

Mill Valley Oral History Program
*A collaboration between the Mill Valley
Historical Society and the Mill Valley
Public Library*

ANNABELLA ROBINSON

**An Oral History Interview
Conducted by Debra Schwartz in 2018**

TITLE: Oral History of Annabella Robinson
INTERVIEWER: Debra Schwartz
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In this oral history, Annabella Robinson discusses her life and the experiences of her interracial family in Mill Valley. Born in Ohio in 1931 to Italian immigrant parents, Annabella joined the Air Force after high school, which took her first to Texas, then to Wyoming, and finally to Parks Air Force Base in the East Bay. Annabella recounts how she met her husband Glen, who grew up in Marin City and was a basketball star at Tamalpais High School, and who went on to become the first black U.S. marshal in California. Annabella describes living with Glen and their first child, Marcus (who was born while they were stationed in Alaska) for a few years in Marin City before they moved to Mill Valley around 1960, where they welcomed two more children, Curtis and Staci, into the family. Only a few black families had lived in Mill Valley before Annabella and Glen bought their home in Homestead Valley, and she recounts both the racial prejudice they experienced as well as the neighborhood community they helped to create and sustain over the decades. Annabella and Glen were married for nearly 50 years at the time when Glen passed away in 2005. 87 years old at the time this oral history was recorded, Annabella describes leading an active and busy life, full of family, volunteering, and social activities.

Editor's note: This interview includes mature content.

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Oral History of Annabella Robinson
June 22nd, 2018

Editor's note: This transcript has been reviewed by Annabella Robinson, who made minor corrections and clarifications to the original.

0:00:00 Debra Schwartz: Today is June 22nd, 2018. My name is Debra Schwartz and I'm sitting here in the Mill Valley Library sound booth on behalf of the Mill Valley Library and the Mill Valley Historical Society. I'm very pleased to be sitting right next to a lovely woman — and I'm going to say your name right — Annabella Robinson. Is that correct?

0:00:26 Annabella Robinson: That's right.

0:00:27 Debra Schwartz: Well, welcome to the Mill Valley Library sound booth. Thank you so much for sitting here with me today. Because, Annabella, you have an interesting story, which I'm very pleased to sit down and discuss with you.

0:00:40 Annabella Robinson: Well thank you for having me.

0:00:44 Debra Schwartz: Let us begin with a little bit about your family history, shall we? Tell me, if you can, a little bit about your ancestry. Where did your parents come from? Where did your grandparents come from? Just briefly, and please include their names.

0:01:04 Annabella Robinson: Okay. I was born in a little town called Niles, Ohio, and my mom and dad were from Italy, and of course my grandparents, though I never knew my grandparents. My father was very, very, very strict and my mom wasn't that strict with us, but —

0:01:25 Debra Schwartz: And your father's name?

0:01:27 Annabella Robinson: Fredrick.

0:01:28 Debra Schwartz: Frederick what?

0:01:29 Annabella Robinson: Frederick Narkey.

0:01:31 Debra Schwartz: And he was from —

0:01:33 Annabella Robinson: Italy.

0:01:34 Debra Schwartz: So was he an Italian immigrant?

0:01:37 Annabella Robinson: Yes, definitely.

0:01:38 Debra Schwartz: And your mother as well?

0:01:39 Annabella Robinson: And my mom too.

0:01:40 Debra Schwartz: Do you remember her maiden name?

0:01:43 Annabella Robinson: Ferrara.

0:01:44 Debra Schwartz: Ferrara?

0:01:44 Annabella Robinson: Her name was Isolina Ferrara.

0:01:48 Debra Schwartz: So, you were saying about your father —

0:01:50 Annabella Robinson: Yeah, my father was very strict because he was raised that way in Italy. He was very brutal, really. He used to beat us and he just wasn't — he didn't know, because he was treated that way when he was growing up in Italy. And mother was very meek and very quiet. There was never hugging in the family at all. We never had a Christmas tree. I never had a baby doll. But I survived being raised by an Italian father. [chuckles] And I had four sisters and two brothers.

