LEXINGTON ORAL HISTORY PROJECTS, INC.

Interview
Jackie Davison
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Interview conducted by Norma McGavern-Norland
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JD: I live on a famous street called Spring Street, and got involved with lots of local issues because of that. I have a delightful husband, a very patient husband, who has a practice of accounting in the town. I raised two children and I am a gadfly at this point.

INT: Why is Spring Street a famous street?

JD: Well, it is in a sense a connector between Route 2A and Route 2, and I hadn't been in town very long—I think we moved here in 1954—when Cabot, Cabot & Forbes proposed a gigantic shopping center with Filene's as an anchor store at the end of Spring Street. Mrs.—I am trying to think—at the Kelsie Farm. There had been a dairy farm at the corner there, and that was the fight and it was at the most lucrative crossroads in the state. As we were told, as neighbors, with Route 2 and 128 this was a perfect site. The only shopping center that we knew about was Shopper's World in Framingham. This was going to be the next giant step, and we were being dazzled by the lure of this. People on Spring Street were not as lured as other people in town. So that's how my political career started.

INT: What was the first political act you remember?

JD: Saying "No!" [Laughter] I don't know. I guess organizing meetings and asking questions, doing some research, running for Town Meeting.

INT: All because of this particular issue?

JD: Well, I think that's often the case. I think the League of Women Voters as a starting point for many of us was a good way to get to know our

town, and having children at the Community Nursery School, because you had to get down and get involved.

INT: What was the Lexington like that you moved to in 1954?

JD: It was a smaller town, a lot more conservative than it is now, a lot of young families coming in as we did from Boston, wanting to move to a school system that was interesting, challenging, and would be worth the move to the suburbs, because we liked the city. So we moved for the children.

INT: From Boston?

JD: Yes, and my husband got involved with tennis and we met people in various interest areas, and so we got to know the town very quickly, and became very comfortable. It was a Republican town in those days. So it was interesting to meet some Democrats for the first time in my life and learn that they had the ideas. They had the issues that were most appealing. So I left the ranks of my childhood and became—maybe not as vicious in some sense as some "born" Democrats—but as a "born-again" Democrat, I got to be rather enthusiastic.

INT: Now, by the time the seventies rolled around, Lexington was different, I would assume, than it was in 1954. Many years had passed. Do you have a sense of how different you felt it was, or did it not seem that way to you?

JD: Well, in those years, we were building education. The town was being "sewered." We were tending to the structure of the town as well as the schools and so it was, I think, meeting our responsibilities as a town that was growing. And we had many, many needs. I got involved again through The League [League of Women Voters] with a project called "Building Schools in Lexington" to understand how schools are built and what was the process. I was appointed to the—in those days it was called The Standing School Building Committee—and so that let me meet a lot of

the officials in town. At that point I was a Town Meeting member. Then in 1972 I ran for School Committee, which was—they had a "woman's seat" reserved for one candidate. Betty Clarke was my predecessor and I, in a sense, inherited the "woman's seat." There was another woman in opposition, Pat Swanson, and so it was a one-on-one. I remember my first experience with a big stage. It must have been at Lexington High School auditorium, standing up and saying why I was going to save this town as a member of the School Committee. I was successful, and then Pat Swanson ran again the following year, and then broke the gridlock, you might say, and there were two of us on the committee.

INT: Do you remember what the issues—what it was like fighting for building new schools and some of the issues that you faced when you were a member of the standing committee? This was about 1970, 1971, around that period?

JD: We were building them almost one every other year. Estabrook School was built to express a new concept in teaching called team teaching, and that started at a school where my children were attending, which was Franklin. So I had good insight into the exciting program this was. The school was built to express this, but that was a giant step. It had to be more expensive because it was attractive and it was doing something out of the ordinary. It didn't prove that way, but those who would listen understood. We had to add on to the high school and there was a decision at that time, as the town really grew and the high school population was going to get very large, whether we should have two high schools which would have divided the town, and I think we made a very wise choice that we would make a large addition and keep a single high school. In so doing they decided they needed to break up the mass into small units. That's how the house system evolved. We went through two referendums on that high school and it was one of those "hold your breath and let's hope we make it

the second time around" and in so doing—reducing cost at each proposal—we stripped out a lot of things. We narrowed staircases and made problems that they have to live with today as a result of that second referendum.

INT: Do you remember very much about the issues brought up by the opposition at the time?

