Oral Histories at the NHA Research Library

Jeannette Killen

NARRATOR: Jeannette Haskins Killen

INTERVIEWER: Kelly Hanley Goode

PLACE: Nantucket, Massachusetts

DATE: August 5, 2001

GOODE: ... Haskins Killen at her home, 43-R South Shore Road, Nantucket Massachusetts on August 5th, 2001. The interviewer is Kelly Hanley Goode for the Nantucket Historical Association. Okay, Jeannette. I'd like to start with your memories of your childhood on Nantucket, and first with your arrival here--when you first came to live here.

KILLEN: We came to Nantucket on a lighthouse tender. A lighthouse tender is a buoy tender and the Coast Guard still use the same ones, I believe. And we came from Boston Harbor. That was the oldest lighthouse in New England. And it was after a heavy storm actually, and we came to shore off of Great Point on the southwest side. And it was just beautiful. It was sort of misty, and the water was calm like it is after a storm. And we could see it, part of it lying there. It was like a picture. And that was in 1937. And they took us all ashore--our furniture, everything. They had a little lighthouse truck. And the crew there had to lift all that furniture into the long boats, take it up to the beach, get it in the truck and help because it was a good mile or so up to the lighthouse itself. And they did all that. And we got there seven o'clock in the morning, so it was done by noontime.
And I met Bill Grieder there, but never knowing we were going to know each other years later. They were leaving on the same tender. And I was going up past the boat house--there was a boat house there--and he was going down to get aboard the tender and I was coming out. And we said hi to each other and that was it in those days. And his family were leaving to go to Gay Head, I believe it was, in the Vineyard and we were coming to Great Point from Boston Light, which often happened in the lighthouse service. You

were not made to make a choice to a light house. You had an option. Would you like to go here--would you like to go there, and the lighthouse keepers had choices.

GOODE: So coming in, your father was in the lighthouse service.

KILLEN: My father--when he was a young man before he married he was in the Coast Guard for two years. That also accumulated time for him. He was in the lighthouse service 32 years after that. And we came to Boston Light when I was nine months old. Mr. Babcock and his family--he was the head keeper. Some lighthouses had one keeper--two or three, depending where they were, how dangerous or whatever. We were the second family. That was in the Depression. And in all of New England--that was civil service also--there were only two jobs available in the whole district which was New England Coast district one. And my father and a friend of his took the test, the civil service test and they got the job in a time when people couldn't find anything, you know. And so he became the first assistant, and the Norwood Family lived in a big duplex house. You can see them on the picture here. It was a large duplex--three or four stories at the Boston Light. This is the Boston Light. This house is gone now, but this finished also--not heated. But they lived over here and we lived here. And you can see the light house. It looked large but it really isn't. And at that time all the men did eight hours and eight hours off to fill in the 24 hours. And they circulated it. And we were there-- We learned to play baseball. My father made us games. And all the children but one--there were seven of us, I was the oldest. And all the children were born not on the lighthouse itself but in hub[??].
And when I started school in the first grade there was a little village school that only had three grades. And after that you had to go down to Nantucket for the fourth grade and on up at that time. When we had to go live in hub we had to room and board with people in there because we couldn't go back to the lighthouse every other day. So that was a very drastic change for we children, especially me. In fact, I was so homesick that they said, "Take her out. Start her next year. She's not ready." Because you go into a strange house--you don't know anyone. You're going to school every day. We didn't grow up in a community and so you're a little afraid. You're not used to automobiles. But still it was a good way to live because there was a kind of strength to achieve from that. It was like living in the country like country people are. You depend

on yourselves--and that's what you do. Anyway, but we had a wonderful life. Everybody loved it. The family next door had eight children. We had six there. And the only one I have left is my baby sister, my youngest. She's up in Maine, and there's just the two of us out of all of them.
And the Babcocks had four children but they were older. They were an older couple. And I remember before they had dams the older boy--his name was Bill--and he was in the Coast Guard. And they would have tremendous floods along the Missouri-Mississippi River. And every year he'd have to get transferred from somewhere along the coast here and go out and rescue people before they built all the dams as ways to, you know, control it. And Grace was a nurse. She was either older or younger. They were the two older children. And she was a nurse. And I think she was a career--an Army nurse in a time when women were not. And there was Gertrude who became a teacher. And then there was Junior who came to visit me when I lived on the Cape Cod Canal. And he looked exactly like his father. I did kind of a skip in the generations thing, you know. I thought, oh, my gosh. Anyway, he came to visit me. He was 72--going to live to be an old man like his dad. And they were all over and all in different places. And I'm in touch with one of the girls from the other family--Wanda Norwood. And she lives out in western Massachusetts. So we're corresponding and catching. And I'm going to invite her here because it was out of the blue. And it would be nice because I sent her a picture of us sitting on the doorstep. She was always my favorite in the whole family.
But my mother, being a mother, she always wanted me to play with the younger one who was my age. But I liked the other one. And we played with black and white rabbits. I guess they ran wild on Little Brewster. That was the island across from us, but at low tide you could walk over. And Dad brought a little black and white--I think they're Belgian. And they would tame in no time at all. He brought babies. So we all had little baby rabbits to play with. And we had cats and dogs and learned to play baseball. All of us, the whole families, get together and play baseball.

GOODE: So then you left that setting for Nantucket when you were-
KILLEN: Oh, I was in the third grade. Let's see, I was nine months old when we went to Boston Light, so I never knew anything else. I loved it there though. But I went back to see it from home one day and I couldn't believe how small it was. You know how things look large to you when you're little. And you go back to see them and

you say, "Oh, I was so afraid of that. I'm bigger than that whatever it is." So we came to Nantucket August 27th, 1937. [ASIDE CONVERSATION]

GOODE: August 27, 1937 you came to Nantucket--your whole family.

KILLEN: To Nantucket in the lighthouse tender, as I said, and just fell totally in love. And there was a picture--I've got a few pictures of it. It had a little-- I think it was a Model A, not a Model T--but it just had the cab. And it had a heavy lighthouse on the side that belonged to the lighthouse service. So Dad got acquainted with Harry Gordon whose garage used to be out in _____. And that's where he did business. And Dad bought his first Ford from him. And he had an old seat out of a car he had put in the back of the truck. So the first year we went back and forth. He took us in every day fifteen miles to town--five miles over the sand and ten miles to town--and then he came back. My mother knew how to run the light and she did. And we all learned how to do that as we got older because a single person, a single keeper of the lighthouse--there were times when you had to do something else. But somebody that could light it anyway would be there and to do whatever.

GOODE: How do you light the lighthouse? How did you light it?

KILLEN: In those days it never was--it was 16 years old. It was an old _____ light. And there were shoals out to the mostly west, a little bit southwest that had a red sector. And you started--it had a wick shaped like that. And so you pumped alcohol--it was an alcohol thing--until it glowed very brightly. And at just exactly the right minute you turned on the kerosene. It was kerosene fed. And then it would go all night long. And if you weren't careful or spilled or anything it was very easy to set the light up. We never did. But my father had an engineering degree. He went to School of Boston before he got married, and so he was kind of knowledgeable about that sort of thing.

GOODE: What were his duties out at the lighthouse?

KILLEN: What?

GOODE: What were his duties, your father's duties at the lighthouse?

KILLEN: You have to keep the light house clean. You have to keep a watch, walk around the perimeter. The lighthouse patrol _____ Coast Guard. You had to every year or every two years whitewash the tower. You didn't get any extra help. My mother held the rope. I said, "Gosh, Mom, it's a good thing you loved him." Anyway, they had this big _____ with wheels on it and you just hauled it up, you know. And he'd whitewash the tower. And the top was always heavy iron, so that was kind of scary to reach over. But we weren't then. Looking at it now-- He had a ladder. He always used safety. But the top of great point which fell eventually was heavy cast iron and you had to paint that to keep it from rusting. All the lighthouse keepers along the coast in every single lighthouse station even before the Coast Guard you got marked whether you had one, two, three or four star lighthouses--the same as the restaurants. And he always got his one because he was just that way. He wanted things to look well. Alex has got a lot of that in him--the rightness of things I was speaking of the other day. You want a lighthouse to gleam. I'm sure you've seen a lighthouse that no one's there--how fast it falls apart. It gets old and derelict looking and the paint falls off it--that kind of thing. And you have to keep it that way.
It was a good job to have because it was right in the middle-- Let's see. I was born in '27. Twenty-nine is when the real tough-- You got paid once a month at that time. And there was a little boat attached to the lighthouse. We called it the Doolittle after the famous flyer, Doolittle because it would go anywhere in any kind of weather. And we were only ten miles out from Boston itself. So in that case you had to take care of the boat too. In Boston Light there were docks to polish. And, you know, anything heavy on Boston Light--that also had the same kind of light. And there were two _____ and a much taller tower. To run the signal house, to run the fog horn, there were two like locomotive engines. They looked like locomotives. They were beautiful. They were black and they had red _____ pistons and they had to be kept in order, and that was to keep it going.