0:02:29 Debra Schwartz: And their names?

0:02:31 Annabella Robinson: My two brothers were Anthony and the other brother was Frank, and my four sisters were Edith, Violet, Mary and June. They're all gone now except my one sister, June, who lives in Texas.

0:02:51 Debra Schwartz: And you were born what year?

0:02:53 Annabella Robinson: I was born in 1931.

0:02:57 Debra Schwartz: 1931?

0:02:57 Annabella Robinson: Mm-hmm.

0:02:57 Debra Schwartz: In a small town.

0:03:00 Annabella Robinson: In a very small town, extremely prejudiced. It's right next door to Youngstown, Ohio. And then I moved when my mom — we wanted my mom to divorce my dad, but she was extremely afraid. I was 14 at the time and my older brothers and sisters, they got behind my mom, and they made her go to the courtroom and they actually pushed her through the door. So, Mother divorced Dad and we were so happy, and then we were all scattered all over. I moved with my older sister Mary, and June went to Arizona with my father, because he promised her he was going to buy her a horse. She had had a horse of her own when she was about 12, but it got so shell-shocked from the tornado that she couldn't ride it any more.

0:03:46: She went with my father, but she only stayed there a year because she couldn't handle it. She came back when she was about 14 or so. Then I stayed with my sister Mary — no, my sister Violet, I moved in with her also. We were just scattered all over, 'cause Mother couldn't take us because she had to go in with a family and be a housekeeper. Anyway, then I moved with my sister Violet, who was my favorite sister.

0:04:20 Debra Schwartz: And she was living where?

0:04:21 Annabella Robinson: In Youngstown, Ohio. So, then I got a lovely job at this beautiful furniture store — I mean shoe store. I was going to be an Arthur Murray dance instructor. I was dating this young man who was very jealous of me and he said, "I don't want you to hold any other man in your arms," and so I quit. I didn't know. I was very naive then, of course, so I quit. Then I was walking by downtown Youngstown and this man was in the window fixing the shoes up and he said, "Come on in and buy some shoes, come on in and buy." They were like a \$100 a pair then.

0:05:01 Debra Schwartz: That would have been like \$2000 a pair now, wouldn't you think?

0:05:05 Annabella Robinson: Oh, they were beautiful shoes! Anyway, I came in and I said, "I'm looking for a job." And he said, "Well c'mon upstairs. Mr. Lustig is the owner of the store." And so I went upstairs, and he was 55 years old at the time, and I was probably 19. And he said, "Well what are your qualifications?" I said, "Well, I was going to be an Arthur Murray dance instructor, and then I babysit a lot." (It was 50 cents an hour then.) And he said, "I can't help you there, because I'm not married." And I said, "Oh." I was very forward and I said, "Why aren't you married?" And he said, "Why have one, when I can have them all." [chuckles]

0:05:51 Debra Schwartz: My that's a little inappropriate to say to a —

0:05:53 Annabella Robinson: I know, a 19-year-old girl.

0:05:55 Debra Schwartz: Now, but back then not so much.

0:05:57 Annabella Robinson: But he hired me, and he said: "Anne, I'm gonna put you where the elevator door opens and all these little ladies come out." You couldn't see any shoes. They were all behind beautiful curtains. They had sofas. They had their own men that they wanted them to wait on them. "So I want you to welcome the ladies and take them to where and ask them who would they like their salesmen to be." I did that for about almost two years.

0:06:22 Debra Schwartz: You were a hostess.

0:06:24 Annabella Robinson: I was a hostess, right.

0:06:25 Debra Schwartz: Yes, to an exclusive shoe store.

0:06:29 Annabella Robinson: Oh, it was a beautiful shoe store. They had hand bags on the first floor. And I met this little lady, Haddy was her name, she did all the purses.

0:06:39 Debra Schwartz: Did the purses, what do you mean? Make them?

0:06:42 Annabella Robinson: She sold purses.

0:06:42 Debra Schwartz: She sold them.

