

Interview With Neville Waters III

January 25, 2018

2729 P Street, NW. Washington DC

Samantha Herrell: Interviewer

Samantha Herrell: Hello. This is Samantha Herrell from the CAG Oral History Project. I am interviewing Mr. Neville Waters III. It is January 25th, 2018. We are in Mr. Waters' lovely living room on P Street, 2729P.

We're going to have a chat about Mr. Neville's incredible history and time in Georgetown.

Neville Waters III: I like Mr. Neville. I do.

Samantha: Do you?

Neville: I love that. Mr. Waters makes me feel like my father, because that's what he was.

Samantha: Understandable. I want to make sure I'm not forgetting any of the things we need to start off with. I guess, just to start off, when were you born? Where were you born? Begin with your youth!

Neville: It's February 22nd, 1957, the world changed because of my birth. I was born actually in Columbia Hospital for Women, which is now a condo complex. If you're familiar with, I think that's around 23rd Street where the Trader Joe's is located now. There is a condo complex that used to be a hospital.

My birth was not very far from where we are today. I grew up in this house pretty much until I left for college. Lived here, and even after college, came back for a while. Once my mother passed away, I moved back in. I've been back here for several years now. She passed away about three and a half years ago.

Samantha: This is your family home. That's incredible.

Neville: Absolutely. My grandfather actually purchased it around 1925. He passed away in 1980. When he purchased it, his two best friends purchased the homes on both sides. At that time, this block, I think, was just transitioning to becoming an all-black neighborhood.

At that point in time, it was obviously a significant, if not a majority of black people

living in this area. He was very proud of this home. He used to always say, talking to his lady, "Don't sell the house. Don't sell the house."

Samantha: [laughs]

Neville: I would always say, "Gramps, I'm not gonna sell the house." He's like, "Don't sell the house." As I said, he passed away in 1980. My mother and I used to joke, we said, "You know if your grandfather came back and saw what these houses are worth," because I think he paid like \$2,000-\$3,000 on the house, which is quite a lot of money in 1920s.

Samantha: Oh, I'm sure. [laughs]

Neville: We were like, "Yeah, if he came back and saw what they were selling these houses for, he might say, "OK, sell the house." [laughs]

Samantha: Yeah. You can sell it. It's fine.

Neville: [laughs] You can sell it now. We've made our money. We are good. We are good.

Samantha: [laughs] Fair. Oh, man. You grew up here, as a kid?

Neville: Yeah. I have fine memories. When I was a kid, and maybe because I was a kid, and I was more in tune with, but it seemed like there were more kids around in the neighborhood.

My best friend lived two doors away. We used to live in that alley in the back of our house which now seems so small, but at that time, it was our football field, our baseball field, our hide and seek. It was, in many ways, our own personal playgrounds.

He had two brothers. There was another family that had two children. There was a girl here. There was just a lot of kids, it seemed like. We weren't very far from Rose Park which was couple of blocks away. If I wasn't in the alley I was at Rose Park, playing. It was very active, very enjoyable.

I have to say, as I said my best friend lived two doors away, and I could remember, he must have been around 10 years old and in all honesty, they moved from the corner here which is 28th and P to the corner of 28th and O. OK? All over a block.

Samantha: OK. All over a block.

Neville: When he moved, we cried like he was moving to California. You would have thought...

Samantha: [laughs] I know, it's so hard.

Neville: But, for one, we were 10, now it meant we had to cross the street which, you know, our parents were already, they were a little shaky with that, anyway. But the fact

was that literally, we could walk to each other's house in our pajamas because we were right there. We were like, "Oh, it's going to be hard." We laugh about that to this day.

Samantha: That's so cute. I love that. What was Rose Park like?

Neville: Well, it was great. One of the things that my father used to always joke about was how at dinner time, my mother would just stand out on the front and call my name, and I would run from the park.

Samantha: [laughs]

Neville: So, I don't know if that's myth or what.

Samantha: Oh my gosh.

Neville: Again, I was always interested in sports and initially, I'd played tennis and baseball, football, basketball came around. There was the Walker sisters who were tennis players. Gosh, I'm drawing a blank on the younger sister's name, but she had two children, a boy and a girl. I used to take tennis lessons from her, and they were world renowned.

I mean, they were professional, and I think one of them, the older sister, had beaten Althea Gibson, and they'd played with a president, so it was a big deal to have them as your tennis teachers. That was really my first sport, was tennis.

But back then, it wasn't so much. Nowadays, you tend to get a sport and you stick with that one sport, whereas, then, it was by season. It was OK, well, it's now baseball season, we're going to play baseball. Football season, we're going to play football. I indulged in all those sports, and I remember, I think I started playing 12 and under. The leagues were by age. We had 12 and under, and 15 and under. I was playing 12 and under, probably starting at age 10 maybe, but then, we didn't have that many under 12s, so I think by the time I was 12, I was already playing on the 15 and under team.

By the time I was 15, these other playgrounds were like, "Wait a minute. This kid, how old is this kid? We've been playing for like, you know, forever. You've got to be 20, you know."

Samantha: [laughs] Yeah, this is not cool.

Neville: Yeah, but it is how I just started playing early, and I wasn't a big kid, so it wasn't like...because sometimes in Little League, you have the kids that just grow fast, and they may be the right age but they're already six feet, 180 pounds, and hair on their face.

Samantha: Yeah. [laughs]

Neville: It was fun. Rose Park, I think, was a great place for the socialization process. I mean you learn how to play with kids. It was really diverse. There were boys, girls, black, white. It was like the center of social activity. We played, like I said, ping pong, cards, shuffleboard, you name it. It would be the place I'd get up in the morning, go to the

park and be there till the sun came down.

Samantha: Oh, that's fabulous.

Neville: Yeah, and along with that, gosh, you'd...All these memories are starting to flood back...

Neville: I can remember when the 7-Eleven opened down the street.

Samantha: Oh my gosh.

Neville: The first day that it opened, they were giving away free Slurpees. Now, for a kid, first of all, it was like, "We got a 7-Eleven and they're giving those free Slurpees, with..."

[crosstalk]

Neville: "...the ice and sugar," all right?

Samantha: Yeah.

Neville: That was the first day. The next day, they were charging. Well, it was like any good dope deal. You've given me the free sample, got me hooked...

Samantha: I'm coming back.

Neville: ...and now, coming back and oh, it's going to cost me a nickel. "Mom! Mom! Can I have a nickel?"

Samantha: Oh, love that.

Neville: Yes, yes.

Samantha: It's so close to where you were playing? I mean, that was...

Neville: Oh, that was perfect. Perfect.

Samantha: That was perfect. Very strategic.

Neville: Yes, yes.

Samantha: They probably had people lining out the door.

Neville: Oh, I think every kid was running home to get a quarter because you weren't just getting one. [laughs]

Samantha: Oh, not at all, not at all.