JD: Well, it's just that they said they [the proposals] are always extravagant. They don't have any details. If you put a rug in a library, for heaven's sake, that was an outrageous act to do. We know now that rugs are cheaper than trying to clean and wax a tile floor, but there were those people who were always negative when it came to spending money on schools. "What was good enough for me when I went to school is good enough." Another thing that we did that was interesting was to renovate Muzzey. It had been the original high school. Then it became the junior high, which is now called middle school, and it had to have a major renovation, which didn't produce any really large space, but we utilized a lot of wasted space. But there was a lot of opposition because people had gone to that school and, "Well, it was good enough for me." I don't mind a wobbly floor in the gymnasium, but I think some of the other schools would not play in Lexington because the floor was not acceptable. So we managed to make points with those who would listen.

INT: It sounds like a costly couple of years.

JD: Well, we were spending money, but I think very responsibly, because I think we are reaping the benefits. I remember when we proposed to beautify the center of town anticipating—since we did not get the Filene's and the shopping center, it had gone to an opinion referendum to Town Meeting, which was interesting. It was not binding, but it was sort of saying, "Would you like to have a shopping center at the end of Spring Street, at the intersection of Route 2 and 128?" and most people in town

said, "Oh, that would be a wonderful idea." Fortunately, Town Meeting was more thoughtful and realized the consequences of traffic, and they voted no, to a lot of angry letters in the *Minuteman*. I think in a sense it rescued the town from having an entry point completely clogged, because what happened [was] they went to Burlington, and we know the result of that. [Burlington Mall] So to anticipate Burlington's pull against our merchants in the center of town we wisely said we have to keep our center attractive and productive. So they widened part of the sidewalk. They added trees, and I think they did a modest, but very positive job in keeping our center attractive.

INT: Do you remember what role you were playing in town affairs in 1971, say, particularly the winter and spring of 1971?

JD: I really think at that point I had gone back to school to get a Masters at Boston University, and I got that in education because I had been active in schools, PTA's and so, and that was in 1964. I did practice teaching in 1965. So, at this time I think I am teaching school. I am a "working woman." My time was really focused more on teaching and Town Meeting in the spring.

INT: Do you remember where you first heard about some upcoming event that "blossomed," shall we say, into the events of Memorial Day weekend of 1971 and the mass arrest? What was the first inkling you had, or the first sign of something that was later to develop into this event?

JD: I am a little hazy, but I think I was at some meeting of the Selectmen. For what purpose, I do not know, but I remember a letter being read from this group of veterans who asked the Town of Lexington—because they were going to be spending the previous evening in Concord, at the Concord Bridge—if they could come to Lexington and spend the night, bivouac in some capacity. I don't remember that they asked for a specific site. They described how many they would be and they

were in a sense thinking in terms that they wanted to be on a direct walking route into Boston. So Tower Park would have been just as appropriate as far as their needs were concerned. That was my inkling. From there my understanding was that somehow the request—there was an assumption that they would also be happy just to—they wanted to use the Green, and I don't think they would have insisted upon it, but somehow the Green was the only recourse that they were willing to accept in Lexington, and the position hardened between the attitude that "The Green is a sacred ground." "There's even a burial ground," and "We cannot put people…" and "We have a curfew," and so the battle lines with the Town of Lexington began to be drawn. It almost felt sort of reminiscent of the skirmish on the Green [in 1775]. I mean, you had Tories on one side and the patriots on another, and a vast number in the middle who were just sort of watching all this take place with no commitment at all.

INT: But there weren't signs of all those battle lines in that first notice of a request from the veterans [Vietnam Veterans Against the War]?

JD: I didn't anticipate that it would be. I thought it was sort of interesting, and I was concerned about the war. I remember walking with my daughter in the middle sixties, carrying a blue balloon in the Boston Public Garden, and feeling that it was just a beginning, and not knowing if anything would ever come of this. In a sense, from the beginning my instincts about this whole war were quite cautious, and then it got hardened into "this is wrong."

INT: Was there any hint of opposition or suspicion, or whatever you want to call it, at that first meeting, or was the response of the other Selectmen and officials fairly neutral? Do you recall?

JD: I think there was some hesitancy on the part of Mr. Cataldo and maybe Al Kenney?

INT: Cataldo was the Chairman.

JD: I think he was not—he was very hesitant about even granting this request, wondering, "Is this necessary? It's going to cause some problems." He knew that it was going to be controversial, that the appearance of these disheveled, unshaved, haircut-less, scruffy people that did not represent war as he knew it—World War II, where everybody was spit and polish, and short haircut. So he didn't like the group, I almost feel, from the beginning. So he was very cautious about even wanting to welcome them at all.