0:06:42 Annabella Robinson: Anyway, we became friends, so we would go out and have lunch together. She was in her late 60s, almost 70, and here I was about 19. Anyway, there was one of the nephews of Mr. Lustig, who worked in there. He was really a handsome young man. He said, “Anne, I would love to date you, but we’re not allowed to date outside of our religion.” That’s how it was in those days.

0:07:07 Debra Schwartz: And what was his religion?

0:07:08 Annabella Robinson: Jewish. They were Jewish.

0:07:09 Debra Schwartz: And you were a Catholic.

0:07:11 Annabella Robinson: I was a Catholic. So anyway, that ended that. But I made a friend there that worked in the office, and she said, “Anne, I wanna get out of this town.” Youngstown was extremely prejudiced.

0:07:25 Debra Schwartz: What do you mean? How did prejudice show its ugly little head in that spot?

0:07:29 Annabella Robinson: Pardon?

0:07:30 Debra Schwartz: In what ways was prejudice evident? Give me an example.

0:07:35 Annabella Robinson: Oh, the Jews lived on one side, the north side. The blacks lived on the west side. The Italians were living on the other side, and the Polish and Hungarians living on — it was horrible growing up there, honey, it was awful. The elevator girl happened to be black, her name was Lorraine. I wanted to be her friend, and so I said, “Lorraine, I’d like to have you over for lunch.” So I told my mother, and she said, “Oh no, no, Anne. You can’t have her here.” Mother probably would’ve let me, but my father probably wouldn’t have. So anyway, that ended that. Virginia said, “Anne, let’s get out of this town. Let’s join the Navy.” And I said, “Okay.”

0:08:17 Debra Schwartz: And Virginia was the black girl?

0:08:19 Annabella Robinson: Pardon? No, she was white. She worked in the store, in the office.

0:08:28 Debra Schwartz: Okay.

0:08:29 Annabella Robinson: No, Lorraine was the elevator girl. But anyway, Virginia said, “Let’s join the Navy.” I said, “Okay.” Just like that. I was brave. Then, a week or so later, she said, “I don’t really want to go.” I said, “Virginia, I’m going to join United States Air Force.” I didn’t know anything about the military.

0:08:51 Debra Schwartz: And this is in the ’30s, now?

0:08:53 Annabella Robinson: No. This was 1950, I think, or so.

0:08:58 Debra Schwartz: 1950. After World War II.

0:09:00 Annabella Robinson: It was during the Korean War.

0:09:03 Debra Schwartz: Korean War.

0:09:05 Annabella Robinson: When I was in high school, we were not allowed to be teenagers. We had to come home right after school. We couldn’t go out to soda fountains or for ice-cream or anything. We had to bring our little legs as fast as we could to come home. We had to be in the yard before my father come home. Otherwise, we would’ve got a beating. This is something: June and I went to the carnival. We didn’t have any money, but we wanted to go and see what it was like. We came home, and my father was home. We were at the front door and June said, “You go in first.” I said, “No, you go in first.” [chuckles] We kept at it, about 10 minutes. I don’t know who went in first, to this day. But he grabbed one of us, and he beat both of us, when we left the yard. Poor Dad. He did tell my mom that he tried to change for 30 years, but he couldn’t.

0:09:56 Debra Schwartz: My goodness.

0:09:56 Annabella Robinson: Because in those days, they were immigrants. They didn’t know about going to a psychologist or a psychiatrist for help.

0:10:02 Debra Schwartz: You grew up in an environment where — in the whole town — there was quite a bit of judgment and racism, and then at home, brutality.

0:10:19 Annabella Robinson: We got it from two different ways. Yeah.

0:10:21 Debra Schwartz: You got a right punch and a left. But then it was time to join the Air Force.