Neville: I guess my palate has matured. I haven't had a Slurpee in a long time, so I have no idea how much they cost, but I can remember, like I said, they were a nickel, then they

were a dime, and I can remember going like to 25 cents and that seemed like, "Oh my gosh," you know.

Samantha: That's expensive.

Neville: Yeah, yes.

Samantha: Yeah, oh gosh. I bet they're still under two bucks.

Neville: I hope so.

Samantha: You should go grab one, treat yourself. Childhood memories.

[laughter]

Neville: OK, all right.

Samantha: Tell me more about the culture and the vibe of Georgetown, as a kid, and then as a teenager, too. What you saw changing there and what you experienced.

Neville: One of the things that I remember most was hearing about how when my father grew up here, he was born in the late 1928, I think, 1929. During his youth, the neighborhood was pretty much a black neighborhood.

Samantha: Got it.

Neville: When I was growing up in the '60s and '70s, we were in a transition period. I probably had as many white friends as I did black friends amongst the kids. Again, I don't know how much of this is myth, but I can remember playing with Caroline Kennedy down at the playground because the Kennedys had lived here up the street.

It was nice thing. It was a family neighborhood. It was a pretty close-knit neighborhood. If I needed to go to the doctor, Dr. Marshall was across the street. Dr. Dodson was right down the street. There was a very strong sense of community. I walked to school. At that time, it was Jackson up there across from Montrose Park.

Samantha: I was going to say, what schools did you go to?

Neville: There was 10 and 12 kids who were in sort of the general vicinity and we'd all walk to school together every day. The experience was very positive. The thing that I remember, too, it's one of these weird memories that is sort of both good and bad was prior to having a driver's license, if I was out or going up to Wisconsin Avenue and M Street and hanging out, or whatever.

I was probably early teens. I'd be coming home relatively late at night and it was no issue walking, but I can recall on several occasions being stopped by police officers. Honestly, I'm not sure if it was as much because I was a black kid as much as a single kid walking the street late at night. The other part is that they were actually police officers out walking the beats at that time.

Samantha: They weren't in their cars?

Neville: No, they weren't in their cars. On some level, it's nice to know that there were police officers in your neighborhood that were walking around and certainly there's probably, even today, there would probably be a desire for that level of security and safety, given this potential for street crime.

It was never an issue. They'd stop me, ask me. I'd say, "I live right here. I'm on my way home." Certainly, didn't have a driver's license, or anything like that. They're like, "OK, go home, be safe." It was really a very pleasant period.

Given the fact that I had some good friends, my friend who lived a couple of blocks away, I cried about him moving. Even though he lives in Seattle now, his father still lives in the house, and he comes here several times a year. We're still close like that. His younger brother still lives around the corner, I see him.

One of the things that I discovered, it was very nice when I moved back here full-time, was how it still felt like the neighborhood, and even though I hadn't lived here in a while, I certainly was here often enough, but it still felt like home.

Samantha: Yeah. This place feels like home. That's good. That's so good to hear. Did you have siblings?

Neville: No, I'm an only child, and very much embraced that. I certainly indulged in being spoiled.

Samantha: Yeah, who wouldn't?

Neville: One of the things I always told people was like, "Of course, I had my own bedroom." I don't have a brother or sister.

Do you think I'm going to be sleeping in my parents' room when I'm 13, 14, 15 years old? No. I had my own bedroom. We probably maybe had two TVs in the house, or whatever. I never had to fight over what to watch on TV because there was always one TV that nobody was watching. I could go turn it on and watch what I wanted to watch.

It was odd initially that I didn't understand when people would say that I was spoiled. It seemed like that's just the way it is, isn't it?

Samantha: Yeah. Absolutely.

Neville: I didn't really appreciate it until I had friends who had brothers and sisters, and I'd go over to their house and they're fighting to get into the bathroom, so-and-so wants to watch this, we can't watch that. Oftentimes, people would end up coming to my house because I was an only child.

Samantha: You have some space.

Neville: Yeah.

[laughter]

Neville: I had free reign. That was great. I don't think I was spoiled rotten, if you will. I like to think that I turned out OK. I do remember when I got to college and finally had a roommate. I remember him borrowing, I don't know, maybe a pair of pants or a shirt one time, and I was like, "Whoa! What are you doing? That's mine." You have to let go of some of that.

Samantha: Absolutely. It's hard to do.

Neville: Learn to share a little bit. I very much enjoy being on my own, sort of amusing myself. A friend of mine, we were laughing earlier today actually about how we used to play Monopoly and play all four hands.

Of course, I did that. I would sometimes be upset that other people would want to play. I used to have a game. It was called Strat-O-Matic Baseball. It was sort of a precursor to computerized analytics and all that.

Basically, it was these cards. I think there was some computer algorithm, and you played with dice, and you would roll the dice. Let's say, it was a six and a three, and you would look on the person's card like the sixth row, the third column, something like that and it would say hit, Out, strikeout, whatever. That's how you would play the game.

You would have this stack really of computer cards for each player. You would make your line up. You play the dice. I was into this game to the point where I had stacks. I would keep a whole season.

Samantha: That's great.

Neville: At night, I remember my bedtime was supposed to be nine o'clock, but oftentimes, again, I had my own room. I'd be in my room and the lights would be out. I'd get the flash light and it was a board game. There was a board and I'd be in there.

Samantha: Playing the game?

Neville: I'd play my Strat-O-Matic. I was like, "I got a whole season to play. I got to get three games in tonight. It's on the schedule." As a kid, I remember I actually even had a newspaper. I used to write like a little four-page newspaper and draw pictures. Again, I don't know if this is myth or not, but I was told that part of the way I learned to read was because we used to get the "Washington Post" delivered.

Actually, my grandfather used to also deliver the "Washington Star" which was that afternoon newspaper. Newspapers were always around the house. I was into sports, so they were like, "OK. Well, here's the sports section."

That's how I learned to read. Shirley Povich was the columnist for the Washington Post. That was, for me, a major indulgence, the sports section in the Post.

Samantha: To be able to read?

Neville: To be able to read. Yeah.

Samantha: Would you wait to get it after your parents or would they...

Neville: I would say my father would have it first. I would defer to my father, but if, for whatever reason, I got to the paper first, I would take the sports section.

Samantha: Did your grandfather move out and then your father moved in or did he live here as well?

Neville: I should and I'm glad you mentioned that. It was a multi-generational home. One of the nice side benefits of having a big home is that all the family can live here. My mother and father were on the third floor of this house. At that time, there was the master bedroom, and the bathroom, and then there was a kitchen.

Samantha: On the third floor? That's great.

Neville: Yeah, on the third floor there was kitchen. Taking a step back when my father and his sister were born, his sister, my aunt, was told that you cannot leave until you get married. This is very traditional.

As part of the incentive for her to stay was that they put a kitchen on the third floor so she could have her own space. That's why that was there. She got married though pretty quickly. She was the more rebellious of the two, between my father and her. She had actually got married and moved out. The kitchen had been installed. After my father and mother got married, they moved here.

