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BY L. BENAGUIST

The O'Brien interview.

LB: February, 1979, 89, right? (laughs)

Mrs. O'B: Just lost ten years. (laughs)

LB: Don't be nervous, we can just keep talking the way we were, and I've got plenty of tape, and we won't use anything that would be inappropriate. So, you know, this is just a way that Bill and I can come back into it, But also, if you come up with any stories that sound that they'd be really interesting, in the film, we'd like to talk with you about using them, you know, like, if you just have something that would be, some insight into Jonathan's character that might help us, but if that comes up later on, you know, we'd like to talk to you about that. In fact, what we'll ask you to do, I think, when we're done, we, I brought a piece of Keene State College stationery, and if you could, if you feel like it, ah, it's just a release that would allow us to use it in the film, in case anything should happen, people would say, well, did you get the O'Brien's permission, got permission last week from Mrs. Marshall. She was the guidance counselor at the high school?

Mrs. O"B: Oh, yeah, Rachel.

LB: 92 years old, she was right there. Not all the time she wasn't right there, but sometimes, she was right--

Mrs. O'B:---

LB: Yeah, she gave us a release, and she went back to her room, you know, it was fun, it was enjoyable. I enjoyed it.

Bill: Well, why don't you tell us a story?

Mrs. O"B: About what?

LB: And I'll just aim this at whoever's speaking.

Mrs. O"B" The Ruth business?

Bill: Yeah.

Mrs. O'B: Well, um--Jonathan had been ----

Mr. O'B: Wait a minute.

LB: All set.

Mrs. O'B: Jonathan had been, actually, forbidden to see this other, this friend, ah, because he wasn't the best company for to keep. So, anyway, Jon had gone to his room, and gone to bed for the night, but ah, evidently, maybe the

boy threw a stone at his window, so he knew that he was down on the ground, so Jonathan just climbed out that window, and they went joy-riding some place, and had a good time and came back, and of course he couldn't go in the front door, so he went right back into the window, where he'd come from, but he skidded on the roof, and when he landed he had a broken pelvis. So, he landed up in the hospital for--

Mr. O'B: I thought it was a broken arm, but---

Mrs. O'B: Oh, no, it was his pelvis.

Mr. O'B: Broken arm. He says he hurt it,, but it doesn't matter.

LB: It doesn't matter.

Mrs. OB: So, after he was in the hospital for a month or me, we would used to go and see him, you know keep company a little bit, and we were down in Miller Brothers, that's the clothing store, and I saw red and white striped nightshirt, with a night cap that went with it, so we bought that for Jonathan, and Jonathan never took it off, until he left the hospital to go home. He wouldn't let anybody take it off, so he, the whole thing, the night shirt and the hat. So, that was just a little---

LB: How old was he?

Mrs. OB: Oh, he was probably 17, 16, 17.

Bill: In high school.

Mrs. OB: Yeah, yeah. He was in high school.

Mr. OB: He was in high school.

Bill: Now, the fella's name was Billy, is that right, but I never heard the last name, do you know the last name?

Mrs. OB: Of--the one that --

Bill: the boy he wasn't supposed to go with.

Mrs. OB: I wanna say it's something like Parody, but it may not be. It might be Parody, or some other--

Bill: Something like that.

Mrs. OB: Yeah, cause there are nice people that are Parodies around here, I wouldn't want to get them confused with him!

Bill: Yeah, well, what was this guy like, I mean, why was he---?



Mrs. OB: I don't know. He just was a little too old for Jonathan, I think to be associating with him, he wasn't teaching him anything that was too good. And they liked to have him go with more of his own age.

LB: You were Jonathan's godfather?

Mr. OB: Yeah, I stood up, he was baptized at the Congregational Church.

LB: Yeah--later on he made a decision to become an Episcopalian minister, so--

Mr. OB: That's right.

LB: Why do you think he made that decision? We've asked several people that question. Why do you think he--? Why didn't he stay in the Congregational church with his parents?

Mr. OB: Well, because he went to Episcopal--

Mrs. OB: UVM, you mean?

Mr. OB: Well, Theogo---theogo--

Mrs. OB: Theological.

Mr. OB: Theo-theo--yeah.

Bill: ETS.

Mr. OB: --school. And that's why he changed, I think.

Mrs. OB: Well, the reason goes back farther than that. He was friendly with Chan McCarthy, and I think--

Bill: Who was the--

Mrs. OB:--the the priest at the Episcopal church.

Bill: Here, in Keene?