0:10:27 Annabella Robinson: In school I got straight Fs. I couldn’t concentrate. I’d sit in algebra class and the teacher would say, “Anne, wake up. Anne, wake up.” I remember

that. So I hardly made it through high school. I just barely made it through high school. And in the Air Force, you had to have good grades, too. But I got in. To this day, I remember the man said, “Okay Anne, I’m gonna let you in, because you are so beautiful.” [chuckles]

0:11:00 Debra Schwartz: I didn’t want to say this before, but obviously just in the short time we’ve been talking — the effect you have on people around you: jealous boyfriends, flirtatious boss, employees. Obviously, you had an allure.

0:11:18 Annabella Robinson: Had what, dear?

0:11:21 Debra Schwartz: An allure.

0:11:22 Annabella Robinson: I guess I did. Because even the Air Force, they said, “We’re gonna let you in because you’re beautiful.” I said, “Okay.” I went to Texas — and how the girls cried. They wanted out. Mostly I don’t like to label people, but your black girls, ’cause they didn’t have that discipline, they said, “Anne, you seem to enjoy it in here.” I said, “Well, if you were raised by an Italian immigrant father, with all the discipline —” I went through with flying colors. [chuckles]

0:11:45 Debra Schwartz: Oh my goodness.

0:11:46 Annabella Robinson: You had to shine each shoe for one hour.

0:11:50 Debra Schwartz: You were well honed for just taking orders and executing them.

0:11:55 Annabella Robinson: Yes.

0:11:55 Debra Schwartz: Interesting.

0:11:57 Annabella Robinson: My squadron commander was 21 years old and she was beautiful. I mean she molded 52 of us into one when we marched. We competed with all of the other squadrons on the field, in a big field, and we won all the time.

0:12:16 Debra Schwartz: Where were you stationed?

0:12:19 Annabella Robinson: In San Antonio, Texas. So anyway, I met this young man, and he was going to take me out to lunch. We didn’t have a phone in our — they called it the day room. You had a squawk box. “Anne, you have a telephone call.” So I ran out to the building right next door. I had just taken a shower, and my pores were all open. I was delirious that afternoon. I almost died from pneumonia. And you know, with this squadron commander, she made me put on a full dress uniform. Here I was getting delirious and they took me away in an ambulance. And to this day I could never figure out why would she want me to go in a full dress uniform with nylons and a girdle. We wore girdles in those days.

0:13:14 Debra Schwartz: Did you get sick running — because you had just been out of the shower — to the phone and you were exposed?

0:13:20 Annabella Robinson: Because the Texas wind was really blowing, and I just threw my robe on and went and answered the phone.

0:13:28 Debra Schwartz: And because of that phone call, for some reason, you became ill at that time.

0:13:32 Annabella Robinson: I got pneumonia. Pneumonia. I was in the hospital 10 days. Then I got well, and I was okay. So, I graduated from basic training, and then they sent us to Wyoming — Cheyenne, Wyoming — in the mid-winter.

0:13:46 Debra Schwartz: Cold wind.

0:13:48 Annabella Robinson: And in the barracks, all the wind came right through the cracks in the wood.

0:13:53 Debra Schwartz: Yes.

0:13:53 Annabella Robinson: So then I was there. What I was learning was looking in thick manuals for an airplane part — just by the number, we had to find it.

0:14:02 Debra Schwartz: That was your job, to look page after page after page for an airplane part?

0:14:06 Annabella Robinson: It was so boring. That was only like six weeks. And then I met this little blonde. She happened to be from Tallahassee, Florida. She was 18, and I was 21 going on 22, and we became friends. We were waiting for our orders to come in, and we were so worried. We didn't want to go back to Texas, and when they said California, we jumped for joy. Oh my goodness! [laughs]

0:14:34 Annabella Robinson: We were so excited. See, they send your papers and all about you ahead of time. It was at Parks Air Force Base in the Livermore-Pleasanton area.

0:14:46 Debra Schwartz: Back then, it would have been just rolling hills.

0:14:49 Annabella Robinson: Oh it was. And cows, a lot of cows.

0:14:51 Debra Schwartz: Yes.