I think it was great, although I would say that in retrospect I suspect that both my mother and father probably would have preferred having their own house, if you will. One of the things I think is probably true is that there really can only be one head of the house, and particularly when it comes from, excuse me, the woman's perspective.

I think it was always my grandmother's house. My mother felt like she was a guest. Anyway, my mother and father were on the third floor, had that space. It was theirs. My grandparents were in the front bedroom of this house which is now my bedroom. Then I was in the middle bedroom on the second floor, and then my grandfather had a study in the back of the second floor.

The first floor down here, we had the nice living room. We had the formal dining room and had what was then my grandmother's kitchen. The basement was the center of social activities. People had parties. My parents would have parties. I had parties when they went out of the town.

Samantha: [laughs]

Neville: That's a little later in life. That was the layout here. It was nice. It's funny even though I'm an only child, I currently have some tenants living here with me that have

recreated the family atmosphere. It's nice to have a big house, but I think if I were here by myself, it might be lonely. Even though I was an only child, I grew up in a house with a lot of people.

It was awesome. Then over the years, as things evolved, I have, at some point in time, lived everywhere. As a teenager, I too wanted to have my own space so I moved down to the basement, more or less lived in the basement.

Samantha: That became your space?

Neville: Yeah, that was my space. Then when I moved back after college, by that point, my grandparents had passed away so I moved into their room, the front bedroom on the second floor. Eventually, when I moved out, my parents were having to climb all the way up here to the third floor.

[laughter]

Samantha: It's so much.

Neville: It's a little much. They moved down into what had been my room and my grandparent's room, that front bedroom. When I moved back, after I got divorced, I moved up to the third floor where they had been. At some point in time...

Samantha: You've been to every part of the home.

Neville: Yes.

Samantha: I love that.

Neville: My next project really, I'd like to fix the basement up a little bit more. Even though it's finished, the ceiling is low. It's only like a little over six feet. It's funny to think, like I said, there used to parties and dances.

People would go down on the basement and you'd always have to say, "Hey, watch your head. Watch it."

Samantha: [laughs]

Neville: There were people who were over six-feet tall. It was a little difficult for them. We had great times. Great times.

Samantha: I love that. I'm curious to hear more about that. What it was, the social atmosphere and the community atmosphere? Did you have an open door? Did your parents have a lot of friends in the neighborhood?

Did you host a lot? I also read a little bit about how it seems like your father was a local legend. Each one of you have been it seems! Tell me more about that.

Neville: Sure. It's funny. One of my best memories was the surprise birthday party we

threw for my father. What I remember most was they didn't tell me. They were like I couldn't keep a secret. The night of the party, I'm like, "What's going on around here?"

They had gotten him out of the house, so he was gone. They're decorating, my mother's getting dressed, like people are coming over. I'm like, "OK." My mother finally says, "Yeah, we're throwing a surprise party for your father." I remember when he came in literally, he was speechless. I think he didn't speak for almost an hour.

He was just stunned that they had, one, fooled him, and that all these people were here for him. I always suspected that probably was a particular milestone. I don't remember exactly which birthday it was. Particularly, my parents both grew up here, in this neighborhood. Many of their friends were here but many of them moved out over the years, had relocated for whatever reason.

They would come back. Oftentimes, my grandmother used to have club meetings here. They would play Bridge. I'm like sitting in this room. I'd come home from school and they'd have two card tables set up. They would be serious with their Bridge. I remember they used to have these little containers of mints or nuts that they would sit on the table.

It was almost a formal thing. I still remember that they would be dressed. It was a big deal. My grandmother was very involved with the church, Epiphany Church, Catholic Church, around the corner. I think she was among one of the founders of the church. There would be church meetings or activities here. I actually was an altar boy there.

Samantha: Were you?

Neville: Yeah. The fact is that Holy Trinity was actually a segregated church. While it allowed blacks and whites to come, there was a black section. My grandmother was among several people who helped them found the Epiphany Church over here that did not segregate in that manner. It also was obviously a little more convenient than Holy Trinity which is up closer to the university.

Samantha: Absolutely. Was it mostly a black church?

Neville: I don't really remember. I would say probably it was predominantly, but it was not founded as a black church per se. It was more a matter of a church that was not segregated. I think that was the bigger issue.

Samantha: Oh, that's wonderful. Then did you go there? Continue to go there with your parents?

Neville: Oh, yes.

Samantha: That's great.

Neville: I'll even face up that the first time I ever had a hangover was a Saturday night. I remember the next day I had to go church.

I remember sitting in the back of the church. I was praying. I was like, "Please, help me.

If I feel better, I'll never drink again. Please, please God. Let me get over this hangover." I probably had a couple of more hangovers.

[laughter]

[crosstalk]

Neville: He got me through that day. He did get me through that day.

Samantha: That's awesome.

[laughter]

Samantha: The church was a good source of community life?

Neville: Yes. I remember it they used to go and set the Holiday Bazaar. As I said, I served on the altar there. It was a big deal to do that. I remember though that there were not enough kids for the Catechism Class where you learn about preparing for Confirmation, so I have to, "Ah."

Samantha: I'm with you.

Neville: I had to walk over to Saint Stephen's Church over M Street, over by where Columbia Hospital for Women was, where I was born. That's where I had to go to take my classes.

Samantha: You mentioned something about Duke Ellington because you said you didn't end up going there for school. Where did you go?

Neville: There was actually no Duke Ellington, that's how long ago, it was actually Western at that time.

Samantha: Western High School?

Neville: Yes.

Samantha: It was a school for the arts or...?

Neville: No, this was a public school for this neighborhood.

Samantha: That's where you went?

Neville: That's where I would have gone, [laughs] but when I was grade school and my sixth, it may have been my fifth-grade teacher. No, it was the fifth-grade teacher. I remember her saying to my parents, and this is the honest-to-goodness truth.

In sixth grade the teacher had her desk, and on either side of her desk she had a desk for students. On one side of her was my boy Patrick, who was clearly the worst behaved student in the class.

Samantha: Of course. [laughs]

Neville: On the other side it was me, because as she said to my parents, she's like, "He's a little too smart. He finishes his work and then he becomes a major distraction. I can't give him enough work to keep him busy, and it's like you don't want schoolwork to be a penalty, I have to have him sit by me so he doesn't distract the other kids."

"I really think that he should go to a private school somewhere where he's going to be a little more academically challenged." My parents talked to me about going to Sidwell Friends. At the time, all my friends were headed to Gordon Junior High and then Western High School.

I'm not even sure what Gordon is now, but it's the school that's right across the Safeway. I don't even know if it's a school now. I remember at one time it became Edward Rosario. I know they have a flea market in their parking lot these days.

[crosstalk]

Neville: That was Gordon Junior High, which is where I would have gone and Western High School. That's where all my friends were going and I was like, "You know, I don't really know about this Sidwell Friends thing." They said, "Look, just go take the test, go see the campus." I remember going up there and it was like a whole new world, because it felt like I was going to college.