Mrs. OB: Yeah, so he probably was the man that influenced him if anybody, in in---

Mr. OB: Well, he went to military school first before he went there. and, well, I can remember before he went off to school, we used to, when he was ten, nine, ten years old, he used to go, with ah, my son his father, and I would go on ah, well, we went, ah, beaver trapping, with ah, Ed Pascarelli, the barber if you, maybe knew him. And ah, I remember having pictures of --showing him out there going

through a beaver canal. He was walking in the canal, I can remember that picture, but, anyway, the, we'd get quite a few beaver, and we--we went many times, and ah--

Bill: Where was this?

Mr. OB: Up in Washington--we went all over the place, I mean, different places.

Mrs. OB: They were all in this area.

Mr. OB: Around this area, yeah. Well, within thirty miles, I would say.

LB: So you a lot of Jonathan while he was growing up.

Mr. OB: That's right. And then we went up Mount Monadnock a few times, too, he and his father and my kids, ah, I had twins.

LB: Oh, you did.

Mr. OB: Yeah, Anne and Arnold.

LB: Were they older than Jonathan?

Mr. OB: They were about the same age.

Mrs. OB: Little younger.

Mr. OB: Just one year younger, I think. Not maybe a whole year, what?

Mrs. OB: I don't think they were a whole year younger, maybe, cause they were in the same grade.

Mr. OB: No, they were a little bit younger. They-- all these kids that we took those pictures of that I was telling you about --

LB: I can't wait to see them.

Mr. OB: --were the same age. And there were two sets, of, four, no, three sets of twins, ah, in the pictures, along with, ah, Jonathan and Doctor Adams' children, and so on. We had a lot of fun.

Bill: What's your memory of his character during those years?

Mr. OB: He was a leader with the kids, you know, as he grew up, I thought. He seemed to be a very smart boy, and ah, intelligent, and as he got older he was very much of a gentlemen and friendly, likable, person.



LB: That's what Mrs. Marshall said, very much of a gentleman, that's the same term.

Mr. OB: Yeah.

LB: Holding doors for people, sometimes even the other boys would make fun of him, but he didn't care. I wonder how one gets to be a gentleman, it's a pretty rare commodity nowadays.

Mrs. OB: My son's a gentleman! (laughs)

Mr. OB: He would always try to be polite. You know, kind of a boy that tipped to the ladies and seat them and--he was brought up right, that's for sure.

LB: So you must have been friends with Dr. Daniels, as well.

Mr. OB: Oh, very, I was very close--we used to go out evenings with on his trips. When he was making his calls, at 2:00 in the morning.

LB: Oh, you went along on some of those?

Mr. OB: Oh, yeah.

LB: No kidding, that's dedication.

Mr. OB: well, I can remember going down to Dublin. He said we were going down someplace where the ambulance couldn't get in. And ah, just off the Dublin road, there was a wood road that went into this camp. And there was a woman in there that he was gonna see. So he came out to me and he says, "Arnold, come in and help me carry her out, we gotta take her out of here." Well, I ah, I went in, and on the way in I said, "What do you want me to do?" and he says, "Oh, we'll do it!" And ah, I got in there and he started to pick her up, and he expected me to help him, well, I didn't know--I said "What do you want me to do?" And he says, ah, "Oh!" just like that. And she passed out, and he put her back down on the, on the bed for a short time, and, he picked her up bodily and carried her out by himself. I opened the doors for the car and he put her on the back seat, and he took her to the hospital and saved her life. But ah, that just one of the things that I was in on, which I think was ah typical of things that he did all the time. He was a man that, I mean, a doctor that made ah, house calls all the time. And he would have them going up until after midnight. Most every night, making his

Mrs. OB: You had housecalls too, only it was because somebody was out of oil, or somebody needed their oil burner twitched---(laughs)

LB: That's important, too!

Bill: Sort of keeping the heat.

Mr. OB: I sold them a stoker during the war to burn buckwheat coal, you know? Then after the war was over we took it out, and we put another burner in for them.

LB: Did Jonathan ever go along with his dad on any of these calls? Do you think?

Mr. OB: I don't think so. He might have. There were-- he had other friends that made calls with him. And ah, oh, we would sit in the car, you know, just keep him company, so that he wouldn't be traveling out alone at night.

Bill: That's really nice of people to do that.

Mr. OB: Yeah.

LB: I think so too. That was a nice thing to do.

Mr. OB: Well; he was a nice person, too. (laughs)

LB: What was he like? Dr. Daniels.

Mrs. OB: He wasn't as big as Arnold is right now. He was an inch or so shorter and he probably wore a size forty.

Mr. OB: That's why I marveled at him picking this woman up and carrying her out. He seemed to get extra strength to do it, and he wasn't the most powerful person in the world. But ah, he was a wonderful friend. And a very close friend.

LB: Now he died in the late fifties, didn't he.

Mrs. OB: Um.

