Memorial Drive and... Oh! It was down near Prospect Avenue. It was Prospect Avenue. [points on map]

RJ: Prospect Avenue.

CT: It was right around here. Right about here.

RJ: We had Moe's. He died, you know?

CT: Moe?

RJ: Moe. It's a "greasy spoon."

CT: Right, right! I didn't want to bring it up, I'll let you say it, but yeah! That's what we used to call it.

- RJ: We'd get all the grease, the best sauce had grease. We didn't care about...
- CT: If you were hungry...
- RJ: You're hungry!
- CT: ...look, you're going to Moe's, because he was open later than Sunny Hunny.
- RJ: Called Moe's. Matter of fact, the man that had owned it passed away, maybe last week. We got to go to Moe's, and they had the salt shakers, put it in the grease. Chicken in the grease! We didn't think about your cholesterol! [looks at map] This is nice, you've got everything. ...she's saying the same thing I'm saying. It was really nice. Then we had the Elks Parade. That's what I was telling you about, the Elks Parade. There would be everybody out there. The Elks had their own parade.
- CT: You had the Asbury Elks right behind the Turf. You had the Neptune Elks up the street.
- RJ: Yes.
- JS: It's a lot.
- RJ: It's a lot. I can remember all that.
- JS: And you still see it; you're seeing it still. All the changes. There's a lot of changes happening now.
- RJ: I know. Boston Way Village is gone, but they built... I said, "Wow! They did a lot of work!" They're building those places fast, too.
- JS: There's some, the churches... St. Stephen's – I know it wasn't originally there, but it's been there a long time – the churches; there's a few things that haven't changed.
- RJ: No, they haven't. Let me see. Mount Pisgah...
- CT: Mount Pisgah, right up the street, it's still the original building and in the original place.
- RJ: Yeah, Mount Pisgah.
- CT: It hasn't changed. Bethel A.M.E.... [inaudible] ...it's an old church, but it's a new location. [inaudible]... St. Stephen's A.M.E. Zion is not where it was, it was *here*. [inaudible] ...St. Peter Claver's is now no longer here.
- JS: Sisters Academy?

CT: Yeah, on Ridge and Springwood.

RJ: Is it Sisters Academy, right across the street?

CT: Right across the street from the school was the church, St. Peter Claver's, is what we would say was the "black Catholic church." Mt. Carmel was here. *[inaudible]*

RJ: St. Stephen – not St. Stephen. The Catholic church, St. Peter. Where the school was at, we went up there, and that's where the dances were for the teenagers. We'd go up there, pay a couple quarters, and we had dances up there.

CT: You remember the West Side Community Center, right? They had dances too.

RJ: Yes. I played basketball in West Side Community. I played basketball. I would think about it, I said, "I'm a forward guard on the basketball team." What happened was, we had to play McGuire Air Force, the ladies on there. We had to play them. They were some tough cookies. They came like this... I said, "Oh, Lord!" They hit my nerve real bad. They were ready to play. *[laughter]*

JS: The team was from the West Side Community Center?

RJ: Yes, yes. West Side Community Center. We did a lot of stuff there, too.

JS: Were you on the high school team, too?

RJ: No, this was an after-school thing. They asked me, did you want to play basketball? I never tried it. I said, "Yeah." Then, that's what I was. They were big like this! I said, "Oh no! Boy!"

JS: Were you in the band or the choir?

RJ: No, I wasn't in the band or choir, or stuff like that. Not in school. Bangs Avenue, when I graduated from eighth grade, I graduated from Asbury Park High School because at that time we didn't have a middle school. We had the eighth grade.

CT: Didn't you go to Bond Street School?

RJ: No, I didn't.

CT: You didn't? Okay.

JS: What did you just ask?

CT: I was asking about Bond Street School.

RJ: I never went to Bond Street School.

CT: At least for me, elementary school K-6 was Bangs Avenue School, or Bradley School. Seventh grade, for me, for one year, Bond Street. Where Thurgood Marshall is.

RJ: Okay.

CT: Eighth grade, for me – I don't know about you – I spent five years in high school because I started as an eighth grader, then ninth through twelfth for high school.

RJ: So once I graduated eighth grade at Asbury Park High School, because I had to go to Asbury Park [High School] because Bangs Avenue [School] didn't have an eighth grade.

JS: You said, your daughter... Does your daughter live in the area?

RJ: Yeah, my daughter lives in the area.

JS: Your siblings live all over?