GOODE: This is at the Boston--

KILLEN: No, that would be in Boston Light. You'd all have to have a hand in doing that. There was a rain shed to catch water for

washing. We had wells for drinking which was very good water, but we had the rain shed for other water for laundry, etcetera.

GOODE: What was the setup like at Great Point?

KILLEN: Great Point had--it's this picture right there--that house right there was also--most all the lighthouses were duplex houses. And some of the other buildings had been taken down, and there was the usual out buildings. Now the woman that wrote that book made a mistake. Right over towards the south side was our well house. There was another well that was metal and it was down underground. It was to keep things cold. That was right outside the door. Then it was a barn at one time and we used it as a garage. But it had the loft still. And originally they had a horse and buggy that went to _____, went in to pick up fuel, whatever. I didn't meet my husband, Jim Killen, till after the war. I didn't know him till then. But I met his family--Harold, John and Bruce Killen's dad. They ran-- The Killen brothers owned the _____ and they still had a business there. And they used to deliver coal to _____. And then the Coast Guard had to take it to Great Point. Also kerosene. And so I knew that family long before I ever met the man I married which was kind of interesting because it shows it's a really small world. And they used to take everything to _____ and then seems to me I remember a _____ at _____. But that would have been later after the war. I think that was the wartime--not because of the war, but I think that's something that the war developed. And they did have a ____ at that time later on.

GOODE: A what?

KILLEN: A duck, you know, like the Coast Guard uses today. I think they use them in a pond at Boston too.

GOODE: Well, the _____ River, as a matter of fact.

KILLEN: But they had to take their trucks, and they would have to transport that up to the lighthouse for five miles because they had bigger vehicles than we did. We had the little truck. And Dad would-- In those days there were people in town where a lighthouse keeper could get credit to get groceries for the month. But today you couldn't do that because it's such a whole different

thing. And then the man got his check at the end of the month. He'd go in and pay and then--

GOODE: So how did you get your food? You would make trips into town?

KILLEN: My father shopped once a month. And we cooked and we canned. I knew how to can when I was ten years old helping my mother--what to do, why. _____--have you ever been up there. _____ around _____ had wonderful clams. Great Point--endless. So we could eat off the land. My father also was a hunter. He hunted birds. He fished. And we had mako shark before anybody knew it was any good. He comes from Maine. And his dad owned and operated a canning factory in Lubec, Maine, so he knew about fish and everything.

GOODE: Can you tell me your father's name? I had it written down, but--

KILLEN: Archford[sp?] Vernon Haskins, the great. You can leave that off. And everyone liked him.

GOODE: So what did you as children do out there since it was remote?

KILLEN: Oh, I made some notes that I don't want to forget. Let's see. Our family--let's see--baseball, horseshoes, cards, poker, parchesi, backgammon, checkers, story time in which my mother and dad took time to read us. But we had-- That library over there--we could count before we went to school. And they didn't have kindergarten then--but just from playing games and cards. And we really did learn to count. We loved poker--still do. And my baby sister was born here during the war--after the war had started. And we had all these games. Dad made his own games. And like what would be--I don't know what you'd call it then--they hadn't started making wallboard, but probably wooden sheathing--small, narrow sheathing. He made all our games. He even made Chinese checkers. And he made it and he framed it. I think my sister still has that. And you could buy marbles then. Whatever color you wanted you could chose. So he would get the different packages and then bring them home. I don't think he ever bought a game. They were all wooden--every one of them. And backgammon we learned before it ever

became a really well known thing. And cards is a great, great thing in lighthouses. Because the lighthouses aren't manned anymore. They aren't womaned either. So, you know, they don't know what they're losing.

GOODE: So how did you feel living out there as a child?

KILLEN: Well, I loved it. And I think I'm a little bit of a loner. I loved having friends. I loved having the _____. But I really, really need my alone time. And that's funny because I have seven children and all the grandchildren. But I really need my alone time and I give it to myself, you know. And I do that with photography. And I've sold some pretty good photography and it's a thing that gives you some time. And you probably have done it yourself, you know. But then I loved having the family because I'm the oldest of a large family. So that's nice too. And if I didn't have them I'd go looking for one--a family, you know. But living out there--of course, there were nine of us. When my sister was born that made nine of us. The first year we were there, there was a man--he was just leaving--his name was Pers Evans. He was transferred to Minitz Ledge Light. And I don't know why he went there.

GOODE: What was that light?

KILLEN: Minitz Ledge Light. It's the lighthouse off Scituate and which is very famous. And I felt so sorry. We didn't know them very well because they just were there waiting for the transfer. And they were going a different way. They weren't going off in the lighthouse tender. And my father told me in later years that he got tuberculosis out there because the towers in the water sweat. And they have, you know, a better way to do it now. But he got TB out there and passed away. And then there was a man named Bill Daw and his wife, Hilda were stationed there briefly. And we were alone for a number of years. When the war started they opened up the other side of the house and they put four Coast Guardsmen up there because, as we were talking about the other day, during the war we began to hear funny things. And there was a lot of security attached to living so far away from there. And one of the things we'd hear motors, and that was during the war. And eventually we found that there were submarine turbines sounding that did not belong to us. And so my father also belonged to the National Security Council. And anything that happened you'd call Jim Glidden who was the FBI--he was the

security person on the Island working for the United States government. And he stayed here and anything unusual--
And then the Army, Navy, Coast Guard, Air Force--everybody was here and he was all involved with all of that. Because they were afraid that-- There were several things that happened during the war out here which were very bad. One of them they didn't talk about for a long time. They were doing maneuvers from I think it was called Danvers at the time--a camp. And they didn't know the waters out here. And they sent some men to go down through _____ in Nantucket. And they didn't know what they were doing or they went at the wrong time or something, but most of them drowned. And it was very little talked about. But we did know that but we couldn't talk about that because it was a hell of a tragedy, you know. And you know who would know about that--Ruthie Greeder[sp?].

GOODE: It was a Naval operation?

KILLEN: They were Army operations. The camp had a different name then--Camp Edwards? I can't remember exactly because there were a lot of things we weren't told. But that was one of the things that happened. And then sometimes they'd have an alarm. And all the soldiers in Nantucket would be up to Great Point and we wouldn't be allowed to go to school. It happened three or four times--an alert. They called it an alert. So, of course, we were all excited. We didn't know how serious that could have been.

GOODE: Why did they sound the alert?

KILLEN: Because they heard things they shouldn't hear in the ocean and they didn't know if like the German's had gone ashore down in Georgia. They went ashore down in Florida. They went ashore in Long Island. And they were afraid of something like that. But we being young kids we thought that would be exciting _____. We wouldn't have liked it--I know that. And then that passed.

GOODE: You mentioned about going to school. How did you get to school?

KILLEN: Oh, my father took us to school in the truck every day. But, of course, there was no cab on the truck. In fact, I have a picture of it I'll show you. I've got just a couple of pictures out now. I'll show

that to you. There's the three of us. I think it's the first day of school--we're sitting in the back of the truck. Just three of us were going to school when we got here, and that was all right. But then the dunes--where the gulls are now, that long stretch--there were two huge dunes out there when we got here. And we had roads over the top of them for when we were running against the tide and trying to make it back home. It seemed like very solid. You didn't think they were ever going to go away. But I have pictures of those too. And they're not very good, but you can see that there are two big dunes there. And my father would get up on them. And he'd say, "We'll wait till the next _____--drive like the dickens and get across to the next _____."

GOODE: How long did it take you to get to school?