Bill: When Jonathan was at VMI, I guess. Jonathan was in his junior year, so. I guess he'd be--about 1960, I'd guess.

Mrs. OB: Emily was going to Barnard, is it?

LB: Whose idea was it--oh, go ahead, Bill.

Bill: I was going to ask, one thing we're not too clear about is, Dr. Daniels in the south, during, you know, we understand he spent some time in there, in the early war years, and this was Jonathan's really, although he wouldn't have been conscious of it, too much, talks about that, as having some roots in the south, because of his father's army, doctoral army duties, are you aware of --

Mr. OB: Army?



Bill: Army, yeah. Oh, where was he stationed?

Mrs. OB: Well, he was-- I never heard where he was stationed in this country, but I knew that he was overseas.

Mr. OB: He went overseas in the war, and he ah, he got ah, Medal of Honor.

Bill: Is that right? What was that for?

Mr. OB: I guess it was called Bronze Star? Ah, he ah, he never talked about it, or wanted anybody to actually to know about it, but he he got this in the battlefield. They were, ah, a bomb went off near them, and ah, his squad and ah, he crawled around, he was wounded in the seat, and he crawled around and gave ah, shots to the, ah, men that were there, and, took care of them first, and then they took him off, afterwards.

Mrs. OB: Wasn't the story that, ah, he gave everybody that he could a shot of morphine to keep them from suffering--

Mr. OB: Yeah.

Mrs. OB: --and then gave himself one.

Mr. OB: Well, I don't know about--I didn't remember that, but that's probably what he did.

Mrs. OB: And wasn't Dr. Armquist was there at the same time.

Mr. OB: Well, that was in the hospital.

Mrs. OB: Oh, he was in the hospital.

Mr. OB: Dr. Armquist was from Keene, and when Phil went to the hospital, I mean Dr. Daniels, he met Almquist, Almquist was in charge of the hospital. That was a coincidence. That's a pretty small world! (laughs)

LB: That was in France, or Germany, or--

Mrs. OB: Wasn't he in England at that time? Brought to the hospital in England? I thought he was sent from France to England.

Mr. OB: I really don't know where it was, I just remember the story that he told me, but he wouldn't tell most people.

LB: that's really nice to know. That doesn't surprise me, somehow. From what I've heard of Dr. Daniels, that sounds consistent, sounds like a generous man.

Mrs. OB: Have you heard about who started the clinic?

Mr. OB: He started it, he was one of the original--

Mrs. OB: There were six doctors, um, Dr. Daniels, and also Dr. Almquist, we just mentioned, and Dr. DeBold, and you fill in--

Mr. OB: You said Almquist?

Mrs. OB: Yeah. Who were the other three?

LB: Dr. Johnston? Was he one?

Mr. OB: No.

Mrs. OB: Was um, Lou Fox,

Mr. OB: Yeah. That's another one, yeah.

Mrs. OB: Fox, remember him? And --

LB: How about Dr. Robertson?

Mr. and Mrs. OB: Dr. Norris Robertson. And he's still--

LB: Oh, yes, we've talked with him, about that other project. Yes, he's up on Pegshop Road.

Mrs. OB: Is that six?

Bill: We have some nice pictures of Dr. Wood, I mean, ah, Dr. Daniels when he was starting the clinic. Um, that we'll probably use.

Mr. OB: Yeah.

Bill: But as far as you can remember you don't remember any stories about being in the south, with Jonathan? I'm not sure what years they are, maybe it was before he went overseas, maybe it was a training, or something. We're not clear--was Jonathan born here?

Mrs. OB: Maybe Jonathan was born in the south.

Mr. OB: No, here, Elliot Community Hospital.

Bill: How old was he when you were the godfather?

Mr. OB: Well, it must have been when he was a year --or between one and two, in that area, I should think. We're trying to get the church to look up the certificate, to get the information for you, but ah, they went through the records, and, ah, all through the late forties, and they



weren't able to come up with anything. Ed Mury was the minister at that time, in the late forties.

Bill: He was born in August, '39, and so that would be--

Mrs. OB: OK, so he was only a month older than Anne and Arnold. I thought he was older than that, but if he was born in August, he was only , just, ah---

Bill: Cause he died right, right, wasn't, was it August?

Mrs. OB : Yeah, August 20th.

Bill: --is his death day. Maybe it was, ah, I'm saying birthday, maybe it was his mother's birthday, either his birthday or his mother's birthday. I'll look that up. Anyway, '39, so, if he was two years old when you were godfather, that would be only '41.

Mr. OB: It was before that.

Mrs. OB: I think he was probably between 9 months and, I mean, usually--

Mr. OB: --baby.