RJ: My granddaughter... she's in Baltimore, Maryland. She's a supervisor in a hospital in Baltimore. I said, "How many people under you?" She said, "I got forty." She said, "And it's hard." She had to go all over to different places to study, but she's good. She went to Bangs Avenue. She went to Bangs Avenue; everybody went to Bangs Avenue. But she graduated from... let me see, New York. She graduated high school, her father's family lived there. She graduated from high school in New York City. Big class. She got two scholarships. One from Walker State in Maryland, and one from Lincoln in Pennsylvania; Lincoln University in Pennsylvania.

CT: That's where I went, for one year.

RJ: Yeah, she went three.

CT: There's two Lincoln Universities – one in Pennsylvania, one in Missouri.

RJ: Pennsylvania; she went to the one there. That's up there where all the people, with horse-and-buggies...

JS: Amish country.

RJ: Amish. She was, that school is way up there. Now she's a supervisor, in the food department. I said, "You only had two more years of college." Criminal Justice, that's what she went to school for, hoping she would finish that up. My mom, that's the only

child I got. Her mother's only child. I say, "You were just spoiled." Only child is spoiled. They don't have no other kids. I hope you was an only child!

CT: No... only for six years, then I had a brother, then I had a sister.

RJ: Alright. Doing good?

JS: Yes... Did you go to the Saturn? The club, the Saturn bar?

RJ: Hmm?

CT: The Saturn Lounge, it was called.

RJ: Where was the lounge?

CT: It was on Main.

RJ: There were too many on Main Street!

CT: That was in the late '60s, into the '70s.

JS: In the '70s. I don't think it's on there [the map]. I don't think it's there.

RJ: We did have the poolhall. My father used to have to pick up my brother out of the poolhall. He loved playing pool, right on Springwood Avenue, they had the poolhall. I remember that.

CT: Hammary's, and State Poolhall, right across the street.

RJ: But that's his life, he shoots pool and stuff like that. I remember my favorite, we played jump rope outside. We jumped rope; double-dutch. You've heard of double-dutch, right? Oh my goodness, we could jump rope. My favorite game was Jack in the Ball. Throw the jacks out, throw the ball up, I loved that game.

JS: Was there a place around... I was just looking some of those tickets, a gentleman came in. Outside, was there a park or playgrounds you went to, or mostly neighborhood?

RJ: Mostly neighborhood. We used to have *[inaudible]* and stuff, in the neighborhood. We had the neighborhood social room, where I lived over there. They had the social room, where you had different things -- parties and everything like that. We used to have a parade and stuff. I can remember a Halloween parade, we all dressed up, and this lady, she'd take charge and all the kids would be marching in the field with their clothes on! *[laughter]* We had a little parade.

JS: In the Village?

RJ: Yeah, we'd all march around the Village. It's funny, but it was fun, you know.

JS: It sounds like fun. Somebody that we spoke to recently, and I can't think who it was, was talking about performing... there were outdoor performances in the Village. Or was it... somebody was talking about it, at Boston Way, they were outdoor; playing music outdoors.

CT: Hmm.

JS: I feel like it was there. Because I was asking somebody where their first gig was.

CT: Oh yeah. See, I don't remember that; not outdoors.

JS: It was someone. I don't remember; we'll have to look back. I'm always interested where you were hearing music. If you had to go into the clubs; if you were too young to go in the clubs?

RJ: Well, I stopped going to the club. My cousins, they were older than I am, they used to take me in the club when I was 16. They didn't ask me for no identification, like they do now. They snuck me right in the bar with them. They knew I wasn't supposed to be there. They just take me with them. Yeah, older cousin! *[laughter]*

JS: That's what older cousins are for!

RJ: Oh my god. I remember that, taking me in the bar, started me out like that at 16 years old! *[laughter]* Oh goodness. I didn't have to buy no fake ID, like they do now, the fake ones. I didn't have to do that. They didn't worry about that.

JS: When you were down in D.C., what were you doing? I know you were married and went down, but you said you were working down there, too?

RJ: Oh yeah. My first time going to Pennsylvania Avenue, I wanted to get a job. So, when I went down to Pennsylvania, I didn't know where I was going. I was asking people, "Can you tell me where Pennsylvania Avenue is?" and stuff like that, you know. I finally found Pennsylvania Avenue, and I go in there. It's like, what you do when you go look for a job. They took my picture, for identification. Washington's funny. You're washing dishes and stuff, everybody had to be fingerprinted. I had a waitress job.

CT: This was in D.C.?