KILLEN: Let's see. We had to be there-- We started seven-thirty. We had to start the day, I believe, quarter past eight. I'm pretty sure these were the hours. It seems to me that sticks in my head. And I think we got out at three-thirty and he'd be there to pick us up. For awhile the bus would take us out to where _____ keeps going and you go to _____. But for some reason they said they wouldn't do it anymore. And there was another family--the Resentes[sp?] Family--lived in _____. And there were six children there. We were three. We became six children going to school, and they refused to take us past the _____ junction. And my father got his back up. What happened is the town refused to send a bus out because they didn't have that many, you know, and so forth, and the laws weren't in place at that time. So he sued the state for not taking his children, transporting his children to their education which was very important to our family. And he won. And it was a landmark case and he won. And as long as he transported us back and forth they had to give him a check every single month for his expenses--for his gas and transport, and so forth. The lighthouse truck could no longer be involved in that.
So we went to Harry Gordon, as I was saying, and he bought a new car. It was a '37 Ford. And he had done a favor for Harry. He had a bad fire out there, and my father saw it. And he put us on the bus and he went back and helped him to get all his automobiles out of the garage which burned down. So Dad got the car at cost. And they were dear friends for years. And he used to come up here fishing when people couldn't get up here anyway. That's another little story in making friends and how things overlap like that. And so he

bought a '37 Ford. I think 850 or 900 _____. And it took us back and forth to school every single day--60 miles. He'd come in 50 miles, do whatever Mom needed, go back. And she'd watch the light. And then he'd come back in 50 miles to bring us home. And then one year the weather got so bad. And one of the big dunes washed away which was too big a place between-- The tide always washed over the gulls at that time. It built up a little bit I've noticed. And so we came to town. And I was in the sixth grade when we lived on Vessel Street in the house right across from where I worked nights--the one next down from-- There was two apartments and we did not like it much.

GOODE: Living in town?

KILLEN: No. I wasn't very happy with it. And we were having to do a lot of homework then. And because we lived in town and my father wasn't with us--he was at the lighthouse--he had to stay out there. And my mother was in town with us and six children. My baby sister was born that year that following September. So there were six of us still. And, you know, they didn't have the boys and girls club--they didn't have this--they didn't have that. Actually, they didn't have the crime either. But there was too much for her to do to watch us that close together, so he wasn't too happy with _____ either. So came April vacation we went out there to stay with a ten day vacation. And we used to go swimming on those flats out there in April vacation. And I couldn't think of going in the water in April anymore. But we just didn't come back. We used to rent the houses by the month. And you didn't have leases, and you didn't have this and you didn't have that. You didn't have security, you know. It was a trusting world which it no longer is. I'm still angry about that. I liked that old world.

GOODE: Tell me more about what that was like on Nantucket--how people treated you.

KILLEN: Open, friendly. You were the guardians of the light, you know. Sort of like the fisherman--you're like the fishermen home from the sea kind of feeling. And everybody's safe. And we had very nice neighbors. My mother made very good friends with a woman. I was old enough to baby sit. And every once in awhile she and the woman would walk to the movies which they had I think twice a week--Wednesday nights and then Saturday nights in town.

GOODE: Where did they play the movies?

KILLEN: In the big theater downtown that's still there _____ Lafayette is still-- And in those days you got Mickey Mouse, usually Mickey Mouse. Then you got a newsreel. And then you'd get a little special story, and then you'd get the main picture for I think it was 75 cents, a dollar and a quarter--something like that. And actually she was the grandmother of Rowena Rickard. And her daughter who is a friend of my girls has that flaming red hair just like my mother's friend had. And I look at her and I think of her--her name was Kate. She was the great-grandmother, you know. And it was like three generations now that we've all known each other, and the Cranston kids in the same family. All the Cranston young men, you know, boys. And it was good. Preston Manchester--do you know him? He once had the Upper Deck. And where the--he may still own it, I don't know--where the ice cream shop is right there below the Upper Deck. I think it's an ice cream shop right there on the corner--right in the alley is it still? I hardly ever go to Main Street.

GOODE: You mean on Main Street?

KILLEN: Yes.

GOODE: On Main Street--the Espresso Cafe now? Is that what you mean?

KILLEN: Going up it's on the left, is it?

GOODE: Yes.

KILLEN: I didn't know that either.

GOODE: It used to be the sweet shop.

KILLEN: Yes, it did. That's what I was trying to think of. The next one up, Preston Manchester--he got to be friendly with Dad. Mel Ray, First National, was across the street from there. And eventually the First National--because he was a lighthouse keeper--gave my father credit there. The two drug stores are still the same. But the jewelry store on the corner used to be Coffin's Drug Store. There were three drug stores. And right across from that--as I was

starting to say--was the sweet shop. I'm not sure whether it was the first one or the second building. But Preston put in I think it was either four or five alley bowling alley--the first in Nantucket. And I used to come to town with my father once in awhile because I wasn't yet eleven and I wasn't quite old enough to take care of the light yet, you know. So I'd come to town once in awhile with him. And he introduced me to it and I first learned to bowl. And the Mitchell's Book Shop was Finley's Paint Store--Mickey Finley. And so curious--because my daughter Jennifer--she works for Cottage Care. That was one of her first people she went to to help, you know. And he remembered all that, and so forth. And then there's another dress shop down a little ways. It's a dress shop now. It used to be Maude Dinsmore's. And I bought my clothing there and the girls, as I say, got to be teenagers, and my eldest daughter's wedding dress. It was just a plain white dress but we had the veil. It was beautiful. It had lace around here--handmade lace, very pretty.

GOODE: What was the name of the store?

KILLEN: Hmmm?

GOODE: What was the name of the store?

KILLEN: It was Maude Dinsmore's Dress Shop, It was very, very nice. And that would be Anne Geddes' mother. She's passed away now. But she had beautiful clothes. And then my girls got to be teenagers. And then Murray's Shop--where Elizabeth and Phil Murray owned--when I came here I shopped there. Because I would earn a little bit of money. A lot of little shells used to come to shore at Great Point after a storm, and I made necklaces and bracelets to match. And once in awhile people would come up to the lighthouse and they'd buy them, you know. I had paints--but I'd touch them up with fingernail polish or paints, or Dad would buy me oil paints because I was beginning to paint and that kind of thing. And so it was fun. But that was a double store as it is today. But one side was more like a five and ten, and you could get lace or curtains and all this sort of thing to sew with--patterns, and the lower half was dresses, clothing--a store like you'd compare it maybe to K-Mart today only small, you know. They carry the same kind of things. And I had credit there as a young teenager so I bought a few things there myself. And they let me pay a dollar a week. It was that kind of thing. And everywhere you went people were friendly. And there

were trust. You didn't kind of look behind you. You could let your children walk down the street at night. When we first bought the inn the kids worked part of the time. They only worked three hours a day for me because then the work would be done. I did the whole first floor and all the laundry, and they were the girls that did the rooms. They'd each take a floor and they'd swap off.

GOODE: Tell me where the inn is located and when you started working there and the name of it.

KILLEN: We bought the inn in 1964.

GOODE: And the name of the inn?

KILLEN: The Carlisle Guest House Inn. Well, I said, you know, the girls are growing up. Sharon was old enough to already have had a teenage party that involved a gown, you know, seventh and eighth grade. And I said, "We don't have room enough." So you know the house on New Street that's got the tremendous addition? Okay. You know Sousa's Barber Shop. Okay. We owned that house right next to it that they're building onto.

GOODE: At the corner of New and Clement? Or is that Clement?

KILLEN: Yes. New Lane--New Street, I'm sorry. And we also owned right over to Beck Street. That was our first house. And we sold Joe Sousa all that land--the father, where everybody goes to get their hair done. And I think Genevieve works out of there, if I'm not mistaken.

GOODE: Is that where you first lived after you were married?

KILLEN: That was the first house we bought. That was our first house.

GOODE: And when was that?