Mrs. OB: children christened--

Mr. OB: I know that he was passed to the minister. But ah, I don't know what his age was, I really don't.

Bill: He wasn't walking, or anything.

Mrs. OB: No, no.

Mr. OB: I don't think so.

Bill: It was probably 1940. Then did Dr. Daniels leave Keene, and do the war service, or---?

Mr. OB: He enlisted in the army, the Medical Corps.

Bill: The Medical Corps.

Mr. OB: I think that was in, ah, '40.

Bill: '40. So, at that point, maybe, he went down south or something?

Mr. OB: He probably got his basic training in the south, I don't know, I don't remember that. I tell you, it was a long time ago.

LB: Connie--Connie might have gone along, too.

Mrs. OB: Oh, sure.

Bill: Well, the whole family I think was there.

LB: And when was Judy born?

Bill and Mrs. OB: Emily.

LB: Emily.

Mrs. OB: Well, she, um, my daughter was the same age, ah, Bonnie (?) was born in '43, so--that would have been.

Bill: Four years difference. So she probably wasn't born yet.

Mrs. OB: I asked Jean Mansfield who was the administrator, I guess she's called, down at the church, if she would look up to see who else ---there were two men from what Arnold says, that stood up as godparents to Jonathan.

Mr. OB: Well, his last name was James, but I can't remember what his first name was.

Mrs. OB: Anyway, Jean, she looked back and all the records that she could find that was in the forties, but it wasn't in the early forties, it was you know, 46 or 7 or 8, whatever, and um, it was when Ed Mury was the minister, but I don't think, I think he came to the church about that time. So it was, the minister before that that would have christened him. But I don't know---

Mr. OB: And I can't remember those things.

Mrs. OB: Another little incident while you were talking about doing the things with all the families, ah, his family and the Adams family, and the Daniels family, and there was Dr. Ford, he was his family, all the children were, you know, roughly the same age. And, um, some of the pictures that he has is taken at the ocean someplace, that they all would go, I don't know where, because I wasn't there, as I say. But um, the pictures were cute, you know, everybody in their old fashioned bathing suits, running around on the beach having fun. So you remember that now when I mention it?

Mr. OB: Old-fashioned, you don't know what old fashioned bathing suits are like!

Mrs. OB: Oh, yes I do! (all laugh)

Mr. OB: kThere's about fifteen years difference in our ages! Cause I ah, I was married before. To Helen. Dr., Daniels was our doctor. He was wonderful. He did everything possible.



Mrs. OB: Well, he was, he was the doctor for my children, too. After we were married, cause I had a 3 yr old when we were married and he took good care of him, and, I remember one time, when, hummm?

Mr OB: We've been married for 34 years?

Mrs. OB: 35. (he laughs) My son, the poor kid, he was 7 yrs old, he started having deterioration of his hips, so he had to, cause he was growing too fast. His bones didn't grow fast enough. So he to walk on crutches for quite a long time. jAnd then he got measles, mumps, and chickenpox, and then ended up with encephalitis, and Phil saw him through the whole thing. I mean he was a peach to Doug, but um, it was one heck of a year you know, he just had so many things right one right after another, he never got over one but he got another.

Mr. OB: We have 5 children between us, and he took care of them all.

LB: He was a general practitioner.

Mr. OB: Yes.

Bill: Would, um, Jonathan see any service in terms of poor people, or, the doctor, or anything like that?

Mr. OB: Oh, yes, he'd go anywheres, any time. It might be one of the late ones that he gets to, but he'd get there.

Mrs. OB: He asked you if Jonathan went with Phil, but you're saying that Phil would always go to to the people.

Mr. OB: kWhatdid you say?

Bill: I just wondered if Jonathan was aware of that at any point, or ever voiced any --if he ever talked about---his dad.

Mr. OB: I know he was aware of his father doing the things that he was doing, in his medical profession, but I never heard him say much about it. Not that I can remember, cause it's a long time ago.

Mrs. OB: Did you ever hear that he was valedictorian of his class, at VMI?

Bill: Yeah.

Mrs. OB: And ah, Arnold gave him a solid-gold belt buckle.

Bill: Is that right?

Mrs. OB: I thought it was a nice thing for him to do.

LB: Any idea why he went to VMI?

Mr. OB: His father thought that would be a good place for Jonathan, he'd get some--

Bill: Who did?

Mr. OB: His father. And his mother, I really think that's what they thought.

Bill: kWhy would they think that?

Mr. OB: Well-- cause he was kind of a, well, he never did anything real bad, but he just was full of the devil. He was full of life and he enjoyed life, and I think they thought a little discipline would do him. . . . I went to military school too, so....

LB: And you turned out all rilght!

Mr. OB: (laughs) I went to BMI.