RJ: D.C., that's my first time ever having my fingerprints, was in D.C. Because everybody...

JS: No matter what you did.

RJ: Uh-huh. You know what I mean? Everybody. So, I got my little job down at... let me see... north-east Washington. It was nice. I didn't know nothing about waitressing. Everything's taxes on the food, I'm not used to having that here. Tax it. Everything, tax it. On the food in the restaurant. Only thing I really like, it was during the time when all the senators come out. They asked me to work that night. All the senators come out, they had a fashion show and everything, so they could buy for their wives and stuff. You know. They had fur coats, you could see the maudlin fur coats and stuff like that, for the senator. I was looking. It was great to me to see all the senators out like that!

JS: Sounds exciting.

RJ: Yes!

CT: Was it a government building you were working in?

RJ: Yeah, it was G Street.

CT: Yeah, but the restaurant you worked in, was it for the government?

RJ: No, it wasn't with the government. This was a world-famous restaurant. North Eats. G Street. I just love to go around the capitol and stuff like that. I love the blossoms. Oh, I love to go see the cherry blossoms and stuff like that!

JS: Kathleen was just in D.C. Were the blossoms, was it past the cherries when you were there? Did you see cherries...? Was it kind of past it?

KM: Yeah. Past it.

RJ: I started going – because I used to work at Jersey Shore. I worked with Jersey Shore six years. They used to have busses run to Washington, D.C. I'd take my little cousin – my little niece – I'd say, "Gotta be up at 5:00 in the morning, that's when the bus is leaving to go to D.C.!" She would love that! We went to Washington, D.C.

JS: For the day?

RJ: For the whole day. We'd saw the White House, she loved it. Oh my god. Then we went to Arlington Cemetery. I explained to her, I said, "This is where the soldiers and all of them," you know. They don't show it, it was so big, you know, Arlington Cemetery's so big. So I told somebody's husband's out there. She said, "Aunt Rose, can we go?" I said, "Do you see? There's two thousand of them!" I thought we would not be able to find it! Washington, I used to every year, D.C., you know. But I really didn't like Washington, because it was complicated to me.

- JS: You said that it was complicated, but what do you mean by that?
- RJ: Back at that time, when I first went to Washington, they didn't have the Metro train. They had D.C. Transit. My ex-husband was a bus driver. They didn't have; that's before Metro train. So the busses...
- JS: You had to take the busses?
- RJ: Yes.
- CT: Were there any trolleys in D.C. at that time?
- RJ: I think there were trolleys.
- CT: I know in Philly there were trolleys, but I don't know about D.C.
- RJ: D.C. was something. I get on the Metro... not on the Metro. I've been on the metro train, since I've been to D.C. If I want to go downtown D.C. or down you know, you get on the metro train and stuff like that. I haven't been back to D.C. in a while, I said it's time for me to go. Go visit. I want to go to the black museum; I want to go there. It's time for me to go pretty soon. They said they're very nice.
- JS: Yes, it's an amazing museum.
- RJ: Yes. Then sometimes I go to the crab fest in Baltimore. I'm not a seafood person, so why would I go to a crab fest, and all there's going to be is seafood? So I found out they have a little something else, if you're not a seafood eater. I couldn't understand why they had a big bucket of crab, and they throw it on the table? Then when you're finished, they take it back and bring another bucket. I went, Oh! I went like this. They enjoy, all the people eat crab. Guess what, they enjoy themselves!
- JS: It's a lot of work!
- RJ: Yeah.
- KM: It is a lot of work! I didn't realize that. We went crabbing, and Mike's family, they make a sauce. We call it gravy, but they make a sauce with the crabs in it. Then they're like, "Oh, then you just take the meat out." I'm like, "How do you do it?" She's like, "You just take the leg and go, and you just break it." And to get this much meat!
- JS: A little tiny, tiny bit of meat.
- KM: I was like, "No thanks, I'll just take the gravy!"