INT: Was there a representative there from the group?

JD: I really don't remember and I wasn't there for that purpose. I happened to be at the meeting when this was…I think there was just a letter.

INT: Did you routinely go to Selectmen's meetings?

JD: No, and that's why I can't conjure up why I was there. It must have been in relation to something because I did not routinely. The League used to have an observer corps which monitored meetings, but I don't think I was part of that at that time.

INT: The next you heard of this event, when was that?

JD: I am trying to think of…

INT: The meeting you were talking about was probably a few days before…

JD: See, they met on Monday. So I think it was a whole week before. It took a while to start wondering about this, and then following up because I think in a sense the events were…they needed to have an answer in a certain time so they could make arrangements. I am very vague about it, but all I remember is getting a telephone call on Saturday saying [that] this whole thing has erupted into a very serious confrontation between the need for this—the veterans having a place to stay—and how entrenched people were getting as far as their attitude, and that they were going to be calling

the Town Meeting members and anyone else. I think that was early Saturday.

INT: Who was the call from?

JD: I don't remember.

INT: Somebody from the town or a friend?

JD: Just a friend, but I—and I think they were calling…I mean, it was how word of mouth gets passed because people say, "Oh, I'll call a few people," and so I do believe that most of the Town Meeting members who were in Lexington were all notified and those who were in town responded. There was no question about whether any…at that point we knew this was important enough for us to be there.

INT: What did you do?

JD: I remember sitting and listening to the arguments, and feeling that the emotions were building and everybody was saying, "Where is Natalie Riffin [a member of the Board of Selectmen.]?"[1]

INT: Was this at…this was a Selectmen's…

JD: No, no. I am trying to think if we were in Cary Hall, and I think there was somebody in the front of the auditorium.

INT: On the afternoon of Saturday…

JD: I guess it must have been late afternoon, and people were wondering because we realized if it came to… I guess it had to be a vote. We knew that we did not have the vote as the [Selectmen] committee stood because Natalie wasn't there. I remember there was a man on Hudson Road—what was his name?

INT: Leslie Davies. He offered [to bring Natalie Riffin to Lexington], because he flew, he had a private plane, and he was going to offer to fly down.

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[1] Selectman Natalie Riffin was spending the Memorial Day weekend on Nantucket with her family. At a special Selectmen's meeting the preceding Thursday, she and Selectman Kenney were in the minority in support of a motion to reconsider the vote that denied the VVAW permission to camp in Lexington.

JD: Oh, yes, I remember him. Okay. And pick Natalie up, and Natalie said, no way was she going to get into a strange man's plane. But, anyway, it was serious enough for him to volunteer to fly her up because there was no way that she was going to get here within that time frame. But it's interesting. It was we versus they. Almost from the beginning as we walked in it was we-they. "They" being the conservatives in town who are for this war, who don't understand how important it is for us to speak up, speak out, and so we lined up from the beginning on one side or the other.

INT: How did you feel about that? Was that "we-they" a feeling that you think had been hidden before and that just came out, or was that shocking?

JD: This "we-they" has been part of Lexington from…because I had been through the "we-they" trying to build schools in town, and through Town Meeting, and through the shopping center issue. "They" wanted the shopping center. "We" of course felt it was irresponsible, and the schools, supporting education and supporting the needs of the town; "they" were always those who didn't want to spend the money. So the "we-they" was obvious and to be expected in some cases, sadly.

INT: Can you tell us some more about what happened that day, how the day ended for you and for others that you knew?

JD: I can't remember if I went home for supper. All this is sort of vague, but I realized that there was nothing concrete decided. Now, I would be making this up if I said they had voted "no," but there was going to be some confrontation of ideas and personalities on the Green. So we all left there, whether [or not] immediately for the Green but we all ended up on the Green, and I think they announced it was curfew at ten. So, if you wanted to stick around…

INT: Who were you there with? Was it family, do you think?

JD: No. My husband does not participate [laughing] in these. At this point I'm trying to think what my children were doing—I was probably with a fellow Town Meeting member, or just neighbors.

INT: Would they have been with you, do you think, if you had connected that day in terms of events?

JD: I don't think so. Isn't that interesting? I think that they would have if it had been an outgrowth of a meeting where we go from A to B, or if it had been something to attend because of some personality and we were talking against or concerned about the issues of the war. They would have attended that kind of thing, but for this, it's a local, political exercise from their point of view, and I have no idea where they were. Isn't this terrible? When is this—1972?

INT: 1971.