LB: Oh. Where's that?

Mrs. OB: Bordentown.

Mr. OB: Bordentown Military Institute.

Mrs. OB: In New Jersey.

LB: Oh, New Jersey, um hum.

Bill: Was Jonathan drawn toward that, or was that pretty much the parents influence, or---?

Mr. OB: I can-- well that's the time that I-- I don't think we --I lost a lot of contacts with Jonathan after that, after he went off.

Mrs. OB: I asked Arnold if he remembered Jonathan coming in his uniform to church, and he really was handsome. Real handsome young man.

Mr. OB: I can--remember him coming to church that --with his uniform.

Bill: KWhat place did the church play in his early years, do you know anything about that?

Mr. OB: He went to Sunday school.

Bill: This was at the United Church?



Mr. OB: Yes, the Congregational -- it was called the First Congregational Church of Keene, then. in those days.

Bill: KWere there activities that ---

Mrs. OB: Oh yeah, there was a very, ah, extensive youth groups that went on lots of trips. I was the chaperone for a trip to New York one time.

Mr. OB: Did he go on that? I don't think so.

Mrs. OB: It was Dawn's age group that went, I think, not not um, Jonathan's -- Dawn is my daughter. Um, so she would be four years younger and um, and I know my son went to Washington and he was only two years younger than Jonathan and Arnold, but um, I don't remember just whether -- I don't know if Anne went to Arnold's trips or not, do you remember?

Mr. OB: Where, to Washington?

Mrs. OB: Washington. I know you took them to Washington, but um, I don't remember that they went with the youth group. But they were both active in it. They did car washes, I remember. (laughs)

LB: Even back then they did that stuff?

Mr. OB: Oh, yeah.

LB: I thought that was a new thing.

Mr. OB: Oh, no.

Bill: Was there a summer camp or something, was there a summer camp?

Mrs. OB: Uh, yeah, Camp Takotah. I guess all the kids went there, uh, summertimes.

Mr. OB: I don't know whether Jonathan went or not, I don't remember.

Mrs. OB: Well, I--I don't know---

Mr. OB: Our kids did.

Bill: Do you know when he got interested in literature, or in music, or---? We know at the high school he got involved in both, but I don't know if that began earlier, or---.

Mrs. OB: Don't you think that--yeah--well I think that it would have begun earlier, because his mother was a school teacher, and um, I mean, she certainly would have, um, you

know, instigated his reading and that kind of thing. So, um--

LB: Yeah, that's probably true.

Bill: What about Connie, how would you ---?

Mrs. OB: Connie, um, didn't have enough hands, she didn't have enough feet, she didn't have enough of anything cause she was in three or four places at the same time, and she never arrived on time.

Mr. OB: (laughs) She had so many things to do, she'd make them all.

Mrs. OB: She was a lovely person, we enjoyed her.

Bill: What was she doing, what were these functions that ---?

Mrs. OB: Oh, well, I belonged to the Fortnightly club and she belonged to that, and um, um, and then she, she did a lot of things in the church, like I can remember her doing the good cheer packing for Christmas gifts for the poor, and I did it right after she did it! So, you know--

Mr. OB: She was involved in the clinic, and the hospital, and the things that were going on, parties, and all that kind of thing, if there's two parties at the same evening, why she'd make em both! (laughs) She was very popular.

Bill: Was she teaching, and raising her family, together, or---?

Mrs. OB: Well, no, I don't think so, I think she, she may have taught, you know, for a few years before they were married. Didn't she come from Lyndonboro?

Mr. OB: No. That's-- Lyndonville is where Doc came from. Phil came from.

Mrs. OB: OK, she came from Bradford.

Mr. OB: His father was principal of school there.

Mrs. OB: And, she came from Bradford.

Mr. OB: Bradford. And her father, was a doctor.

Bill: Humm.

Mrs. OB: And I remember when her mother was 90 years old, we had a party for her. She was the sweetest person.

Mr. OB: Oh, she was a wonderful person.



Mrs. OB: She had the most gorgeous white hair! (laughs)

Bill: I think we have some pictures of that , that family. Well, we lalked a little bit about the father's influence, what would you judge to be Connie's influence on Jonathan?

Mrs. OB: Well, I think she probably pushed him, you know, to always excel. I think most people try to push their kids but he may have gotten a little more than usual. (laughs)

Bill: In terms of academics, or---what what?

Mr. OB: School.

Bill: School?

Mrs. OB: Well, I think he was always on the honor roll, I can't prove it, but I think he was. (laughs)

Bill: Was the raising Cain a little reaction to that, or---?

Mr. OB: Well, he was-- he he wasn't a bad boy. He just was full of the devil. You know what I mean (laughs) He was a real boy! There was nothing bad about Jonathan, he was a gentlemen. Too.