There were green fields, there were multiple buildings on the campus. There was the middle school, there was the gym, there was a library. It was like, "Oh, my gosh. What is this?" I got accepted and went there. It was also a great experience. The difference at that point for me was Sidwell was a predominantly white school.

I'd been going to public school where I have been with...predominantly black kids. Now, it was a different cultural mix, and frankly, a different socioeconomic mix. I think part of this is the reason why I'm still connected with Sidwell is because of the general underlying philosophy of the Quaker education, and the way they approached learning and teaching.

Each week we would have what's called a meeting for worship. In fact it's called a silent meeting for worship. You didn't actually have to be quiet the whole time. Part of the thing is to encourage you to stand up and share your feelings or your thoughts. It was a wonderful experience for me and I developed some friendships to this day that are still very strong.

I've been involved with the school. I've been on the board there, served on the alumni association. I still work on committees. Many people are always surprised because many of them do it, because their kids are there, or they want to get their kids there. I don't have kids, so, "Why are you doing this?"

I do it because I really have that level of love and care for that school and the institution and what it did for me. I don't, under any means -- I can't find the words I'm looking for

-- but that was one of the most important decisions in my life that my parents guided me to.

The impact that going there had for the rest of my life, I didn't know at the time, but in retrospect when I can look back and see how prepared I was to not only deal with college, but deal with life, understand how to study, manage problems, it was a wonderful experience for me. I think in many ways it was a real turning point.

Samantha: That's incredible. Did you feel that separation or distancing from your friends and the neighborhood?

[crosstalk]

Neville: Yes. That's a great, great insight. That was the only negative about it. One, all my friends went to Gordon and Western. I was immediately dubbed private-school kid.

Samantha: Yeah. [laughs]

Neville: Secondly, I was academically challenged, there was a lot of homework, I wasn't able to hang out at the playground like I used to. From a social standpoint, now if a kid from Sidwell was going to have a party, I was going to the party with them.

It did pull me apart from the neighborhood. As a matter of fact, my best friend who lived here went to Saint Alban's, which was, technically, our big rival. We were friends, but now we went to these two different schools. We sort of were like, "I have to hate you now, because...even though you are my friend."

In some ways that is the sad byproduct. You probably see it in other ways, not specific to me but other people, if you move away from you neighborhood.

Samantha: It's a part of life. Life as a teenager in Georgetown, what did that look like?

Neville: [laughs]

Samantha: From your pastimes, businesses that you'd go to, that kind of thing.

Neville: It's funny you mention, the first thing it came to mind was Commander Salamander. It's interesting how to describe Commander Salamander, it sold pop culture, T-shirts. It wasn't like Gap, it was more like a hippie place.

Samantha: I've read a little bit about this gem, but tell me more.

Neville: It had bangles, they probably had paraphernalia, there was black lights. It was very cool, eclectic, like I said, the whole Commander Salamander. There was a Salamander logo there, and clearly targeted to young people. They probably sold jeans, I can't even imagine that they sold suits or anything like that.

[crosstalk]

Samantha: [laughs]

Neville: The other place, there was The Little Tavern. There were two Little Taverns. One was at the corner of Wisconsin and -- is that Dumbarton or is that Anne? -- it's now where...What is that restaurant on the corner? It's across from Billy Martin's...Paolo's!

Neville: That's where The Little Tavern was, that was one of them. The other one was up one M Street going towards Key Bridge. Is there like a Chop't or some salad...?

Samantha: Sweet Green.

Neville: Yes. The Little Tavern used to sell 25¢ hamburgers, and they were little patties, and the buns were nice and soft, and they had little onions and pickles, and ketchup on them. Their whole slogan was, "Buy 'em by the bag."

Samantha: "Buy 'em by the bag." Hot. [laughs]

Neville: I think it was like 25¢ and probably I think five for a dollar.

Samantha: What a dream.

Neville: Let me tell you, The Little Tavern was all that. There was a woman who used to work behind the counter, I wish I could remember her name. She used to have the hairnet over, and she was your typical...at a diner, "All right honey, what you want? What you want?" and they were back there on the grill, and they'll be flipping the burgers.

She would always watch out for the kids, because again, it was an informal line of people, at the takeout counter. You'd have to yell out your order, "Three burgers." "Can I get two?" "Me, one." so if you weren't really aggressive, sometimes, you wouldn't get waited on.

[crosstalk]

Neville: Kids, let's face it, we're not quite as assertive when adults were around there, so she was, "What you want honey? I got you." The Little Tavern was all that.

Samantha: Sounds incredible. Was it drinks too, or mostly food?

Neville: No alcohol. Back then I was probably more like a grape-soda guy.

[crosstalk]

Neville: I was a big root beer fan.

Samantha: Root beer is great. What about with the place where there is now Sweet Green?

Neville: ...and Cherry Coke.

[crosstalk]

Neville: That was also at Little Tavern. There was actually two, and I'm not sure why we would ever go up to the other one, because that was obviously further. There were occasions we would go to that one. It always felt like you were cheating, because it's still Georgetown but it was like, "That's not really our Little Tavern."

Samantha: You got your Little Tavern.

[laughter]

Samantha: What about the dating scene? Because you've mentioned that you could feel cool as a 15-year-old going down to Georgetown's campus and talking to college girls...

[crosstalk]

Samantha: What was that like in high school and college?

Neville: Yeah, girls. I was a good kid, never indulged in any nefarious activity. [laughs] Not. I tell people to this day, I did good with the Visi girls.

Samantha: The Visi girls, the Georgetown Visitation girls?

Neville: Georgetown Visitation.

Samantha: OK. [laughs] That's awesome.

Neville: Yes ma'am.

Samantha: Private Catholic School?

Neville: Yes.

Samantha: OK, awesome. Those were your girls?

Neville: Those Catholic schoolgirl outfits, still, to this day it's a shame, what that image, but... [laughs]

Samantha: Understandable.

Neville: Are we going to cut that part?

Samantha: I'll leave that to the person that's transcribing this.

[laughter]

Neville: When I was old enough to walk across Wisconsin Avenue and go on that side, I would go up to Georgetown's campus, largely because I like to play basketball and they had outdoor courts.

Samantha: You could go there, even though you weren't a student?

Neville: Yeah.

Samantha: Oh, nice.

Neville: I wanted to play against better, older kids, so that was a change to go up on their campus and play with those guys. It was also you're 14, 15, 16 years old, and even a college freshman is an "older woman" to you at that point, so just being able to speak to one.

Samantha: Yeah. [laughs]

Neville: At 16 you're not that far away from 18, and you could easily...

Samantha: You're smooth.

Neville: "Yeah, I'm a freshman. I live off-campus."

[crosstalk]

Neville: Like, "Wow, you're a freshman? You live off-campus?" I don't recall there being any particular female at Georgetown, but I do remember a couple of young ladies at Visitation.

Samantha: Love it.

Neville: I still call it Visi. [laughs]

Samantha: You should continue calling it that.

Neville: They used to have dances there. We would go to the dances there.