JD: 1971.

INT: Were your children young then?

JD: No, they were all in high school. At this point I did not have to keep track of where they were. As a matter of fact, I think my son might have been in college, and so I was free to respond. I remember seeing John [Kerry] in his fatigues, and he was back and forth, and as the sun dropped, and the television cameras were there, the lights would go on wherever. John was running back and forth between the pastor at Saint Brigid's and some of the other settled ministers of the town. I think Reverend Harding might have been there; certainly the Unitarian minister. I belong to Hancock Congregational Church. I don't know whether Reverend Henry Clarke was involved. The church was never politically active—I mean, they were a major player in town, but not on the liberal side as the Unitarian Church. But I remember seeing—and I kept saying to myself—John [Kerry] is really courting all this attention. I felt he was going to be making his name in some capacity. So we were very anxious,

of course, to follow up after what we were observing being filmed, to follow up how it was going to be reported on television.

INT: Did you see it reported on television?

JD: Oh, yes.

INT: Tell us about that.

JD: Well, it was a fairly reasonable summary of what went on, and I don't think they exaggerated in any way, and I don't think anybody looked like a fool, either. I think they were stating that there was great concern. Lexington Green was very important, and this group was not known, but I remember at one point, I don't know, they requested to parade through the Town of Lexington, and the permit was not granted them to go down Massachusetts Avenue where most parades proceeded. The British could walk up in 1775, but our poor, old veterans were not allowed to walk back. So I think what they did because they [the Selectmen], at that point, had been challenged, they granted a permit to walk on Worthen Road, which was behind Massachusetts Avenue. A few of us made a point of being down there to cheer them [the veterans] on, and I thought it was a very feeble excuse for allowing them, but they did in a sense march through Lexington on Worthen Road.

INT: Was any of that brought out by the news that you watched?

JD: No, but that was just sort of local. We understood the politics of the issue, that a parade permit which they responsibly requested was not granted, and it was sort of, to me, a small, tacky way to [deny] to us, the liberals, the right of a citizen. As I said, the Little League can tie up traffic. That was one of the excuses, tying up traffic. It was inappropriate. Little League once a year—which I think is lovely, my son participated when he was at that age—they use the center of town to parade from A to B, and I think that was in a sense all they asked for. Oh, I remember

another thing. They were also told to keep on the sidewalk. So that was something very important. Even on Worthen Road.

INT: What did you think of the "consecrated ground" argument?

JD: I felt that the traditions that began there, it was a common area to be used, to be set aside to be used for common good. It was sacred in the sense only that you could create, I think, a misuse of the words "sacred ground." It was historic, and could be used as a focal point for many issues, and there are people in the past who have spoken there, and people have gathered there for various events, and that it was a very appropriate use for a ground that centers and is a symbol to our country. That's what we fought for, the right to assemble and to express our ideas and feelings. Didn't we have some gathering there last year when everybody gathered around with lighted candles and the Desert…those of us that were unhappy with that? So we just had a silent…

INT: Operation Desert Storm. [Gulf War]

JD: Yes. We had a silent gathering. Now that could have provoked resistance, but there wasn't. They were very open. There was a small gathering and it was symbolic and, I felt, very appropriate. So I think we have simmered down and learned a bit to loosen up for the use of the Green, but at that moment the factions had dug in. I felt that the request was not out of line, and there were many people who were offering to police the area afterwards, to provide food, that they would not disturb, they would not make a mess, they would not destroy. I thought it was an important symbol to march from Concord to Lexington and then they ended up, I guess, in the federal land on Bunker Hill. So we were recreating something that we take great pride in telling the rest of the world [about], but when it came to a modern incident, we were unable to see the history of it, which bothered me because I think those of us who understood what the issues were are those who spent a little bit more time in trying to read and

understand, and I felt very impatient with arguing with some people. They just got very emotional. "Oh, this is sacred land." "It's a burial area." "I think there is someone buried on the Green." I am not sure whether all those Minute Men are [buried there], or whether they are in a memorial.[2] The first revolutionary memorial is there in 1799. So, yes, so there are areas that should be respected, but I don't think that was the intent that they would disrupt anything.

INT: To take you back to that weekend now, do you remember anything else that happened that night or any conversations that you had with either officials or others that you might want to tell us about?