Mrs. OB: I don't remember if he --started going to the Episcopal church ah, while he was still in high school. He might have, you know. Ah, when Ed Pikes was there, too. Have you ever met him?

Bill: No. What was his ---?

Mrs. OB: He was the priest in the Episcopal church before Chan McCarty.

Bill: Oh. um-hum.

Mrs. OB: He lives in Andover, Mass. Did Phil go hunting with you when you went --

Mr. OB: With Ed Pike? No.

Mrs. OB: Well, Ed Pike had a, probably still has a, --cottage on Presconnecticut (?) Lake. And he used to take Doc Adams and Arnold and Jim Walker, and Art Doyle, and they'd all go off, this went on for about five years.

Mr. OB: He was the minister before. (end of side A)

Mr. OB: Religion, I don't think made any difference to them. One way or the other. They were friends, just because they were friends.

LB: Well, how come, how come you were chosen to be godfather? You must have been--real close to Doc Daniels.

Mr. OB: I was.

LB: Cause that's quite an honor, to--

Mr. OB: I thought so.

LB: So you must have been good friends.

Mr. OB: We were.

Mrs. OB: You didn't go to their wedding, did you?

Mr. OB: No.

Mrs. OB: Phil and Connie, no.

Mr. OB: They came here after they were married. I believe, that's the way it was.

LB: Did they come here in the late thirties?

Mrs. OB: Hm, that's a good question.

Mr. OB: Yes, ah, yes I would say, ah, about--I don't really know, but '35 or thereabouts. I started in business in '28, and they came shortly after I had been in business for a while.

Bill: During the depression then, huh?

Mr. OB: Oh, and the bank holiday, and the whole works, the NRA and so on.

Bill: The practice of medicine must have been interesting. in those days.

Mr. OB: (laughs) It was! I guess, yeah.

LB: But you didn't live out here in those days, did you? This house is 12 years old.

Mr. OB: KWe lived on Court Street.

LB: Oh!

Mrs. OB: Well, you and Helen lived on Cross Street, and ---

Mr. OB: Oh yeah, in the early days, that's when the kids were young.



Mrs. OB: Yeah, so ah, you would have entertained Jonathan on Cross Street more than you did--we lived for five years where Doctor Carlman lives. And I couldn't stand the house, he was the one that picked it out, when I came to Keene. (laughs) So we--it was ah, a promotion on radio--every day they went to this house and told the general public of what was going on, and who the contractors were, and who --everybody was doing some thing --so um, and it was just broadcast right from this house they were building. So Arnold takes me out to see it one day, and it was the house that we bought on Hastings Avenue that John Westland had built. Do you remember that? That goes back now, 30 years, and , anyway--

Mr. OB: It was built as a promotional deal, there.

Mrs. OB: (walking on his lines) --and ah, I had ten dollars in my pocketbook and I said, "Here, down payment on my house." So I put the first ten dollars down on my house!

Mr. OB: Well, the reason I took her out there was because we had put in the heating system, and it was a new type of heating system, it was, a steam system with little quarter-inch pipes going to the unit. And it was something entirely new, and so I wanted her to go out and see it. And it was, it was promotional deal different contractors did their thing at the house, such as we put in the heating, and somebody else put in the plumbing, and it was called Electronic Home, when it was advertised. It had electric doors and electric lights, I guess that's why!

Mrs. OB: Oh, it had a fancy electric can opener, a fancy electric mixer or thing, I forgot the name of it now, but it set right down in the counter.

Bill: This was when everything was going to be electric.

Mrs. and Mr. OB: Yeah, oh yeah.

Mr. OB: Even the towel racks were electrified. (laughter)  
They had heating units in it, (laughs)

LB: That's amazing!

Bill: Thinking back, I'm wondering if if there's anything in those years that to you thinking back on it could possibly explain how Jonathan got involved in civil rights.

Mrs. OB: Probably when he was in the south going to college he probably witnessed a lot of things going on there, that he didn't like. And again--

Bill: Do you know of anything or say any things about that, or---?

Mrs.OB: No, not really, but I mean I'm just judging that that's probably what started the interest, and ah, and then cause he went to the seminary and then became involved with Martin Luther King.

Bill: Nothing you can think of that in Keene that might have if not civil rights had been --

Mr. OB: Before the seminary?

Bill: ---yeah, get him involved with activity like--that's what we're trying to find out, in a way, what was circulating.

LB: Do you suppose when Dr. Johnston made the news when he tried to join the Navy and the Navy rescinded his commission because he was --he had Negro blood, do you suppose that would have--

Mr. OB: Could have.

LB: --he's pretty young at the time, actually, six years old when that happened.