0:14:52 Annabella Robinson: Beautiful. So anyway, we were sent to Parks Air Force Base, but all of your paperwork comes ahead of you. All the airmen knew we were coming, and so they were leaning out the windows as we arrived. But you'll love this

little short thing, I'll tell you. The sergeant picked us up in his car, and as we were going through the rolling hills I saw all these cows on the hillside. And you know how they had walkways going like this? "God," I asked him, I was so naïve, "how do the cows keep from falling off the hillside?" 'Cause it was steep, and he said, "Well, when they go this way, the right leg and front leg and back leg is shorter, so they can balance themselves going." [chuckles]

0:15:43 Debra Schwartz: So, you're coming in pretty simple in many ways, but you're good at taking orders and following them, and you're curious.

0:15:54 Annabella Robinson: Always curious, always curious. I guess maybe being raised by two Italian immigrants, they hardly knew any English. I spoke Italian until I was six years old and I started school, and then a very broken English. To this day my sentences are — one of my neighbors said, "Gee Anne, you say your sentences backwards" I didn't know I did that, but anyway —

0:16:18 Debra Schwartz: So, you're now over by Pleasanton and Livermore, and what's the year?

0:16:23 Annabella Robinson: Let's see. 19, probably, 55.

0:16:26 Debra Schwartz: 1955. This is before they even put in the San Luis Reservoir, and canals, and all that. That was built in 1956, I believe. So there was still a large delta-type region in the vicinity. The landscape itself — I'm thinking what it must have been like when you arrived.

0:16:47 Annabella Robinson: It was beautiful.

0:16:48 Debra Schwartz: Tell me a little bit about what you saw visually.

0:16:51 Annabella Robinson: Just a lot of agriculture, and a lot of cows of course, a lot of horses, rolling hills, no homes at all, no houses, just the base was there.

0:17:08 Debra Schwartz: And you were with your one friend, or were there other girls that came?

0:17:12 Annabella Robinson: Just the two of us, yeah, we got orders.

0:17:14 Debra Schwartz: Just the two of you. Were you really, kind of, the only women about? Were there many other women?

0:17:19 Annabella Robinson: On the base, you mean?

0:17:19 Debra Schwartz: Uh-huh.

0:17:20 Annabella Robinson: We had probably 50 girls in our barracks. I learned how to type in 30 minutes, and I got a job as kind of a secretary or receptionist. And my husband Glen, he was a basketball star. When he was in Marin City, he —

0:17:43 Debra Schwartz: But wait. Let's just pause for a moment because one of the reasons why you're here in this sound room with me right now, a good part of your unique experience here in Mill Valley, has very much to do with your husband Glen. Glen is Glen Robinson. You had an interracial marriage. Glen was African-American.

0:18:07 Annabella Robinson: Right.

0:18:07 Debra Schwartz: You were Italian-American — well, American, white. And this, after coming from an incredibly racist environment, this is interesting. When you came to Mill Valley there weren't many African-American families — or "Negroes," men and women, as it was called back then. Let's explore that if you don't mind. First, tell me a little bit about how you met Glen.

0:18:41 Annabella Robinson: Okay.

0:18:42 Debra Schwartz: And a little bit about Glen, because I'm sorry he's not here to be interviewed as well.

0:18:46 Annabella Robinson: I know. You would have loved him. Anyway, he was a basketball star when he grew up in Marin City. He played ball, ball, ball.

0:18:53 Debra Schwartz: So he grew up in Marin City?

0:18:55 Annabella Robinson: Oh yeah.

0:18:55 Debra Schwartz: When did his family come here?

0:18:57 Annabella Robinson: In the '40s to work in the shipyards.

0:19:00 Debra Schwartz: So back then, for people that don't know this that are listening to this interview, during World War II, when the shipyards were built at various locations all across the bay, here in Sausalito they shaved down a hill and installed a shipyard in a matter of months, and then went out to basically bring workers in from the South. They came from the South on trains here to San Francisco and Sausalito. Marin City was built to house those workers, quite quickly as a matter of fact. And so your Glen's parents came in that wave, correct?