JD: Well, I think there was a lot of discussion of how long are we going to stay there, you know, when ten o'clock came and went. So, nothing happened. I felt like a naughty girl because my mother would say [laughing] the consequences as we stayed beyond ten o'clock—I thought the earth might open and I would fall in the crack, but that did not occur. So they were not being rigid about it, but I think they were trying to say that they might seriously consider enforcing the curfew, but the end was still in doubt and there were enough people there. There were a lot of people there. There were people who arrived after dark with sleeping bags and all sort of things to spend the night there, with that full intention. Unfortunately I was dressed for late afternoon. I did not have warm clothes. I had not made preparations to spend the night there. So I was at a disadvantage. I remember cuddling up with somebody who had a sleeping bag. I said, [laughing] "Can I get warm?" He will remain nameless. I don't remember who he was. There were lots of people there, but I remember by twelve o'clock I was cold. I was exhausted, and I didn't think

[2] In fact, Minute Men *are* buried there. In April 1835, according to the inscription, the remains of those who fell in the Battle of Lexington in 1775 were moved from "the old cemetery" and placed within the gated area of the memorial.

they were going to be enforcing anything, so I bid goodbye and I went home.

INT: When did you find out what happened?

JD: I guess early the next morning in talking with Jack Maguire who was Chairman of the School Committee at the time. He was incensed because he had been there with his family and he wanted—it was important to him to make a statement because he took his job as Chairman very seriously. He wanted to show, perhaps by his being arrested for staying on the Green, that there was a way to peacefully protest something that he felt was certainly not necessary, and to be rigid about, so… But when he was not arrested—I remember [laughing] him telling me that he was not arrested—he got on the bus and I think they made him get off, or something or other. B they did make arrests. Of course, I wasn't there to see this, and everybody was brought over to the maintenance building on Bedford Street, which hasn't changed. It's just a concrete simple structure, and there were no facilities for spending the night or anything. Then the next day they [those arrested] were brought to Concord, and I guess I was quite concerned about whether they got a record, you know, for being arrested. So it was a criminal offense.

INT: It was a misdemeanor.

JD: Misdemeanor, but it is on your record that you were being arrested for a misdemeanor. Okay. On some occasions I wished that I had stayed, but the reality was that I had been involved since that afternoon and I was really exhausted.

INT: What was the fallout afterward for you?

JD: Well, participating up to the point and not going through that early morning, I got a sense that there was so much misunderstanding on the positions and the passions that were on both sides, that we needed to talk about it and let it out. It was a need to meet together as a community

because otherwise it was just going to be little circles of discontent. I remember calling Robert Cataldo, the Chairman of the Selectmen, and I said, "Bobby, I believe we ought to get together"—and I believe at that point maybe it was Monday or maybe it was Tuesday—"as a community and talk," let people get up and speak almost sort of like a Quaker meeting, but I didn't use that to explain what my intent was to him, and he was concerned. He was really concerned that there would be a riot, and I am talking about a real serious riot, that people would break out in fighting, and that there would be total chaos, and I said, "I don't." I said, "You distrust people in this town." I said, "I don't think you really know the concerns over the issues, but it's not going to be demonstrated in fighting."

INT: Who did he think would be fighting?

JD: He thought that between the "we's" and the "they's" that would break out because in his context he perhaps often settled arguments that way. In my context the arguments are always verbal, never physical. But I did get a sense in talking with him that he was seriously concerned, that he did not want to encourage anything of this sort. He did not want to bring people together and create the opportunity for this kind of exchange and I said, "Well, think about it and talk with others." So I guess I wasn't the only one who called. I think many people called, and maybe some of the ministers in town who began to realize that the best way to come to understanding is to listen in a calm context. I remember they did call, and people were invited to come to Cary Hall.

I remember entering that hall and it was crowded at that point, and noting to my horror that up in the balcony, circling the entire balcony, were policemen. I guess the entire police force was up there. I said to myself, I'm frightened for what I see, because there was such lack of faith in our ability to act as adults. I said, "This is a fearful Selectman," or at least the people in charge are, that they had so little confidence, but maybe they are

wiser than I am. But I mean, that memory of looking up and seeing all those police circling the top of my town hall—there to stop anything that might happen—it bothered me, and I have never forgotten that. I had an interesting experience. Where I sat that evening was with one of the Busas. I don't think it was Al[3]. I think it was one of the other brothers. I was sitting next to him. So this is what this whole thing was all about; everybody would be sitting, I mean, with other people. Who knows who you would just happen to sit next to, and I remember talking, trying to go back into the history of how important it was to the veterans, and the symbolism, and why…how this country started, that if you waited around for the majority, we would still be a part of the British empire. I realized as I was talking he had no references to make and put this thing in a context. It was either right or wrong. They [the Vietnam Veterans] were "scrubby, self-appointed, arrogant nobodies; if they were true veterans, they wouldn't look like this. They wouldn't act like this." Realizing that we came from two different worlds, that we would never really be other than be tolerant, and so… But I sort of kept this in the back of my mind because people just won't always think the way you do, but you have to listen to them, and then, at some point, that's it. You can't go any further.