KILLEN: The first house that we lived in was Jim's mother's house--Obadiah's Restaurant. And she had a little tea room there called--what the heck was it, I worked there for her--Snackery. And she served afternoon tea and one meal a night. And she could sit 42 people. In the morning I cooked. It was all home cooking in the

kitchen. You didn't have all those rules and laws and regulations then either. She would go upstairs and rest, and then I would do the afternoon tea which involved simple things that she had made. We always made a big pan of brownies and cinnamon toast mostly and tea, English tea, and so forth. Because that was the end of the war. You couldn't get a lot of things--a lot of meat. And so Jim's father was very ill with tuberculosis. And that was the result of the First World War gassing--mustard gas that the German's did. And he was over in Pocasset, which at that time was a tubercular hospital. And that's where people on the Cape and Islands went to. Anyway, he was a patient over there. And so she never really was that crazy about Nantucket, but she ran a restaurant. She was also the manager of Butler's Store which we miss. But she wanted to go over there. So she went over to Hyannis and lived awhile--then she bought a piece of land. She built a little house, a two bedroom house for them. And he got out for awhile. He got better medicine, so he got out for awhile. So I kind of got beside the question. Oh, so we lived in the house for a few years and we paid it off. And I said, "You know, I'm renting rooms here." I started renting rooms there--four of them upstairs.

GOODE: In Obadiah's Restaurant?

KILLEN: Obadiah's Restaurant upstairs. I re-did the hall and I re-did the rooms. My father taught me how to do all that stuff at the lighthouse. And so I started renting rooms there and I liked it a lot. The only trouble is I had two little babies and another one on the way. And they'd come to the door and say, "Is the lady of the house at home?" Here I've got two little kids and they didn't think I was the lady of the house. I said, "I'm the lady of the house." But it gave us good money. And I told her we'd pay the taxes on the house because I was making that extra money, you know. And I liked it. So I got to like it then. And so she wanted to sell the house. That's what she did. She wanted to sell the house and build a little house for her husband--she and her husband over on the Cape in Hyannis--and that's how that came about. It sold right away. And so that's when we found our house and we bought that. And Jim had saved some money from the service and I had saved some money from renting rooms too, so we had enough for a down payment. You only needed about five hundred dollars then.

GOODE: Do you remember what you paid for the house on New Street?

KILLEN: Yes. Five thousand seven hundred and fifty dollars for that house. Do you remember it before they added onto it? And that whole piece of land down to the next street--a whole block--and over to the next house--all of that.

GOODE: And that was in what year?

KILLEN: Let me think. I had Sharon, Cheryl-- I had Sharon, my son and Cheryl. And she was--I think it was 1951.

GOODE: Early fifties?

KILLEN: Or thereabouts, you know. I'd have to look it up.

GOODE: It was in the early fifties you bought the house on New Street.

KILLEN: Yes. I'd say '51 around I'm thinking. And we sold it in 1964 to buy the Carlisle House. And my husband at that time was Commander of the Legion. So some of the people told me that I should become a part of the auxiliary because it helped him. So I did that, and in it I met Kitty Barr, who owned the Carlisle House, and her sister. They owned it together. And she was tired of running it. And one thing led to another. And they had to have a meeting and we had to attend them. So we were in her kitchen and I totally fell in love with that house. So I went to see her. So my husband was getting--he says, "Well, what are you going to do?" I said, "You've got eight of us. You've got six girls coming up." We lost our son when he was four. He had equine encephalitis. So I had the six girls and so I said, "We're going to have gowns. We've got a little tiny close in one bedroom--none in the other--none in the other--one hall closet, one bath. We did take the whole kitchen apart. And he worked with Dick Corkish[sp?] on Saturday's, and he let him build cabinets and everything--beautiful kitchen--twenty-four feet of counter space around. And we took one window and moved it to make a corner window like we could do here. And we lived here a few more years. And so he said, "Well, you think you're so smart," he says, "Why don't you buy the Carlisle House?" I said, "Okay." I was being smart, you know. So I went down and I said,

"Kitty, I heard your house--" it was on the market. And I said, "Jim and I would like to come talk to you." And he got very enthused. We went down and he looked it all over. I said, you know, "It needs some paint." The kitchen was gray and pink. All the beautiful old pine was covered with pink. It took me three years to do that kitchen but I got it all off. And the entire wall--15 feet--it was longer than that--a closet, and just had everything in it--closets you didn't even use.

GOODE: When was that house built?

KILLEN: Seventeen sixty-five. And I loved it. Nine fireplaces. And you walked into the cellar off of the street. It wasn't down. You walked in straight. So we built a double bedroom down there because we had so many kids.

GOODE: So you lived in that house as well as ran it as an inn.

KILLEN: Yes, we did. There were living quarters, and you could shut off your living area. We built a bedroom downstairs, and the sun porch we took over for a few years. And we had football weekends. All the kids would have their friends in. And during football season I would make like beans and hot dogs, you know. And the thing about it is the kids were home. People would say, "Oh, you love all those kids around you _____." I knew where the hell my kids were. One of my best friends, she's the one that said that to me. I often wonder if she ever thinks about it now. Because my last one went to school. She came in and said, "Come on. Let's go up to the drug store and have coffee." I said, "I wouldn't sit in that drug store and have coffee for love nor money." She says, "Why?" I said, "It's the biggest gossip place in Nantucket." And I said, "But let's have coffee here." And she said, "Why are you crying?" I said, "Well my baby's gone to school. That's a landmark." And it is--believe me, when yours do it. And that's when she said that to me. And I said, "Well, where were your kids Saturday night?" "Well, at your house I suppose." And I said, "Well, what are you fussing about then?" But it was just a little joke between us, you know. There was no hard _____, as they say today.

GOODE: Tell me about running the inn. How many rooms did you have?

KILLEN: There were 32 rooms with nine baths altogether--three full floors. I had seven bedrooms and three baths on the top floor, which now there are four. And there were one, two, three, four, five baths on the second floor and double and triple. And one place you could make a suite--triple by that. Then there was another end of the house where you could have people in here and across the way. And the door would shut so the family could be at this end. Both ends of the house had that. And then the sun porch--we took the back room and we put double bunks in so that the kids could move out there. And they had their own entrance off the back of the store, too--off the back of the place. And I began to serve a continental breakfast. I got known all over the country for it.

GOODE: Why is that?

KILLEN: Because it was very good. [LAUGHS] No. I got up-- As a matter of fact, I didn't even know it myself. Somebody came to me one day and said, "Do you know how we found you?" I said, "No." I did advertise in Yankee Magazine on my own, but they had Frommer's New England Tourist Guide, and they had listed me as the best on the Island. But what I did was I decided--I got up in the morning and I made three loaves of bread. And I would invent some of them. And rather than have juice--and I had that big coffee percolator--I served coffee, tea, cocoa for the kids. I welcomed children, because a lot of them won't take children or babies. And so actually these two chairs were there then. These are covers. They're crewel work and they're ugly but they were, you know-- Anyway, and he showed me, he said, "Look it." And I had a write-up in Frommer's New England. I never even knew they'd been to the house because it wasn't a breakfast that I went out and bought. And I had a big punch bowl and it was swirled--very simple, just swirls--that's all. And every day I filled that with fresh fruit. Like now all the fruit that's on sale I would _____ cancel out the other green one which I don't care for and watermelon altogether.
And then the Emporium was still there. And I had Chinese cups and Chinese dessert dishes I bought there to match. And, as I said, it was in there from six to eleven--no twelve. And then I would clean it up. And I took care of the whole floor. We had double living rooms. So they had black and white TV in theirs--we had the color one in ours. The foyer and the dining room--and it backed to the kitchen. And I had the same group coming back. I could count on it every single August. They would make sure they were coming back

all the same time. "When are you coming back?" And they'd make tentative-- I really miss it. It taught me a lot about people.

GOODE: What did it teach you?

KILLEN: Well, it taught me that, you know, you hear all this bad press all the time. Even then we were starting to get it. People are really nice, you know. And this is something that-- I had never been a prejudiced person in my life. And I had an incident where one of the first people that ever came to see me--she was lovely. And she came to see us. But somehow she got here a day early and I couldn't take her for the two week vacation. She came in--very nice--and she happened to be Jewish. And so I won't tell you where I sent her. I called her up. I said, "This girl has come a day early. Have you got any openings--it was up on Center Street--for just one night?" And I said, "Then she's here for two weeks." And so she said she'd take her. I was working in the kitchen, and I hadn't started my continental breakfast. And it was a few years where I did that. And I thought gee, that's a good idea. Anyway, she was standing there crying. And I looked at her and I said, "What's the matter?" And she says, "The woman says, 'We don't take Jew girls here.'" And she kicked her out of the house at seven o'clock in the morning. Never, never did I ever send her or anybody to another--a guest-- We all swapped around in all the inns--that kind of thing. And she spent years coming to our house until she married and had her own family. That's the kind of thing. I never was prejudiced anyway. But I didn't realize that people were still doing that kind of stinky stuff, you know. So anyway, I loved it.