Samantha: Did a lot of your friends in Georgetown aspire to go to Georgetown University, because it was so close? Did you have friends? You came back for your MBA?

Neville: There was a part of me that always wanted to go to Georgetown, having grown up in Georgetown, rooting for Georgetown. It was a natural for me.

Samantha: I was wondering, how connected were you to the university?

Neville: One of my best friends used to live around in, it was Popular Alley at the time. He went to Georgetown. The other day we went to the Georgetown basketball game together.

Samantha: Did you love it?

Neville: In some ways, many people, they wanted to get away. They wanted to have a chance to branch out. Even me, when it came time to initially go to undergrad I chose to

go Springfield College in Massachusetts. It was only after I had finished, and had come back and reestablished myself in Washington.

Because I didn't go right back to get my MBA, I finished Springfield like 10 years prior. I was probably on the older end of grad students at that point in time. The business school was relatively new. I like to joke they have enhanced the value of my MBA, because now the school is universally recognized as a top 20 program. When I was there, we were working out of the roof of the Old North Bell Tower.

We were sharing the computer lab with the undergrads. It was not nearly a nice a facility as they have now. It's funny to hear students complaining about facilities. It's like, "Yo, you don't even know what it was like 20 years ago, trust me." That was in many ways a dream fulfilled, to be able to actually walk on campus as a student, to walk when I graduated and received the degree.

I know my folks are real proud of that moment. Georgetown has always resonated, just the name, Georgetown. When people would say it, whatever the connotation was it was instantly recognizable. There was even a level of respect that, you're Georgetown. That implied something.

I was always very proud, and even now I can recall, as an adult, when my parents used to have Black Georgetown Reunions and people who had lived here, and grown up, and have moved away would come back for these dinner parties. All of them would talk about how proud they were, and how close-knit they were.

The bridge being the dividing line, it was like, "Yeah, kids couldn't come across the bridge and talk to our girls, in our neighborhood." I remember on one occasion -- this is after my father passed away -- I was at the Black Georgetown Reunion.

I came in and this guy came up he said, "Man, you scared the mess out of me, because I know your father's dead and you walked through the door and you walk like him, you look like him. I swore it was his ghost."

[laughter]

Neville: It was like, "You scared..." It's funny, because I don't think -- maybe at that point certainly -- I was not really self-aware how similar I looked, acted, walked like my father until people would tell me. They would make that observation. They would say, "You walk just like him." Not being self-aware of that, but that was certainly something that I took a great deal of pride in.

The fact is that I was Neville the III, so, in many ways, for me that was a legacy to uphold. I didn't want to let down the other Nevilles. A funny thing, in our house here if you said Neville nobody would answer, because it was always like, "Which one? I don't know about that, let me lay low."

We each had our own identity. I was Little Neville, my father was Big Neville, and my

grandfather was Mr. Waters. Even to this day, when I hear Mr. Waters, my immediate thought is, "My grandfather." I've never really felt like I was Mr. Waters. The downside, if you will, I still have family members or friends that refer to me as Little Neville.

Samantha: Little Neville. [laughs] That's sweet.

Neville: "I know you know me. I may be the only one left, but I know."

Samantha: Have the Black Georgetown reunions continued, or how have you preserved some of their legacy, and some of that work?

Neville: Those were really organized, I would say, by the generation before me, more so from, as I said, when my mother and father were growing up, this was a predominately black neighborhood. For them, the idea of a reunion had an almost spiritual quality to it.

Samantha: It was a special heritage.

Neville: My generation, being a bit more diverse and maybe not quite as close knit culturally, in that way, that wasn't a facet, but you asked this. Frankly, now I'm going to seek out some of the committee members. Part of the thing, unfortunately, just like my mother and father have just now passed on, many of that generation are no longer with us.

Obviously, that's sad. That's the cycle of life, but it is sad to think about that they're gone. In many ways, the legacy of what they had endures through things like this and hopefully other examples. It has changed. Speaking of that, another project that I've become involved with is there's a cemetery around the corner.

Samantha: Mount Zion!

Neville: The Mount Zion Female Union Band Society Cemetery, which I now serve as the president of the foundation. As a kid, it was very overgrown. It was dark. I can remember my grandfather taking me up there because he's like, "Look. You have family here. You need to see this."

It was scary for being a kid. First of all, it's a cemetery!

Samantha: Yeah, any cemetery is scary as a kid. Oh my gosh.

Neville: Right, right. You're walking and there are branches and bushes, and things falling on you. For the longest time, those things imprint on your as a kid. Even once I was grown, I would go by the cemetery and I'd tense up thinking about it, but we have been pleased over the last couple of years with some of the efforts.

As I said we organized this foundation. We've recently gotten an influx of some grant money. We've brought on some people to help us with doing some survey work, some geo-something testing to find where the bodies are. We'd like to try to restore as much of the headstones that were moved. At one point, there was a plan to sell the property to some developers.

My father stepped in and got a court order to designate that as a historic preservation area. The interesting thing is, at that time, my grandmother who was a part of the Female Union Band Society, was among those who were interested in selling.

Part of the thing was it had fallen into some, as I say, disrepair. There were no longer burials allowed there. Many of the Mt. Zion members and Female Union Band Society members had passed so those who were surviving were like, "OK, you know, let's take the money and be done with it."

My father along with another gentleman, Vince DeForest who was with the Afro-American Bicentennial Committee, they fought the sale so that pitted my father against his mother. At the resolution, I think my grandmother was very pleased. The fact of the matter was that the argument that my father and Mr. DeForest were putting forth made sense. This is a historic area and these grounds should be preserved.

That's where we are at this point. I think we've gotten to a point where we've been able to at least maintain its integrity. It's not as nice as it will be but it's much nicer than it was and I think we are on a path to restoring, maintaining and extending the legacy.

We really hope to be able to encourage young people to participate, evolve and learn about the history, not only of the cemetery but of Georgetown, of the contributions of black people to Georgetown. On the cemetery grounds, there's a crypt that, my understanding, was used as part of the Underground Railroad to hide slaves as they were making their way up. It's an important place.

Samantha: It's really cool that you're involved in preserving that. That's awesome.

Neville: Thank you. Thank you.

Samantha: You said you came back after college in Massachusetts.

Neville: Yes.

Samantha: How integral was this place, or how was Georgetown a part of helping you flourish after college with your career and with the people you've met? Did you live somewhere else in DC or was it really just centered here in Georgetown?

Neville: I think this has always felt like home, and I always was comfortable with the idea of being able to come home. It didn't bother me that I was 20-something and living with my parents, so that helped to provide some foundation and some level of support.

Particularly when you're starting out in a career, obviously having a place to live that's affordable when you're not making any money is important. Not to mention my mom could still make a bacon, lettuce, and tomato sandwich better than anybody. I always knew I could get something to eat, so in that regard it was an important station or foundation.

I was always pleased that I had a place to come to, and I knew I was blessed and

fortunate with that opportunity. My mother died about 20 years after my father. She lived to be pretty much on her own after he passed away.