INT: What was the meeting itself like?

JD: I think there were some very passionate arguments on both sides. I think probably it was reported and, again, reading in the paper for the next issue about sort of recap.

INT: The local *Minuteman*?

JD: Yes. I think they did a pretty good job in recapping it. In those days was Alan Adams still the editor? I'm not sure, but they were willing to spend a lot of space; and, from then on, the letters to the editor came flying back and forth. The spin-off from this was that there was always a

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[3] Al Busa was another of the Selectmen, and supported the Chair, Robert Cataldo.

mutual suspicion that Bobby Cataldo—and I don't think it is quite fair to him —sort of symbolized the extreme position. Maybe he was vocal and he did take the brickbats as the Chair in consequence he has suffered from a lot of people's attitudes towards him. I find it's very pleasant to say "Hi" to him now because we are all older and wiser and these things are in our past, but I think there is always a feeling that people will have, and I feel sometimes it's not quite fair. We should not forget, but I think we ought to be able to go beyond. But the memory of the actual evening, it's interesting how the issues sort of disappear in detail.

INT: Have there been any more recent, shall we say, "flashbacks" to this in any other meetings that you have been to? Have you had a sense that this lurks in the background still as you interact with some of the people who were involved at that time?

JD: Well, this is fairly recent: I remember that there was a request before the Town Meeting that Mr. Cataldo wanted to trade some land (he now lives on Marrett Road) with the conservation [land], and to straighten out a boundary or to swap, which for his purposes was perfectly reasonable, but I remember this thing flared up again. "Anything that man wants I am very suspicious about." I was a little concerned that this anger was quick to come back again, and I kept saying, "Come on, let's leave it alone," but he did not—the Town Meeting did allow or grant his request. Now I can't pinpoint when it was, but I think it was within the last five or six years.

INT: The memories are still there.

JD: Some of us old timers are still there, and remember.

INT: Do you think it had a profound change or effect on the town, that it changed the town in some way?

JD: I think it really defined the we-they attitude and lots of times it was expressed in East Lexington versus the rest of Lexington. In fact, it goes back into history. There was a time when East Lexington, way back, did

not vote their share of the school tax, and they didn't have schools in East Lexington. What I am saying is that that has always been East Lexington versus the rest of the town. This is where I think most of the farms were, a lot of the farm families who were here as early as anyone, some of the vacationers, some of the people that I know who grew up in this town. We are all latecomers if we came in the fifties, but I think the East Lexington versus the rest of Lexington is still there. But what's encouraging to me, as a lot of the people retire and have even left Lexington—like Pat Swanson is not here anymore—and new families move into East Lexington the whole area has changed because East Lexington is a more affordable Lexington. You can benefit from the library and our schools in this wonderful town, but you can't afford a large home. So East Lexington is the affordable part of town now, and so it is a very different personality. I think time is going to erode this whole we-they. Perhaps, I don't know.

INT: Would you say looking back that it was almost an inevitability back in 1971 in terms of the history of Lexington that something came to a head like this and it just happened to be this issue, or does it seem like a more unusual event, unexpected?

JD: Well, I think it was conservative versus liberals who were quite evident in town. When the Democratic Party first sort of began to make movements there were very conservative Democrats who were running the Democratic Town Committee. As more of "those people from Cambridge and Boston" moved into town and began to ask questions, run for office, become active, support candidates like [George] McGovern and [Eugene] McCarthy, and that type of personality they began to nudge—even within just the Democratic party framework—the conservative Democrats who were always here— and the liberals. So the conservative [or] liberal as a tag was almost immediate, and to this day you are labeled one or the other. I am considered a liberal but I feel after so many years I would like to have

a sort of a moderate tone to that, and therefore all the negatives, "the big spender who doesn't pay attention." With the "Proposition 2-1/2"[4] override again you get back into this we-they liberal-conservatives—"What do you think, I'm made of money?" But, again, the priorities are different. I think the liberals' priorities are libraries and schools and appropriate town response to needs, and it's the conservatives who say, "It's too much, can't afford it anymore, going to have to leave town." I have heard this for thirty-five years. "I am going to have to leave town if you raise taxes by twenty cents." I have not seen this mass exodus, and I keep saying, "Where are you going?" but I don't get a response that is very convincing. I think many people just feel that good people are here. Even though they are not active, there are enough people who listen, and I am quite happy to continue to be actively involved in issues, but I know that after 2-1/2 overrides we get in this rigid formation again. So it's still here.