GOODE: When was the season? When did you open and close?

KILLEN: I opened in April. I had the rooms all ready and I took college kids looking for jobs at a rate so that they could come and stay and have fun and give them a break. And, you know, I had kids too, you know. And I was one of the first ones that opened that early. And so I did that. One family still lives in Nantucket and they're in business here. And they wanted to come to Nantucket. They couldn't find a place to live. They had nowhere to go. One of my daughters was going to get married and got engaged. They decided to live together. So I knew that house was going to be available. So I said, "Look--" They had a brand new baby too. They'd been married awhile. So, you know, she did the formula in

my kitchen and stuff. This is the kind of thing that--I've never forgotten them, they've never forgotten me. And they live here now, and I think the kids must be in high school at least or maybe college even. But my daughter and her fiance were going into their own place so it made this house available. And they stayed there till he went into business and they built their own.
So that's the kind of thing we should say. "Gee, I did something good." You know, I helped somebody do something good is what I mean. The kids had a good upbringing. They could have their friends any time. It was nothing-- They could not just one at a time come in--say it's your turn this week and your turn this week, but they could each have a friend in at any time, you know. And then I let them have a New Year's party. We were going out one night. I let them have a New Year's party. It was all right. The police didn't have to go there, in other words. But I think some of them--they had liquor. And I really didn't like that. I knew they drank out, but I asked them not to. But by the time we got home--which wasn't really late--it was a little bit, you know, just--they calmed down. But that was just one of the incidents. But I really didn't have many of them. And one of the things the kids had years ago and I don't think they do it now is Friday nights--the kids weren't allowed to go out during the week--Friday, Saturday they could go. But homework had to be done, and most all the parents were like that too. But they always went out to the pines out into the woods. They had a special place they could go. The police let them alone. They probably had beer. We didn't go out sneaking around looking to see. But the children--they were expected to clean up their mess and they did. They'd say, "We've got to go out and clean up after our party last night."
And it was such a trusting world that I'm taken aback almost on a daily basis--not by Nantucket but what I hear on the TV and what's happening, and child molestation. Am I being a babe in the woods or has this always gone on, or is it just such a free and easy world, you know. That's what makes me think--why did I ever leave the lighthouse when I hear those horrible things, you know.

GOODE: Why did you leave the lighthouse?

KILLEN: Well, they made them obsolete.

GOODE: When did you father-- Your parents left the Island?

KILLEN: Yes. And ten years right to the day I had met Jim. And he hadn't fallen in love but I had, so I decided to stay on the Island. And I was out of school, of course. And in those days I'd loved to have gone to college. I've had other courses I've taken myself but not-- So I've got a degree-- Well, I've got a license for real estate. I had that. But I let that lapse because over there I made some good sales and I really liked it a lot. I love meeting people. So I really can't say that I-- I love my quiet times. But I loved meeting the people, and it was fun to find homes for the right person. But then, as you know, real estate went right down hill. I love to cook. So I got into the care field--caring for people. And I went to school for that. We became a foster family over on the Cape. When I had my own home over there I had a house with four acres. And my daughter's abuts it now. She bought the house below it three years ago. And Cape Cod Hospital runs a program in which you become a foster family for a senior citizen that hasn't any one in particular or no children. And Alex was a baby then. So I said, "We'd like to have a male for peer ideas." And they match you up. You go about three or four months before they let you have anybody. They check you--who you are. Because I was really getting nervous because we were going into another recession. And I said, "How the hell am I going to do this?" I had Jenny and Alex living with me.

GOODE: Was it _____?

KILLEN: Yes. And so what they did was they paid you 500 dollars a month. And that was all off my mortgage. And I could earn the rest because I was hanging wallpaper for a living. That's what I did and I was good at it too. You know, when she was going to have a baby I still had money left. But I knew that things were getting rough and so I said, "Okay, my girl." I did the Carlisle House twice myself--all the wallpaper, all the paint, all the ceilings--the kitchen, everything. And Jim was a telephone man so, you know, they were so busy down here all the time. And he built a fire escape in one of the rooms--it made a suite. I said, "I'd like to close this door off of the hall and make this a suite and put that door in from the bedroom into this bath," which there was room to do. It made an old-fashioned bath with the tubs with the legs. And then you could shut the door there with a double or twin bedroom and it made a suite for people. Anyway, he did all that kind of stuff. _____ carpenter. He did all that kind of stuff.

GOODE: And who came to the Carlisle House? You said that college kids came in April for jobs.

KILLEN: They came in April looking for jobs and would stay a weekend or a couple of weekends. I actually opened--Memorial weekend was the big one. That's when everybody opened. And then I ran right until October 15th, including Columbus Day. It used to be the 15th. I think it was earlier.

GOODE: And how long would people stay on average?

KILLEN: There were people that would come for one night in August. I've had people come and stay the entire summer. I had twin doctors, actually Ph.D. doctors. They taught in Chicago and they were identical twins. And they tried to eat the whole damn continental breakfast themselves too. In fact, the guests complained. What they were doing was go down and having breakfast. And they would take some of the melon and stuff upstairs into the rooms and they wouldn't have to go out for lunch. And I thought--how am I going to say anything to them, you know. They stayed the whole summer. I forget what I did but I worked it out. It think I told them that, you know, they had to be careful about how much they ate because some of the guests came down at eleven and there was nothing left. So would they please not bring it up for lunch because-- What I did to get rid of that problem--I went to the Marine Lumber Company and bought a 40 dollar little refrigerator. And, as I said, you could walk in my house _____. So the washer and dryer--eventually I put those down-- So they were in the kitchen--I put them downstairs. _____ too much. I begin to feel that's what I'm doing. [ASIDE CONVERSATION] And so it was just a little one. But I told the ones that used to come out in the kitchen and pack a lunch. And you got to really read people, you know. So I told them, "There's a refrigerator downstairs. There's only one rule. After eleven o'clock at night you can't come down because that's when we go to bed." Because the living room-- We slept in the living room, Jim and I. And there were great big wide doors as wide as there to there. And we just closed those up tight and they could go down.
But we stayed up till eleven o'clock and watched the late news, you know. And sometimes he didn't get home till nine-thirty or ten most of the time. So anyway, they loved that. Then they could come up. And they'd make their lunch and go to the beach and it saved

them. It was just a courtesy. It didn't cost me a thing except 40 dollars, you know. And I liked getting to know them. I made some lifelong friends actually. And I love getting into-- My father taught me about politics and all that kind of thing. And I love to get into discussions about politics. I tried to pass a lot of that on to Alex. He's very interested, you know. And we'll see what happens.

GOODE: So what was it like in those days in the sixties and seventies in terms of a tourist town compared to today?

KILLEN: Well, you could find a parking space on Main Street except maybe in August. There were no time slots how long you could stay there. There were no signs up "one-half hour parking." There was none of that. We didn't have public parking, which that's a Godsend down on Washington Street. When we first had the Carlisle House, Mr. Barnagee[sp?] had not built. Everybody was against that. My husband was on the Finance Committee for quite awhile. And Mr. Miller who at that time owned--he owned the docks.

GOODE: Who was that?

KILLEN: Mr. Miller. He married a local girl. He was a very wealthy man who summered here. And he offered docks--it was the Killen docks--to the town of Nantucket for one friggin' dollar. He was on the Finance Committee. And he and Kenny Holgate fought for that. The others said, "No, no--we can't afford to float a loan," because they had just built the Town Hall. Look at what they missed. They could have owned that whole area where all those boats come in every day. All that goes somewhere else. And they lost almost all their waterfront. But he and Kenny Holgate, Sr.--Ella's husband--they're the ones. And Mr. Barnagee built the marina as it is. And then more expensive type businesses moved in--I could say more classical businesses. That's not the word I want to use, but you know what I'm saying. Better clothing stores. Prices have gone up. I find it very hard to live in Nantucket and I did business here for years myself. I find it very hard.