Mr. OB: I doubt if it---

Bill: There were no events going on at that time?

Mr. OB: He might have known about that through his father and as he grew up he, it was in his mind. That could have been it. Ah, you know. But ah, I don't know.

Bill: Kind of funny, how people end up some ways. You know, just, you say, well why, why is it that he ended up in Alabama, doing what he did?

Mr. OB: I know. I was surprised when I heard about it myself.

Mrs. OB: Well, wasn't he-- he was sent there, um, through a certain group.

Bill: ESCRU.

Mr. OB: You know what the group was, I --

Bill: Yeah, the Episcopal Society for Cultural Racial Unity. He became involved in that, and then he answered Dr. King's call, who asked for whites to come down. But we're of the impression that there must have been something already there that was ready to respond to such a call, so we're kind of interested in trying to get at what that was. Maybe it was his father's work as a doctor, and that whole concept of service, you know, might have---



Mrs. OB: Well, I'm sure that was really instilled in him.  
Um, but---

Mr. OB: Well, we didn't have any -- hardly any, I don't think there were more than two or three black families Keene, so that he didn't have any connection with that, from here, um, one little black girl, that was George what was George's name? at the Cheshire House?

Mrs. OB: Oh, Grace?

Mr. OB: Grace.

Mrs. OB: Yeah, Grace Miller.

Mr. OB: Grace Miller. George Miller's daughter. And she was accepted in all the parties and things that the children had, and she, um--

Bill: Was she Jonathan's age?

Mr. OB: (continuing)--she fitted in with everybody and there was no feeling whatsoever there, everybody thought she was a lovely little girl, and, and ah---

LB: He was the man who worked at the Latchis Theater?

Mrs. OB: Yes.

Mr. OB: Ah, he did, afterwards, but he was the , he was a,  
---

Mrs. OB: oh, he was a major-domo, or something like that?

Mr. OB: ---a porter, he was the porter at the Cheshire House, in the old days. And ah, he had an old Cadillac roadster, and he used to take people out for tours of the around the countryside, and that's how my folks got up here, (laughs), cause they, they came to the hotel, and ah, he took them around and then they found this place up in Walpole that they liked, and they bought that, that's how I got to be here.

Mrs. OB: Guess what year he bought--they bought the house in Walpole.

Mr. OB: Hum?

Mrs. OB: Tell them what year your folks bought the house--

Mr. OB: 1915, was it?

Mrs. OB: (giggling) Goes back a little ways!



Bill: Now, was Grace the same age as Jonathan, pretty much, that was the same group, or---?

Mrs. OB: Ah, she might be just a little older, I know her now, and I would, I would guess she's more like, 40--what would she--she--Jonathan would have been 50, you think, yeah, so she might be like 52 or 3.

Bill: Little older, yeah.

LB: Does she live in Keene?

Mrs. OB: She has a home, that was the family home and its on Pleasant Street, down in the middle of town. And um, there's a family living in it, and she comes and stays when she feels like coming to Keene. She doesn't stay here too often.

Mr. OB: She's in New York, isn't she?

Mrs. OB: She, she has, ah, property in New York that she keeps rented, as I understand it.

Mr. OB: Well, he had property in, ah, apartment houses, in New York.

Mrs. OB: So she stays there most of the time, but she's real nice she comes and sits in the choir, and she sings---

Mr. OB: --(over here) --bellhop at the hotel, but owns apartment houses in New York City! (laughs at the irony of that) He had an income from those. You never know.

Mrs. OB: ---last December when the church had their annual Christmas fair she came and she worked real hard! (laughs) Exceptionally hard, for a --to help us get that going.

Bill: Now she, she would have been in the same church as Jonathan, or---?

Mrs. OB: Well, it's the United Church, yeah.

Bill: Yeah, so-- he might have know her--

Mrs. OB: --through church--

Bill: --through the church, anyway.

LB: Be nice to talk with her.

Bill: Yeah, that would be.

LB: So, I wonder how we'd get in touch with her, Bill. I've heard of the Millers, you're not the first people who have mentioned them, although I've never met Mr. Miller.

Mr. OB: He isn't alive, now.

Mrs. OB: She's a maiden lady, she's never married.

LB: I think I've seen her around Keene, on occasion. She's kind of severe looking when she wants to be.

Mrs. OB: Ah---I wouldn't say that. I think she's quite pretty, she's a little bit heavy now, but she's ah, she's got pretty black hair, and, not kinky, you know, like you think of---

Bill: Somebody in her family's in town, though, you say.

Mr. OB: Do you want to look up and see what the address is? Do you know where she lives?

Mrs. OB: Well, I--I don't think the people that live in her house are family.