INT: Do you think our looking into this issue and asking people questions about this long time ago, back in 1971, has some relevance for this history of the town? Do you think it is something that seems to be divisive still? Is it worth going into?

JD: I think so, because it is part of our history and somehow we sort of pull the curtain after the shot heard round the world and the Revolutionary War. Somehow our history sort of stops, but it doesn't. We are ongoing and have a very interesting history, and lots of people beginning to value this town for its continuum of changes, and I think it's valuable for us to realize this was an event that involved the whole town. It polarized the town. It created passions on both sides, and it is appropriate for us to remember this... You can look back in nostalgia as some of us are retiring and moving on, but I still think there's a tradition we should leave behind that people will pick up in time and realize that in this moment in the

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[4] Proposition 2-1/2 override was a vote to allow the town to exceed the existing tax limit of 2-1/2%.

history of Lexington this was a very controversial and emotional incident. I can't quite say it was as important as April 19th, but in some context it reflects what must have been going on at Buckman Tavern that week before the British arrived. I bet there were a lot of exchanges over glasses of drink within that tavern because that was the center of town for ideas, and I often feel that maybe there were more ideas expressed back then than there are today. We are so isolated within our little houses in front of television sets. To get people out today is harder than even twenty years ago.

INT: Do you think an event like that could happen again if the right issue came along?

JD: Oh, I think so. I mean there are enough volatile people in this town to make almost anything happen again. This town is unique. We are big enough to have a wide range of income levels, education levels, and attitudes. I think this mix could boil up over lots of things, which makes it a fascinating place to still continue to live.

INT: I am interested in the fact that you pointed out that you see this as an ongoing educational reality that these things can keep happening here. The people who were involved were educated in this town, were they not—Cataldo, Busa, and Kenney? They were educated in the school system of this town. How is it that they didn't get the same sense that you got, being educated in where—New York?

JD: Suburb of New York City called New Rochelle. I think education, even today, is there. If you want to participate, want to read and take courses that are going to make you thoughtful, it's there, but if you choose not to, that is also your choice. What I heard, and this is all hearsay, is that growing up in Lexington there were the Italian farm families on one side of this town, and the people on Miriam Hill and Massachusetts Avenue

(Shirley Stoltz, Judy Uhrig, and Sandy Shaw)[5] and they were in a sense the center, the elite, the college bound. The farm families, there was a chip on their shoulders. I reflect that this existed in the high school that I went to. So you quickly got into categories of expectations as far as teachers and families, and the farm families were not expected to go on to college. They weren't expected to do anything, but it turns out that they owned the land, and they made their millions by selling this land, and are doing probably financially better than many of us. But again reflecting, I am sure that Sandy Shaw's education was different than Bobby Cataldo's. They may have graduated from the same high school, but I am sure what they got out of that high school was quite different. Therefore the end result was, they had a different stance from the beginning about this war and never could understand how we could feel that way against the war and then accept these scrubby, ill-clothed, uncouth veterans, even though John [Kerry] is a graduate of Yale University. I think it's even happening today. There are successful high school students and the school is meeting their needs, and there are those who are feeling left out.

INT2: A lot of what you talked about has been insightful and sheds light on the town of Lexington. Was there anything important in what you saw and what you experienced, how you experienced it as related to the Vietnam War? You mentioned something about a blue balloon, and I didn't connect with what that meant.

JD: In the beginning, in these very modest little walks against the war, the symbol was the blue balloon, or at least for that particular afternoon where they had this walk, but I think I have seen it in another context. I cannot remember why I went to Boston, but I was with my daughter and she went away to a school where they were very much involved with the issues of the war. She walked from Weston into Boston again, and I

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[5] Shirley Stoltz, Judy Urhig, and Sandy Shaw have all been active in town affairs, members of the League

remember meeting with her when I was working as an editor at Ginn & Company at the Statler Office Building. She met me for that largest gathering where there were well over a hundred thousand people on the Boston Common against the war with various speakers. Being part of this mass of people and feeling, as someone said, "Weren't you frightened?" I said I was very secure. Everybody was there because we were concerned. It was not a frightening experience. We were affirming that there are hundreds and thousands of us here, and you have got to listen to us because we are not kooks. We are not crazy. We are as passionately concerned for this country as all those who are not here. I remember meeting her to go to this specifically. So there were these kinds of things, and so this fell into the proper context in Lexington. It was just another outgrowth.