GOODE: Financially do you mean?

KILLEN: Yes. I really do. And there was a trust. Like if your kids were going to the dentist, you know, and they had a lot of work to do you paid on it every month. And what happened--if you had

anything-- Everybody trusted everybody. If you had anything left over-- What I used to do with the mortgage is in October I would pay five months until Memorial weekend and I would not have a mortgage. And I didn't realize it--all that time I was paying on the principal as well. So actually when we sold the house in 1979 actually we only owed seven thousand dollars on it. And I forgot. I said, "There must be some mistake here." And they said, "Well, no. You've been paying on the principal every winter." But the oil was so expensive. And we had nine rooms. We were running two floors. I used the money I would have put in the mortgage. I had the money to pay the fuel bill and you didn't have to. Because people had trouble--they had to break it down so much each month, you know. Because in those days it was coming over by barge down where the marina is now. There were more tanks down there probably before you ever saw it--big tanks, and it was all stored down there. Nobody really liked that too much. And there are a few tanks down there now. But that was very hard on people. But everybody would wait. And most of us would go--about February I would go up to the bank and say, "I need twelve or fifteen hundred dollars for six months." And I said, "I'm going to do--" They didn't care what you were doing because you paid them back every year, but it established your credit. And I would buy the wallpaper and paint and I'd get all that work done. In February and August Sears and Roebuck's would have its white sale. And I bought matching sheets and towels in base colors to blend in with the wallpaper so that everything was, you know, it was truly an old country inn.

GOODE: And was it possible to make a living--how were you living?

KILLEN: I never lost money. I had that money left over. I wanted it so the kids could go to college if they chose. They didn't choose. And that's all right because they did just as well in those days. But I don't know. In Nantucket you seem to be able to do that though. My children have an education just working out in the banks, in the public life, in the school and self employment, you know. But they could have if they had wanted to. My oldest daughter went a year to Cape Cod Community College but then she got married. And you knew Jamie Lake, didn't you?

GOODE: Yes.

KILLEN: He was our oldest grandson. That was my daughter's son.

GOODE: I'm going to stop this now because we're at the end of this side. [CHANGE TO SIDE B OF TAPE] So I want to talk about your school years.

KILLEN: Well, I just wanted to say that we have the high school and other private schools now. And it's so wonderful because we had the first-- It was so funny. They did have the Cyrus Pearce School--very tiny school. A big auditorium. But the classrooms I think were five, no six--one off the side. And it filled the bill and it was named after I think a Nantucket educator, as far as I know. I'm not familiar with that. And they did a good job, by the way, adding onto it. And it was funny, because anybody who lived north of Main Street was _____. Anybody that lived south of Main Street wasn't quite _____. And there was a little quiet war going on. "Oh, that's right. You live in the south part of town, don't you." That was going around. And I never could figure that out.

GOODE: _____ were you considered?

KILLEN: North part of town because we lived at Great Point. I wouldn't have cared one way or the other. I probably would have sympathized with the south though, to tell you the truth. But actually in the seventh grade we all came together at Academy Hill.

GOODE: There were two elementary schools?

KILLEN: No. There was Cyrus Pierce and Academy Hill. Oh, wait a minute. Wait a minute. The Caulkin School was also the technical part of the school. The girls went over there to learn sewing, cooking and the boys went over to learn woodworking and that kind of thing. So that was really a good part of the school because almost every Nantucket boy knows how to do anything. Nowadays they have mechanics for cars in school. They didn't have that there then. But most of the father knew how to build cars so they didn't, you know--

GOODE: Where did you go to school?

KILLEN: What?

GOODE: Where did you go to school?

KILLEN: Academy Hill all the way. I started there-- I put down the names of the teachers. And I know anybody-- Wait a minute. Let me find this a minute. I didn't go to the third grade, but I know Margie Hull taught the third grade. Mary Simmons, who was very sarcastic, taught the fourth grade--and that's when my marks began to shine. I was a very serious kid, and in the fourth grade I really came home with A's and B's and it was kind of fun. She had Jim, my husband, too. And Jim can be pretty sarcastic. And Mary Simmons was friendly with Jim's mother who was also--she was a substitute school teacher. But she said, "Your son is the only person in my whole class that understands sarcasm." I got the biggest kick out of that. So then Mrs. Chase--I think there's still a Chase home right down around from the school--taught the fifth grade. And Jim's mother substituted, but I never had her. And then Miss Mendawnsa[sp?]--her brother was a priest and was stationed here on the Island as a priest for awhile--taught the sixth grade. We then went into the seventh grade and that's when the southies came. It's like the Yankees and the Red Sox. It was kind of like that.

GOODE: Where had they been before that?

KILLEN: At Cyrus Pierce School.

GOODE: I see.

KILLEN: You see, they only went to the sixth grade in the Cyrus Pierce School. [BRIEF INTERRUPTION--ASIDE CONVERSATION] So then--

GOODE: There was one classroom per grade?

KILLEN: When you got to the seventh and eighth grade we started changing rooms. Mr. Landry, Rose Landry's husband, he was the gym teacher, but he also taught--what did they used to call it, history and geography together--

GOODE: Social studies?

KILLEN: Yes. Richard Porter was Superintendent of the Junior High School. Who else was there? Mary Lovely Glidden was my teacher in the eighth grade. I loved her. I got polio between the seventh and

eighth grade in the summer. It's the only vacation my father was ever able to take us on--all nine of us down Maine. And I was there about a week and I got polio so I spent six weeks in the Bangor, Maine hospital there--not knowing whether I was going to live or make it. But I did. And so we had to do oral themes which I totally detested.

GOODE: You had to do what?

KILLEN: Oral themes.

GOODE: Oral themes.

KILLEN: You know those? Now they might call them something else. And I was scared to death. And what did she do? Dad had told them, "If she gets too tired, let her rest in the teacher's room." But I never pulled that. But for some reason she called me first. And I think she did it thinking I could get it out of the way.

GOODE: This was Mary Glidden?

KILLEN: Yes. I got up, started to cry. I never did that in my life in school, you know. So she said, "Jeannette, do you have it prepared?" She could see the paper because, you know, you're supposed to just glance at the paper to remind you like I'm doing now. So I said, "Yes." I said, "That will be fine. I'll be ready tomorrow." And it was one of the best times I had in the school. You didn't have to do anything but you could choose your subject. So I went home and I thought--well, why--I didn't know what I had first, but I thought--I think I'll talk about living in a lighthouse. And she called me. I got up and it turned into a question and answer period. And I got an A plus, of course. But I totally lost myself--wasn't thinking about being up in front of a class--and it was just so much fun.

GOODE: Do you remember what the students were interested in?

KILLEN: What it was like to live in a lighthouse. Did you stay up all night to watch the light? Did somebody have to? Yes, somebody had to. I said, "But, you know, that's why they call some ladies lighthouse keepers. And some ladies get a salary for that too." And my girls have given me all the books about lighthouse horrors and famous lighthouse women going back to the 1700's actually and

that kind of thing. And they wanted to know what it was like. And eventually I had a lot of my friends--there were so many of us. But then the Coast Guard left Great Point and we were there by ourselves. So we then had a duplex house, so we were allowed to have people out. And it was fun then, because we could have people out for a weekend. And over the years when we've had reunions I've almost forgotten who came to visit us out there. But it would be Friday. And when Dad would be going back in their families would pick them up in _____ so we wouldn't have to go all the way to town. They absolutely loved it. And my father was a very strong swimmer, so he always went with us for that kind of thing. And we had a Fourth of July picnic on the beach. And he had an old stove, and he'd fill it full of seaweed. And we would dig our own clams, get our own crabs. He built a frame to put out in the lagoon. Where you see it coming in at Great Point now way out--I would say the point is probably half a mile closer to Nantucket than it was when we lived there. We used to have it in a pond. At high tide we could go down. We older ones could swim, but we weren't allowed to go on the outside waters because there were sharks around. _____ Coast Guard Station was three miles down. And they threw their garbage in the water. We had blue sharks and hammerheads. So we weren't allowed to go unless Dad was with us because he was watching. And that wasn't-- Because in a lagoon the sand _____ would be caught in it and _____. And we'd line up, the five of us together in a row--and we'd all rush like that and go break up and push _____ on the beach. Then we'd push them back in. _____ very good, but it was one of the things we did--a bunch of us together. Is that thing on?