Like I said, I would come by, but I didn't really live here full time until after she passed away. An interesting fact about this house, my father was born and died in the same room.

Samantha: What?

Neville: Yes.

Samantha: That's remarkable. Oh, my gosh.

Neville: Yeah, and that's actually the room that is now my master bedroom, so there's a spiritual connection from the family.

Samantha: Absolutely. I love that.

Neville: It's an interesting aspect. When my father passed away, he had cancer, and it was clear he was transitioning. He was here and at that point I was married and I was living up near Walter Reed, but I used to come over here still to Georgetown. I liked to go up to Yates. I'd work out, I'd play ball.

Still, my life was around here, and I can remember telling my wife and my mother, "I'm going to stay over here on P Street tonight" ...I wanted to be around my father, and that happened to be the night that he died.

That's obviously a sad occasion to lose your parent, but I was very happy that I was here. It was just him, me, and my mother at that moment. Again, sort of feeling the spirit of that whole period. I'm very grateful for that.

Samantha: Yeah, really sacred memories. That's awesome.

Neville: Yeah.

Samantha: What are some of your reflections both on moments in history that occurred in DC, in Georgetown? Do you have specific memories tied to historical events? I would also love to hear any of your reflections on Georgetown as it is, as a resident today, what you think about it.

Neville: I remember when Martin Luther King was assassinated in 1968. What I remember about that was there was a basketball tournament that weekend. I was a little kid. There was a basketball tournament that weekend and James Brown, who is now the host on CBS NFL Football was in high school. He was a friend of ours.

My father, James Brown, and myself went to this basketball tournament. We were taking James to the basketball tournament, so we left. If I remember correctly, Martin Luther King may have been assassinated on a Thursday. That Friday morning, we were leaving. There had already been some activity that evening.

Samantha: Downtown?

Neville: Downtown. As we were leaving, there were National Guard troops coming back into town. During that weekend, we're watching news reports and we're seeing riots and looting. I can remember my father calling my mother because at that time, her sister lived near where some of the rioting was going on.

I believe, again, some of this may be myth, there may be some truth in the myth. I seem to recall my father saying to my mother, "You did what?" "You took a..." If I understand it, I think there had probably been a liquor store that people had broke the window and they were stealing stuff. I think my mother took a bottle of something. She and her sister were like, hey, you know...

Samantha: Let's drink to...

Neville: Yeah. When we came back Sunday, there was a curfew and the city was closed, which is hard to imagine nowadays. There were only so many ways in and out the city, and they were blocked. James Brown lived on Eastern Avenue, which was right on the edge of the city. That was as close as we could get until the morning.

Now my father used to always insist, when I would travel and go with him -- because we used to go to a lot of basketball tournaments, my father was very involved in that -- was that I needed to dress. By dress, I'm a little kid, so that meant a turtleneck and a sport jacket. I would always have a sport jacket.

When we got back Sunday evening, Monday morning was school. All I had was...

Samantha: You had your very nice dress clothes.

Neville: Yes, yes, yes. When I went to school, who wears a sport jacket?

Samantha: Wear that to go to class, yeah.

Neville: I come to school like that and the kids were like, "Oh, you were out stealing clothes. You got a new outfit."

Samantha: Oh my gosh, I didn't even think about that.

Neville: Yes. I don't remember exactly what the protest was, but when I was in high school, I can't even remember what the issue was. I don't know if it was necessarily a war or something they were protesting against government, but it was some sort of protest. They wanted to shut down the city.

There were attempt to prevent traffic from moving around. People were in the streets. They had thrown stuff. I remember, I'm pretty sure that the bus couldn't run because the streets were blocked. I literally walked all the way up Wisconsin Avenue to go to school that day.

It didn't feel like a dangerous riot. It was sort of like they weren't really trying to break

anything, but they were trying to disrupt. They were pretty successful, I think, in disrupting. I'm going to put some onus on you to do some research and remind me or tell me what that was.

I feel like I was a sophomore, junior, it was some time in the early to mid '70s. It might have even been called A Day of Rage, for some reason.

[May 3, 1971, "Some 25,000 young people set out to do something brash and extraordinary: disrupt the basic functioning of the federal government through nonviolent action. They called themselves the Mayday Tribe, and their slogan was as succinct as it was ambitious: "If the government won't stop the war, we'll stop the government." The slogan was of course hyperbolic— even if Washington, DC were completely paralyzed by protest for a day or week or a month, that would not halt the collection of taxes, the delivery of mail, the dropping of bombs, or countless other government functions—but that made it no less electrifying as a rallying cry, and no less alarming to the Nixon administration (Nixon's White House chief of staff, H.R. Haldeman, called it "potentially a real threat"). An elaborate tactical manual distributed in advance detailed twenty-one key bridges and traffic circles for protesters to block nonviolently, with stalled vehicles, improvised barricades, or their bodies. The immediate goal was to snarl traffic so completely that government employees could not get to their jobs. The larger objective was "to create the spectre of social chaos while maintaining the support or at least toleration of the broad masses of American people." <https://longreads.com/2017/01/20/in-1971-the-people-didnt-just-march-on-washington-they-shut-it-down/>]

Samantha: I wonder if it was about Vietnam, maybe?

Neville: It could've been a Vietnam thing. As I said, I don't remember the cause. I know I wasn't partaking in the protest, but I remember it having an impact in that way. It did cause some disruption. Other than those particular things, I don't really remember the social unrest or upheaval really impacting this neighborhood as much.

I think you also were asking how, now, being back in the environment, the differences or how it is in some ways...

Samantha: Yeah. I'm sure Georgetown's changed a lot over the past however many years, since you were a kid. What is the most marked change, and what would you attribute that to?

Neville: It's interesting. In many ways, at least on the exterior, there's not a lot of change. Some of that I know is because whatever the historical board, they're not letting you change. I walk these streets and there are many of the same houses that were here 50 years ago. The neighborhood doesn't look that much different externally. The Morgan's Drugstore is still Morgan's Drugstore there, you know?

It's now CVS, used to be People's. Still, nonetheless. A lot of it is still very much the same. I think most of the differences that I see really come in the commercial areas, the Wisconsin Avenue area and DuPont Circle. The places that were there when I grew up, the Commander Salamanders and Little Taverns are gone.

The quaint little shops, while there's still a few, we have Urban Outfitters and a Starbucks and a Nike store. You have these big-name retailers. I think I probably see more

differences in those areas. The fact is, the real estate is probably still reflective. My grandfather spent, whatever, two, three thousand dollars, that was probably a lot of money back then.

I think there was always a sense of, I hate to use this word, but almost a sense of elitism in Georgetown. You have these fairly big houses and families who have been here for a long time. I think there's always been that privilege, if you will.

It's funny, I don't know that I looked at myself as being a privileged kid. Some of that may have been by the fact that if I met Sidwell friends, let's compare privilege. I have a car, but you have a car with a driver. There's no question that this was a blessing. It was a privilege to be in this neighborhood. I think that it is only enhanced in that regard.