INT: One question that people have asked in the past is about the experience of being in the group on the Green compared to other anti-war experiences. You were asked were you frightened, being in that larger group. When you were on the Battle Green, was there any inkling of possible impending problems or actions by the town?

JD: Well, they said that they were going to enforce the curfew, but they didn't say when. I think it was ten o'clock. It may have been midnight, but I wasn't concerned that they would enforce it with dogs and clubs. I mean that was never a reference that anybody would be afraid of. I was thinking our police reflect this community and so they would not harm…they may arrest people because you are breaking a curfew, but it would be done in a reasonable way. So there wasn't any fear. In fact, I think some people sort of would like to have the confrontation to be able to say they were arrested but unfortunately it took too long for me, so I went home. I was cold and very tired.

INT: How old were your children in this?

JD: They were, as I said, she was in high school. My son I think at that point may have been a freshman at college. That's why I was free to be in and out of various issues and goings on in the town.

INT2: I would love to hear about your…the "cracking of the Kremlin wall" in terms of your Republican upbringing. Give us some of the anecdotal memories of where you began to…you say you came to Lexington and met Democrats. Gradually you began to see things differently. How did that transpire? Also, how about you and your husband? Has he remained a Republican?

JD: Yes, he has. Oh, my, we are reaching a little beyond…I grew up, as I said, in New Rochelle, New York, a suburb of New York City which is in Westchester County and was about 99.8 percent Republican in those days. I am not going to tell you how old I am, but I am over sixty. At this point my sister was involved with a parade for Thomas E. Dewey. He was going to be the President of the United States. It's preordained, and despite the cartoon in *The New Yorker* with the little wedding cake image. My sister was dating one of his sons from Pawling, New York, and they had already picked out the wallpaper, and I am sure the kids had already picked out their rooms. So it was a profound shock to this Republican family that he did not succeed, and I remember feeling that Harry Truman, that little haberdasher from Independence, Missouri, was going to take it—with no experience. As it turned out the perception was quite true. But the man had basic instincts and had read, and was a worthy successor to the tragic death of Roosevelt. I remember arriving in Boston, supporting Henry Lodge for Senator, and there was a person called Kennedy with all those sisters, and that mother, and saying, "What is this?" and going to a cocktail party on Beacon Hill for Henry Cabot Lodge who was a bit late. This was a private home so you had that little tiny elevator that lets you off on each floor. We decided that we had waited long enough. We had descended on

the elevator and then the door opens, and there he is, the candidate. So we go, ride back up with him, but I remember looking up to him and he is about nine feet tall. So we had participated in Republican politics within Boston.

I remember coming out to Lexington when Mr. Stevenson was running for President. We began to listen because he was such an eloquent speaker and I remember my husband listening to him. Couldn't stand listening to Eisenhower. It was embarrassing because he [Eisenhower] was such an awkward speaker, but that was not quite convincing enough. When Stevenson ran again I remember switching over. But, again, it was meeting your first Democrats, meeting other people who had some challenging questions to ask you, and finding it difficult to defend. In a sense it didn't bother me because all the interesting people in town were Democrats, and my husband has still retained the R in front of his name. That doesn't mean he votes that way. If someone said, "I want to talk to Mr. Davison, I am calling from the Republican Headquarters," I said, "Well, you're not going to get him through me, and good luck to you if you send anything because I get to the mail first." He had gone to a meeting of the Young Republicans in Lexington, and the meeting was called off for some reason, but they had never bothered to put a little notice, even on the door. He got so mad because it was an in-group. They all knew that there wasn't a meeting, but they never expected anybody to walk in from the general public to this meeting. So that turned him off to participate in any way in the Republican Party in the town of Lexington. Some of my best friends are Democrats and at this point I don't know if I know any Republicans. I know a few, and it's fun because we can exchange in a good humor.

INT: Did you ever talk to Natalie Riffin about her feelings about what had happened?

JD: Yes. I tried to call to her on your behalf within the past year and she felt very reluctant to bring back what she considered some difficult times, to open wounds that she felt had healed and that we ought to let it alone, and I said I could not agree with her. I felt this was something that was important because we both had participated, she in a particular way, that we should really remember because somehow in this country you recall things on anniversary dates, and that twenty years was an appropriate time span to think again on what happened. I left it at that.

END OF INTERVIEW