Bill: Uh-huh.

Mrs. OB: They rent the--

Bill: --oh, the property from her.

Mrs. OB: it's a two, two family house.

Mr. OB: It's a brick house, on the corner of Mechanic St--no, I don't know whether it's on the corner or the first house up on Pleasant Street. That she owns.

Mrs. OB: It's more like the first house up on Pleasant Street.

LB: Pleasant Street loops around, doesn't it? Doesn't it kind of go from---

Mr. OB: Pleasant Street goes ah, it's only a short street, it goes from Mechanic to, ah, to, Union Street. Not Union--

LB: The next one up.

Mrs. OB: It's just in between Elm and and, hum--

LB: It runs parallel to Elm Street.

Mrs. OB: Yeah, just--

Mr. OB: Yes, but it-it starts at, at Mechanic Street.

Mrs. OB: It starts right near the fire station, or not, but the--

Mr. OB: --the block there that's the , used to be -

Mrs. OB: Where Macmillan's is.

Mr. OB: Yeah. Right on that--that's the corner, right there.

Mrs. OB: You don't think it's Pleasant Street, right down to the fire station? It's right straight across, there.

Mr. OB: No! Oh, I kn--I kn--

LB: Elm Street begins at ah, at Mechanic Street, at the corner of the Macmillan Building. And goes north. That's Elm Street.

Mrs. OB: That is Elm Street.

LB: And then that street that continues down to the fire station doesn't have a name, 'cause that's just a one-way street in the parking lot, that runs across where um--

Mr. OB: Well, if you went from Elm Street towards Washington, it would be the, ah, Pleasant Street would be the first street on the left. Now, that isn't where she---

Mrs. OB: (interrupting) --that's where the GAR building used to, or is?

Mr. OB: (pausing) That's the corner, yeah. But it--

Mrs. OB: That's--that's Pleasant Street.

Mr. OB: And you say she lived on Pleasant?

Mrs. OB: Um-hum! She lives on Pleasant Street, I know that.

Mr. OB: She had-- she had--the Millers lived on, ah, Elm Street, when I sold them coal and heating stuff.

LB: We could find that out.

Bill: Yeah, we'll try and locate them. We might get back to you on that if we hit a snag. (all laugh)

LB: Well, I think we could go into the, tax office and look at the maps and see if Mrs. Miller's name is on this property, and find out where the landlord is.

Mrs. OB: Well, she is the landlord.

Mr. OB: She's in town, ah, ah, quite often. She was working with you on the church ah,--

Mrs. OB: Yeah, I just said that ---



Bill: Maybe the church would know where her address is, too.

Mr. OB: They would, yeah. She wouldn't be on the picture book, would she?

Mrs. OB: (whispers) Just happened to think too!

Mr. OB: What?

Mrs. OB: Just happened to think of the picture book!

LB: What's her first name again? Mrs. Miller's first name?

Mr. OB: Grace.

Bill and LB: (together) Grace.

Bill: Yeah, she'd be really interesting.

LB: Yes, that might be interesting---

Mr. OB: That's the daughter of these--the Millers, that I've been talking about, George, and ah, his wife.

LB: Yeah, I understand, yeah, that'd be nice.

Bill: Um-- well, I was going to ask you what you, what your feelings are now about being Jonathan's grandfather--ah, godfather.

Mr. OB: (laughs) Well, I'm pretty proud, to feel that I have that honor. That's for sure.

Bill: What would you say is the--what --you most proud about him?

Mr. OB: Well, that he was, the boy that he was, in the first place. He was a wonderful boy. I mean, I liked him, a lot. And ah, not only that, but what he stands for, I think that's wonderful.

Bill: (addressing Mrs. O'Brien) Would you like to respond to that at all, we're just asking you know, what your feelings are about---?

Mrs. OB: Well, I always say he was a real nice -- well, I call people like that a peach. So, he was a peach, and, ah, I liked his family, and--

Mr. OB: (says something unintelligible, three syllables)

Mrs. OB: (continuing) --Emily was, very nice, too, and, enjoyed her, and liked her company.

Mr. OB: You want something to write on? Here, look---I got a little --I don't think there's anything in it, and you can write in that, and tear it out.

Mrs. OB: (in the background, under Mr. O'B's above remarks):and um, we didn't--keep in touch with Jonathan after he went to college, so much, except to see him when he came to church---what he was doing, and. had a special place, for him.

Mr. OB: What do they have there, Pleasant Street?

LB: Box number, 335. So she must collect her mail when she comes to Keene. OK, thank you. We'll write to her, in care of the box number, and she if she wants to respond. Anything else, Bill?

Bill: I'm about done, Larry.

LB: Well, we'll just, ah, ---(end of interview)