GOODE: Yes. And so your classmates would come out. Did they come out for the Fourth of July picnic?

KILLEN: Anybody that wanted to. The three older ones could usually have company--one person and because we had to be at different-- Like the boys could be on the other side of the house because they were boys. And so the boys had to give up their bedroom so the girls could have--where we lived, you know. We didn't live in the other side of the house because it wasn't cut through. Well, there would have been four bedrooms there. And they just had--what do they call it--the kind of furniture--mission furniture is what the Coast Guard used--the big long tables and bunks. And they had left it there rather than transport it anyway because they

were overwhelmed with that kind of stuff. So it was nice for us, and we began to have more of a social life. And they'd rather come to Great Point than do anything. My grandsons next door and all their friends--they all have _____. They can't go out now when the birds are nesting. But that's where they go to stay out of trouble and have their parties and pick up their mess. And I'm so glad to hear that.

GOODE: What was it like? So did people come out to Great Point?

KILLEN: Yes. People began to get four wheel drive--not even four wheel drive. A Model A or a Model T--Bertha Arnold--do you know Bertha Arnold?

GOODE: No.

KILLEN: Well, she works down on the back streets _____ the Murray's once in awhile. She's my classmate. Her father was Mr. Manta, and he used to be the President of the Gas and Electric. And he was a friend of my Dad's. And he used to love to come out to Great Point. And he'd bring Bertha with him once in awhile. So she's very, very quiet, but we'd hang around together. So we've always had kind of a when we meet friendship kind of thing and talk awhile, you know. And she's very shy, and she never mixed well with very many people at all. And I think that was just living. I never knew her mother and I never met her mother. But he came out here and my Dad would go fishing. There was an artist--I'll think of his name. And I was painting by then with watercolors. And so he asked my father if he would allow him to come out to Great Point and paint. He was a famous man. He's passed away now. But he was a famous man that did--he did funny voices in scary movies. He was very famous. If I said the name you'd know it. But he also was a pretty good painter. And so my father asked him if I could sit up beside him do a sketch because he was doing the lighthouse. He said, "Yes, but she can't talk." In other words, sit quiet. I'll think of his name. Some time I'll remember what it was and tell you. And he told my father--he said, "She has talent." He says, "Get her some lessons." And so that made me keep going, you know.

GOODE: When did you start painting?

KILLEN: Sixth grade. Speaking of that, I had a friend in the sixth grade. His name was Ming Dur. And he came from--there used to

be a Chinese--below the Pullman--there was a Chinese laundry. And it was--

GOODE: Below what?

KILLEN: A Chinese laundry.

GOODE: But where was it?

KILLEN: Below the Pullman Restaurant--maybe the next house down. I'm not sure which one. Because when you live out of town in the lighthouse I didn't know where all the buildings--who contained what. And his name was Ming Dur, and this was in the sixth grade. And I had begun sketching and doing that probably the year before. Are you getting tired?

GOODE: No. I was looking at your paintings.

KILLEN: Oh. And so we drew names in school. Anyway, about the name. He was a war person. I think it was his uncle--relatives rather than his father. And he started school in the second grade because he couldn't speak English. Within a year and a half he was up with us in sixth grade. He was maybe a year or two out of whack for his age but everybody just loved him. And we got each other's names. And he gave my first set of oil paints. I just fell in love. That's what I do. Like the water-base paints or anything--they don't have the depth, they don't have the light. They're dead in the water compared to oils as far as I'm concerned. And I've never forgotten him. But Marty Kaufman--his wife still works I think--but he was my favorite, favorite classmate. And his father and mother and family used to own Kaufman's Restaurant right next door to the theater. That's where everybody went to have family dinners. And he was the youngest and he was my classmate. And he told Alex--he met him out to _____ when Alex worked up there-- And he got sick one year and I stayed at the school, because we only had half an hour for lunch then. And I'd make sure he got all his homework every day. And so I took it over to him and he told Alex I had a crush on him. I didn't. But what I did like--I wanted him for a lifelong friend. You know how when somebody like that--and you know they're interesting and you know they're special. And I bellowed at him yesterday. I was just coming from Mrs. Nelson's and he was out raking around his yard. He's right across from Mary

Glidden. And I bellowed at him, "Marty Kaufman." He waved. I think he recognized me because I go that way all the time to avoid traffic. But there was that. And, you know, _____ I haven't mentioned.

GOODE: Right. You moved to _____.

KILLEN: Because the automated Great Point Light. And my father had the option of either going to-- Mr. Larson--they had six girls too--he was retiring after 40 years. He was from Norway.

GOODE: And Mr. Larson ran the light--_____ Light.

KILLEN: _____ Light. He'd been there for all those years. And he retired, and all of a sudden the girls _____ around here. Anyway, so we could either go over there--

GOODE: When was this, Jeannette? When was this?

KILLEN: Well, let's see. I was over my last two years of high school--17 and 18 and 19. Because I worked in town but my family was still there. And it was a duplex house--huge. That house--

GOODE: So it was in the forties. It was still during the war?

KILLEN: It was right after the war.

GOODE: After the war?

KILLEN: Right after the war. Yes, the war was over. Let me see. I graduated in '46. I think we went over there in '44, '45. That would be about right. I would say-- Yes, you're right. The war was not over.

GOODE: So they automated the light during the war.

KILLEN: Yes. They made it automatic. They put a little house there--that red part--they put batteries all the way down through it. And you could only walk through. And it was all run by battery after that. And we stayed out there about six months. But it meant we had light in the house and electricity in the refrigerator which we never had. My mother loved ice cream, and my father never came to

town. And do you know Sue Ferno[sp?]? She heads up the Big Brothers and Big Sisters.

GOODE: Yes.

KILLEN: Well, her father on _____ Street where Doc Rider had his liquor store, he used to have a grocery store there. And my dad made friends with him, and he used to buy his groceries there and then at the end of the month go in and pay him. But he also knew my mother loved ice cream. He had ice cream there too. And he never came home without a gallon of ice cream for my mother. And Arnold-- I must tell Sue this the next time I'm talking with her. Her father saved that hot ice so my dad could get the ice cream all the way to Great Point and it wouldn't be melted down for my mother. It was just those kind of things would happen to you all the time.

GOODE: But you couldn't keep it there because you didn't have electricity out there.

KILLEN: No. We didn't have it. And we could keep butter and we could keep eggs down in the well. The well was below outside. And it was cement. And there was a little water, but it was very cold and the temperature never changed down there. And it had a metal top also. And Dad had a little pulley there with a basket to put like butter, things that that would spoil or go rancid. And we grew up on canned milk. But when he went to town he'd bring back the fresh milk--which I love milk to this day. But canned milk I use to cook, you know. [ASIDE CONVERSATION] And they made it automatic and then we went to _____ because the other man retired. And it had been run by the Coast Guard. And that house in _____ is no longer there either. They built two little--I don't know. They took down all these old, beautiful houses. The one in Boston Light isn't there either. And somebody [BRIEF PAUSE FOR INTERRUPTION]

GOODE: So in 1944 you moved to _____.

KILLEN: Yes. And I graduated from high school there. I had pictures taken. My brother did too.

GOODE: So it was taken _____?

KILLEN: Hmmm?

GOODE: You had pictures taken--

KILLEN: I graduated from, I mean yes--my graduation pictures were taken at _____. I have some of those things.

GOODE: What was _____ like in those days?