Samantha: You said that there were more kids maybe back then.

Neville: That's what it feels like. I'll tell you, I'll go down to Rose Park on the weekends in the summertime and they're down there playing Little League Baseball. I see a whole bunch of kids. I assume you all must live in the area. I presume maybe part of it is just because, one, I don't have kids and I'm not a kid.

[laughter]

Samantha: Yeah, so you're not seeing kids.

Neville: I'm not seeing them.

Samantha: That's fair.

Neville: There may be still just as many as there were when I was younger, but it just doesn't seem like it. I mean, particularly on this block where I am, I just don't see that many. I frankly probably see more dogs.

Samantha: There are so many dogs in this neighborhood. Oh my gosh they're everywhere.

Neville: There's a lady, I have to say, she has two dogs that she walks every morning. Comes past here sometime between 6:30 and 7:00 and they bark. There's nobody on the street. I am always curious as to...

Samantha: What are you barking at?

Neville: Yeah, what are you barking at, dog?

Samantha: It's too early.

Neville: Now the fact is, I'm generally up, not functioning up, but I'm up. It's like clockwork. Yeah, there just seems to be a lot more dogs.

Samantha: Do you have a favorite hangout spot now in Georgetown, businesses you like to support or places you like to go?

Neville: Yeah, that's funny. I don't know if you're familiar with George's Falafel which is on 28th and M. That used to be the house my mother lived in, so I like going there.

Samantha: That's so cool that it's a falafel place now.

Neville: Next door to that is DAS Ethiopian. That's my spot in the summertime. It's got the outdoor deck right there. The patio is nice. You can sit there and eat. You can have some Ethiopian wine and watch the flights go by.

Billy Martin's is an institution. I mean, you have to go to Billy Martin's.

Samantha: Oh, it's incredible.

Neville: To me, a relatively newcomer, although it certainly has an iconic presence, is CafÈ Milano now. That, as I said, having been, it's funny to me sometimes when I hear people talk about, "I've lived in Georgetown for 20 years." It's like, "Oh, that's nice. My families been here since the 20's." Yeah, I get that just because I've been here that long. CafÈ Milano seems like a relatively new spot.

I've always enjoyed just hanging out M Street, Wisconsin Avenue, particularly in the summertime. I love walking and watching people. The Halloween, that's a must see.

Samantha: Oh, Halloween in Georgetown's incredible.

Neville: I don't even necessarily have to go places sometimes. It's just a matter of let me just walk the streets, see who's out there, and just enjoy the general vibe. I guess I'm probably on the older demographic so when I look I say, "Wow, it sure seems like a lot of young people."

I suspect the demographic of mostly young people is probably still the same. A lot of Georgetown students. A lot of tourists, you know?

Samantha: A lot of tourists, yeah.

Neville: It's just that at that time I was in that demo, so I didn't necessarily notice. I think the big thing for me has always been just the comfort. I just have always felt incredibly comfortable and supported, I guess, being here in Georgetown.

Samantha: Amen. That's a beautiful thing. I would definitely come back too, if that's the vibe. Well, I want to be mindful of time here. I guess, do you have any other special memories, whether it's family traditions or stuff from your own career, any experiences here, that you'd like to share?

Neville: A lot of different things pop up, and in particular, as you talk about things. It's like, "Wow, I hadn't thought about that in years. Oh, yeah that, that, that, that." It's wonderful to still retain this as a home.

As a kid, Christmas was a great family time. Thanksgiving there would always be folks here. I remember I used to decorate the Christmas tree, we'd put up the lights and all that

kind of stuff. Always hated taking them down.

Samantha: Oh, it's so sad.

Neville: Now, I'm to the point that the fact that I hate taking them down so much, I won't even put them up now. [laughs] I won't put them up, so I don't have to take them down, but I think I'm going to go back to that tradition again.

It's interesting to see how everybody has now turned their backyards into parking decks. One of the things people always talk about is how difficult it is to park. It's really not that difficult to park. I mean, one, you've got neighborhood parking which prevents people from coming and stealing your spaces. So many people now have created off street parking behind their houses. That's an evolutionary change.

I can remember back here the Kew Gardens. Their patio deck back there, that used to be where we would ride our bikes. I mean, it was this gorgeous yard.

Samantha: Oh, really? Was it a public space or has it always been Kew Gardens?

Neville: Yeah, it's always been the Kew Gardens. I wouldn't necessarily refer to it as a public space, but we were the neighborhood kids.

Samantha: A place where they didn't care if you'd go.

Neville: It was no big deal. I do have to tell on myself that there was one occasion.

[laughter]

Samantha: A confession...

Neville: We were back there and for whatever reason somebody was having a garden party and we were up on the hill throwing rocks into their yard.

Samantha: An elegant garden party? [laughs]

Neville: Yeah. The husband came out and yelled, "All right, you kids, you stay right there. I've called the police. My wife was hit with a rock and we're going..."

Samantha: You're like, "Oh, shoot."

Neville: All the kids ran away except for me.

Samantha: You stayed?

Neville: I stayed. To this day I'm still like, "OK, I was probably eight doors away from my house. I could have been in my, you know, but I was like, "Well, he called the police. I've got to stay."

Samantha: Oh, bless your heart. [laughs]

Neville: When the police came, well, they walked me home. It wasn't like I was arrested. They walked me around to the front of the house, knocked on the door, and my parents see their kids with a cop. The cop explained that I'd been throwing rocks.

It was a prank. It was a stupid kid thing, but what I remember about this was sitting with my father and I was fully expecting a whipping. I was waiting for it. It might have been in this room where we are right now. I remember sitting as far away from him. He was in one corner and I'm like, "I'm sitting over here."

We talked. His approach to disciplining me was, "Did I understand what I did wrong? Why did I do it? Tell him the truth." I explained that there was a bunch of kids. We were playing. I think it probably started out...You know how things get out of control. We were probably taking little pebbles and throwing them at each other.

[laughter]

Neville: Then the rocks got bigger. Then we saw, "Hey, there's some people."

Samantha: A target.

Neville: Yeah. It spun out of control. After I explained the story he was like, "OK." He said, "Well now, you must be punished. I'm going to punish you. I'm not going to spank you. You're too old for that. I think you understand. You learned your lesson, but I think that we're going to put you to bed without any dinner. I think that will be it and no TV.

Samantha: No TV. OK.

Neville: As I said, I felt mature and empowered. I was respected. Again, I don't even know how old I was, but I was a kid. I was a little kid. That was really a big deal for me. Now, the epilogue to the story is it was a Sunday and whatever time it was I went to bed, it was earlier than normal.

Now, the tradition on Sunday was that my mamma made fried chicken. Either my mother or my grandmother would make fried chicken. I went to bed, but it was too early. I probably woke up around 10:30, 11 o'clock. Everybody else in the house was asleep. I came downstairs and there on the kitchen table was...I'm sure my mother or grandmother did this on purpose.