- RJ: My family's crabbers. My nephew, they both crabbers. They have these things with neck, they got all this. They go to Sea Girt or somewhere. My nephew, when he comes – he lives in Georgia now, but he comes up here. They go crabbing, that's the first time. Vincent Ecoute. *[inaudible]* Warren Ecoute, Perry Ecoute, they're local.
- CT: When you went to Georgia, where in Georgia did you go?
- RJ: Covington.
- CT: Is that close to Atlanta, is it close to Savannah, is it close to...
- RJ: Yeah. I'm trying to think that part, where my nephew lives. Decatur. You remember Decatur?
- CT: Yeah.
- JS: We just realized, we only have a few minutes left before the battery dies. We may have to wrap anyway.
- RJ: Yeah. We did good?
- JS: We did great. Anything else you want to share? We really appreciate you talking to us; we love hearing these stories. And we'll be back, so if other things come to your mind...
- RJ: Yes. I might have to write it down. Write it down, stuff like that.
- JS: Please do.
- RJ: People know a little more than I do. When I went to Bangs Avenue, you had a colored side and a white side.
- CT: Yes. I wasn't around then.
- RJ: You weren't there. The colored go in this door, the white go in this door. This is Bangs Avenue. It was allowed white and colored in the same school. My mother's so used to saying "colored," she don't say "black," she says "colored." *[laughter]*
- CT: I remember.
- RJ: You remember? They never say "black," they say "colored." That's how they were taught, you know? *[laughter]* But I remember that, we were all together. We had so many kids at school. So many kids.

- JS: During the day, when you were in school, did you see each other? The black half and the white half?
- RJ: They got together, yes. When this whole thing happened, I'm not around what happened with the black and white. I wasn't around, because I was born here. I took my daughter to Virginia one year, she was like this. That's before they changed the bathrooms over and stuff. They had the signs saying "Colored bathroom" and "White bathroom." I saw that. I did not know. My mother could tell me, because she was from Georgia. But I did not know. I went to Virginia, and that was my first time seeing that. We weren't raised like that.
- JS: It wasn't something you were so aware of, here.
- RJ: No, I wasn't aware, no. But my friends, we worked together, they could tell you because they came from down that way. They told us about the marches and stuff like that.
- JS: You still have family down in Georgia now?
- RJ: Yeah, my nephew. I got a lot of people in Georgia. My brother, he moved down there because, his daughter moved, her and her husband moved there, and she feels like she's going to take care of her father – because his wife died. So, she came right back and took her home to Georgia. He's down there by Augusta. Macon, down there by Macon, Georgia. You heard about that?
- CT: Yeah.
- RJ: Yeah, Macon, Georgia. Yeah, so I know a lot about Georgia. I have a lot of family down there. We're getting ready to have a family reunion in July, in Charlotte, North Carolina. Charlotte's real pretty. Oh, I love Charlotte, North Carolina. It's a decent place, you know. So we're going there. I've been Charleston, South Carolina, and stuff. I get around and stuff. I try to get around.
- JS: Do you come here all the time?
- RJ: Yeah, I come here about three, four days a week, I come here. Sometimes I come home, feeling like, "I'm tired, feel like I've been working." But I enjoy doing it. When you live by yourself, you have to get around and stuff. I live in downtown Asbury. You know Philips Seaview? That's where I live. I'm right there, two blocks from the beach. If I want to walk on the boardwalk, I just go out and walk on the boardwalk.
- CT: A couple blocks away from the library.
- RJ: Yeah, the library, that's a couple blocks. I haven't been to the Asbury library in a while.

JS: You'll have to go.

RJ: We done?

KM: No, come on over. We also deliver books too, so if for some reason you can't make it, we do home delivery.

RJ: I went there one time, somebody on the computer, whoever it was, helped me on the computer at the library. I went over there. I got a computer at home, but I'm not a computer person. I don't know why I have a computer. And I got a printer! I got a printer sitting right next to my computer.

JS: Don't use it.

RJ: Yeah, because I got my Facebook on my phone! I'm a Facebook person. I'm a Facebook person! I'll check my Facebook! Look, a whole lot of older people on Facebook, you know. Can't stop them from being on Facebook. Yeah. So that's how I find out what's going on. If you want to know, get on Facebook.

KM: We have a Facebook page, if you want to follow us. The library has a Facebook page.

RJ: Alright, I got to put it in. I got to put. Just say, "library" what?

KM: Asbury Park Library.

RJ: Asbury Park Library, okay. They got a page here, "Senior, Asbury Park Seniors." It's on Facebook. They got their own page on Facebook.

JS: That's how you keep up with everything these days.

RJ: Yeah. That's what I like to do, Facebook.

JS: We should wrap it up, so it doesn't crash on us. We just want to thank you.

KM: Thank you so much.

JS: If anything more comes to your mind, we'll be back on the 14th.

RJ: I did good?

JS: You did great!

RJ: You helped me a little bit!

CT: Yeah, just a little bit. I was trying to stay out of it!

JS: He's good like that.

[End of Interview]

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