KILLEN: It was lovely. They still had the theater there. And they had a dance once a month, and we were able to do social-- The first two houses that--I was able to earn money because the people that came for the summer--the first two houses next to _____ I cleaned them. And then there was a woman there that until her husband got down she was afraid to stay alone. So she'd pay me to stay overnight with her. And I was in high school then. On the weekends I could stay. And when he came down, you know, then I wouldn't be doing it anymore. But also I went down to the bilge and I baby sat for families down there quite a bit too. So I remember why I thought about that is because you asked about the war. I had just heard on our radio--Dad had a shortwave which would bring in countries--and the war was over was announced--_____ Day. And the American's were ashore and the German's were driven back. And the people were getting freed from the _____. And I remember I was going baby sitting to a _____ family. It was three miles down to the village, but we walked it then. We did that.
And I remember going down the road crying when I heard about the people, you know, that the war was over. Everybody was crying because it was over and the boys would be coming home. My brothers didn't have to be in--they were too young. But we had a boy from our class and a class ahead--they just up and went and signed up. They were really too young. And they tried to lie, but the Navy caught on and sent them home. Bobby McGrath, who is now in charge of the field, I believe, out in that lovely area--he was one, and Irwin Verdick[sp?], who was in my class. But he has passed away since then. But they went together. They decided they were going to go fight for their country, but they didn't quite make it because the war was just about over. But we lost a lot of people around Jim's age group. He's five years older than I am. And they were actually in the war. He was in the Air Force. I didn't know him then till after he got back and all of that.

GOODE: So there were young men that died from Nantucket?

KILLEN: Yes. I wasn't that familiar with them because they were all of _____ and I didn't know them, but I knew the names. And a lot of those names are down--a couple of his friends. And then they came-- I met some of his friends later when I met up with him. They came back as veterans. And there was still a shortage--there was a shortage. Jim's mother ran the tea room still, and I worked for her then. That's when I began. And Jim used to go shopping for her. It was very hard for the veterans to get a job after the war. There was nothing for them to do. They came home, and they had to take whatever they could get wherever they could get it. There was no work, you know. All the plants were closing down that were making the bombs, the guns. They hadn't switched back to automobiles yet. Building wasn't really in effect. It hadn't rolled over to a prosperous-- They were still in a war mode, and it hadn't rolled over to a prosperous time when they had the money to start building new houses, new homes. The money wasn't there. It had been put into the war effort. And so men had to just do whatever they could do--sweep the streets, do things that they never thought they'd come back from the war-- The war is not very good for veterans. Really they're not. They kind of leave them hanging.

GOODE: You mentioned about rationing. What was the rationing like for you in the lighthouse service?

KILLEN: Well, actually we weren't troubled by that. We didn't have a lot of meat. My father I told you was a hunter. He got a deer every year. And I don't remember whether the men hunting on the Island if they were allowed more than one or not. But we had rabbit all the time, deer all the time, ducks. And there weren't a lot that would come up to Great Point, but _____ woods was full of deer. And my father-- We didn't have refrigeration, but he knew how to salt it down and dry it and that kind of thing. And so we did that. But they had a commissary here. I don't know what building it was in. Because I know that I went with him a couple of times and it was down like on the docks--steamship wharf. So it must have been one of those buildings was a warehouse and I'm not remembering which one. But anybody that was in the service or connected to the service could get eggs, butter if you wanted it. We used margarine. It was my stuff to mix the damn stuff. It was a block of white--it wasn't even Crisco--it was white lard. And you'd get a package of colored powder in it. And because there were nine of us my mother

had this big yellow bowl. And it was my job to mix the darn stuff. And she'd put three pounds of that in the bowl and I'd have to mix it with my hands. I can not stand margarine to this day. And actually margarine's pretty good now because I bake with it. I make cookies and stuff with it. But the lady I go see, she uses Fleischmann's. It's just like that stuff I used to mix till it got yellow.

GOODE: It's not for you.

KILLEN: Oh, God, no. I don't care if I have to use two-- I can use _____. I don't care. I'll do it. Oh, was that awful stuff.

GOODE: What was the situation for the lighthouses and the blackouts?

KILLEN: Well, I was thinking about that. And I was asking Ruth Greeder[sp?]-- Did I ask about that? I don't think we were allowed to put the lighthouses out because that's an international thing. I don't believe we were allowed to put them out at all. [BRIEF INTERRUPTION]

GOODE: Did you have to put the lights in your house out?

KILLEN: No. We didn't have them out. We all had to have black--and they were handed out--we didn't have to buy them--black shades to pull down. And they had to be tight. But I believe-- You know, I don't even know who to ask about that. But Richie Reed might remember. He's older than I am. He might know. Do you know Richie Reed up in Sleepy--

GOODE: Yes.

KILLEN: Yes. We've already had that conversation _____. He would know. Because they were at-- Gerry and Alice were his mother-- Hazel was his sister, and Raymond was the other boy. And Reggie was the oldest. But he might remember that.

GOODE: What did his father do?

KILLEN: He was a lighthouse keeper at Brant Point. So he might-- Reggie being older might remember if we had to black out the light

house. I don't remember that we had to. Because that would be pretty damn dumb, because what would our guys do, you know.

GOODE: Yes.

KILLEN: I don't know how I missed that. That's really important, you know.

GOODE: All right.

KILLEN: So then when we went-- _____ was lovely. A lot of--the famous actor Houston--his place was down there. And very famous people lived there. And the tennis courts, and then the post office and one market. And there was a lot more land down at Codfish Park. I had friends that lived down there. Ishke Santos Family lived down there. I think that place is still there. But I can't believe when I went down not too long ago how so much had washed away. You asked about the casino. They called it the casino where they had the floor shows. It's a stage and everything. They used to have bands come from away, you know, and put on shows and everything. So that was kind of nice. And we used to go to dances down there--summer dances. That's when it was nice to have a gown or something resembling a gown, you know. [ASIDE CONVERSATION] _____ lighthouse.

GOODE: I'm sorry. Could you say that again?

KILLEN: _____ lighthouse in Rockland, Maine.

GOODE: That's where your family moved to.

KILLEN: That's where they moved to, and I stayed in Nantucket and eventually married my husband. But I worked in town. And I had to rent a room in town, of course. And I remember--oh, God. It was after the war. And at first I worked in a restaurant for a man. And I always have gotten up early in the morning. And I would get the breakfast going and men came in for breakfast. And it wasn't very--not much money, but I could eat my breakfast and have coffee there. And so my husband to be and his buddy lived together in Obadiah's Restaurant which, you know, it wasn't Obadiah's Restaurant yet. And Bob Ruley[sp?]--that was Bob Ruley--his family _____ now. And they weren't married yet either. And he would go to

Florida every year. And then he'd come back and he'd stay with Jim until he got his own place. He didn't live with his family. And so we decided-- I think I brought home 18 dollars clear a week and they were making just about the same. And I said, "Well, what about if we all eat together." I lived up around the corner in a place--Stanley Cassidy--a yellow house. It's right on the corner now. The room didn't even have any heat, but I only had to pay seven dollars a week. And the man of the house gave me a cup of coffee when he had his in the morning.

God, it was hard. So what I did--we ate a lot of hamburg. And the three of us would chip in for a dinner so we could eat better together. And I would cook it in his mother's kitchen and then go home. And they hunted too, both of them. Jim hunted at the time, although he doesn't anymore. He never liked it but he did. And I knew how to dress a rabbit and I knew how to cook game. And we got a lot of fish. We still had a fishing fleet in Nantucket then. I have a picture of the last fishing boat which was called the "Nobadiah." And the fisherman--very often you'd go down the dock and for 50 cents you could get enough for your family. And they also process fish here still. And after our _____ they had an ice house down there. And the fishing boats would come in here to load up the ice and sell their fish. But after awhile it got too expensive and it was kind of coming in out of the way, because the main buyers were in New Bedford.

So it changed and Nantucket lost its fishing fleet. And Nobadiah was the last one to go. And we always got fish because they were friends of ours, you know. But that was sad. That was something else that the fisherman did that could have brought money into Nantucket that disappeared from our Island. But then the tourists started to come and that kind of saved everybody, you know. And then they had to build better communications. And the telephone building that's right at the top of the hill at _____--Jim, my husband, got a job. He wasn't my husband then. We were dating though. He got a job digging the cellar. That's what a guy from the Air Force who was a Sergeant and rated has to do when he comes home from the war. That's just an example of, you know,-- But that wasn't just in Nantucket--that was all over. They really-- The Veteran's Administration did what they could, but they were kind of broke too. They also hadn't had a chance to get organized post-war kind of thing either, you know. But then things started to get better

because a lot of visitors discovered Nantucket. And then they had better restaurants, more boats, more communication. Planes started to fly and here we are. And there you are almost flying planes. [ASIDE CONVERSATION]

GOODE: Great. So I guess that will end our interview with Jeannette Haskins Killen.

[END OF INTERVIEW]