[laughter]

Neville: There was several pieces of chicken just wrapped up.

Samantha: Just wrapped up for you! [laughs]

Neville: I remember I was like, "Oh, yeah." [laughs]

Samantha: This is for me. Finger licking good?

Neville: Yes, that fried chicken was finger licking good.

Samantha: Oh my gosh. That was every Sunday?

Neville: Yeah, that was our Sunday thing.

Samantha: Your mom would help, too, so it would be both your grandmother and your mother?

Neville: Yeah.

Samantha: Oh, that's fabulous.

Neville: I tell you, that just reminded me. See look, you got me started.

Samantha: That's good!

Neville: That reminded me of another life lesson. My grandfather used to smoke cigarettes. He used to smoke Camel cigarettes. He used to the Camel cigarettes with no filters. They weren't that long, but he would look so cool because he could have it hang on his lip and not use his hands. He would have it hanging on his...and suck in and the ash would grow on the cigarette and it was so cool. He was cool.

He would either drink coffee, scotch or whiskey. He was a brown liquor drinker. I would see that and I was like, "Man, my grandfather's cool." Again, on a Sunday night I stole couple of his Camels, cigarettes. I'm going to learn to smoke like my grandfather and I caught myself making coffee.

I didn't know. I had watched making coffee so I remember [inaudible 82:46] the coffee thing and dumped in all his coffee and heated the water up and blah blah blah. Took a drag on his cigarette and coughed out, I was like...Like I said there's no filter. And I'm dizzy I'm like, "Whoa, that's not pleasant, you know."

Samantha: "Grandfather, what are you doing here?!"

Neville: Then I said, "Well, let me try the coffee," which again I'm sure it was incredibly strong any way, I took and I spit that out. I said, "Oh." I was like, "OK, this ain't cool," and I never smoked them again. It was probably a good...might have been 35, 40 years before I ever tried coffee again. Again like I said...

Samantha: Really?

Neville: I was a kid, yes. It was imprinted that, "Oh, no, no. No, I don't like coffee. I got bad memories."

Samantha: Wow. Did your grandfather know that you attempted or tried?

Neville: I never fessed up because of the fact that I'd stolen the cigarettes. If I took two or three, I put two back because it was like, "Well I know I'm not going to try these again." I'm pretty sure I tried to get rid of the evidence. I probably washed everything away.

Samantha: Like you mentioned you traveled with your father for sports and such, and you said that he was very involved in sports. It sounds like you have an interest so were there many memories of that or were sports a big part of your life?

[crosstalk]

Neville: Oh, no question. My first basketball game was Lew Alcindor who later became Kareem Abdul-Jabar later on in his life, was in high school. It was in New York and he was playing DeMatha at Maryland's Cole Field House and it was a big deal. High school basketball, this was sort of like the first really big super-regional game.

Lew Alcindor was considered like the greatest of all time. Seven feet high school kid. DeMatha won and that happened to be around 1964. It was the early '60s and that was the first basketball game. That became sort of a thing my father and I did. We would go to basketball games. Many basketball games at Cole Field House, NCAA Final Fours, tournaments...

We had a basketball team here for one year, the Washington Caps. They were the American Basketball Association team. I was the ball boy in that team. Being around basketball was always a major part of my bonding with my father.

I've met a bunch of coaches. One of the things that I was always particularly moved by when my father passed away was Dean Smith who had been the coach of North Carolina for a long time sent a hand-written note of condolence to my mother because he had been a friend of ours. My father used to teach at his basketball camp so I used to go down to North Carolina basketball camp.

Samantha: Oh wow, so your father taught, that's awesome.

Neville: Yeah. He was a coach. He used to coach youth basketball here, many of the kids that he had coached, it's an interesting thing to look back, to have the perspective. At that time, there were not a lot of black kids getting basketball scholarships the way it is now.

When coaches were interested in, "Hey, we here watching," then there's a lot of talent. They were like, Yeah, you need to talk to Neville Waters because he knows all these kids." You've never recruited them. You may be a little uncomfortable talking with a black kid or awkward, so my father would help to facilitate.

At that time for the kid it was a matter of, "Oh, you mean I can get a scholarship and go to college to get a job?" It wasn't an idea of becoming a millionaire basketball player, that wasn't the reality. It was an opportunity to go to college.

A lot of these guys used to spend a lot of time over here, go down to the playground. A lot of them were able to get opportunities to go to school in part because of my father's relationship with them from youth basketball. Basketball, it was a big deal. It was a big deal.

Samantha: Sounds like amongst a whole bunch of sports for you. That's awesome. Do

you have any wisdom or particular nuggets that you want to share, life philosophies or any of that good deep stuff?

Neville: [laughs] Yeah. I can't really say that there's any particular philosophy, if you will, other than I've always believed that when you get knocked out you've got to get up and go for it again.

Samantha: Love it. Can you recount this story of this chair that I think it's an awesome story and it's going to be in the photo?

Neville: [laughs] OK, sure. My parents got this chair as a wedding gift. They got married in 1954 I believe and it was a yellow plastic chair but it was very chic for that time period. When I got married they gave it to me as a wedding present. At that point, the chic '50s was now more of a kitschy kind of not quite where we...so we got it reupholstered.

I've always enjoyed the chair. It was a great chair. Unfortunately, my house had a fire and it was damaged in the fire. Only damaged the covering so I had it covered again so this chair is now on its third life, if you will.

I still love it. It's incredibly comfortable and the fact that it has endured a fire, not to mention it was 1954, I can't do the math but that's over 50 years, I know, and it is still sturdy and standing. I'm not sure if they make furniture that good today, right?

Samantha: Yeah, no kidding, to withstand that much, that's crazy. It seems like a perfect place for your window spot right here. What do they call this? It's not a window seat but bay-window.

Neville: Bay-window.

Samantha: Bay-window, where you can watch the world go by.

Neville: Absolutely.

Samantha: Very close to the...there's a sandwich or a butcher shop nearby right...

[crosstalk]

Neville: ...Stachowski's.

Samantha: Stachowski's, that's right.

Neville: It's great, but it had been many things. It's always been a sort of a little sandwich shop, grocery store, neighborhood place to go get something real quick and Stachowski has continued that tradition. Between the Stachowskis and the 7-Eleven all my nutritional needs...

Samantha: You're covered.

Neville: ...get met, yes.

Samantha: Where else do you need to go? [laughs] This has been such a pleasure. You have a phenomenal memory. I can't believe you recall all these stories and all the people. It really has been a privilege to have this conversation. Thank you so much.

Neville: [laughs] Oh, thank you. You've brought up a lot of good memories. I've enjoyed it.

Samantha: Oh my gosh yeah. I envy your youth years, sounds just fabulous. Thank you so much. I think at this point unless there's anything else you want to share...

Neville: No, I don't think so at this point.

Samantha: I think I've worn you out, I hope it's not too late.

Neville: OK. All right. Curfew...ding, ding, ding, ding, ding.

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