0:19:38 Annabella Robinson: Yeah. Austin, Texas. Glen was nine years old. He had two sisters. So he went to the gym every day and practiced basketball. And he became the star of Tamalpais High School. They named the basketball court after my husband.

0:19:54 Debra Schwartz: And what year did he graduate?

0:19:56 Annabella Robinson: 1950.

0:19:57 Debra Schwartz: And that would be Tamalpais High School. He graduated in 1950. Was he the only African-American to graduate that year in the school?

0:20:08 Annabella Robinson: Oh, no, no, no. The majority of them came from Marin City, the black kids.

0:20:15 Debra Schwartz: Just before we move away from his family of origin, do you recall his parents' names?

0:20:22 Annabella Robinson: Rosemary and Frank.

0:20:24 Debra Schwartz: Rosemary and Frank Robinson.

0:20:26 Annabella Robinson: Frank Robinson.

0:20:27 Debra Schwartz: And they came from Texas. And Glen's siblings' names?

0:20:31 Annabella Robinson: Glen's who?

0:20:33 Debra Schwartz: His siblings? His sisters?

0:20:36 Annabella Robinson: Oh, Elizabeth and Lula.

0:20:38 Debra Schwartz: Oh, that's pretty.

0:20:40 Annabella Robinson: Lula May.

0:20:41 Debra Schwartz: So, Glen was physically gifted. He was a great basketball player.

0:20:49 Annabella Robinson: He was the basketball star. When he graduated from high school, two colleges wanted him. But when they found out he was black, they didn't take him. He was so upset. 17 years old.

0:21:01 Debra Schwartz: Did he ever describe his experiences at Tam High and in Marin City as a black man? A black family?

0:21:07 Annabella Robinson: No one ever thought to interview him at all.

0:21:10 Debra Schwartz: But did he ever tell you what it was like? Did he share with you his experiences?

0:21:14 Annabella Robinson: Oh yeah. About the college thing. Nobody accepted him. Very few things he talked about.

0:21:20 Debra Schwartz: You told me before this interview that he had a very interesting position in government.

0:21:28 Annabella Robinson: Yes. He became the first United States federal marshal appointed by President Carter west of the Mississippi. The first black U.S. marshal west of the Mississippi. They may have had others, maybe one or two in the South. I'm not sure. But they do have two United States federal marshals in California because California is so big. One in Los Angeles, and Glen had all Northern California up to the Oregon border and down to Monterey. That was all his territory.

0:21:56 Debra Schwartz: So he went from — he didn't get to go to either of the two colleges that didn't want him to play.

0:22:03 Annabella Robinson: He went to the College of Marin. That was it.

0:22:05 Debra Schwartz: He went to College of Marin. He just got an AA at College of Marin. But you mentioned that he worked with John F. Kennedy.

0:22:12 Annabella Robinson: Well, when Glen became the U.S. federal marshal, Robert Kennedy came to California on an anti-poverty program down in the San Joaquin Valley. I don't know if he was the marshal then or if he was the deputy U.S. marshal. You have to work your way up from U.S. deputy marshal, chief deputy, and then you have to be appointed by two congressmen. Phil Burton and John Burton recommended Glen to become the U.S. marshal. So when Robert came, Glen was his personal bodyguard for three days, and they went down to San Joaquin Valley. It was on an anti-poverty program. And when Robert came back he shook Glen's hand. He took off his tie clasp that his brother —

0:23:06 Debra Schwartz: John.

0:23:08 Annabella Robinson: John Kennedy gave [the tie clasp] to his brother, and he gave it to Glen. So I still have it. It's a PT-109 boat. His other brother died on that boat, I think. So I still have that. And then he told Glen, he said, "I wish you were going with me to Los Angeles because that's kooky country." And they killed him three days later. We were watching it on television when he was giving that big speech at that hotel. And Glen's blood pressure went up and never did go down to normal, like a normal blood pressure, because he loved Robert.

0:23:44 Debra Schwartz: You mean while watching that live where Bobby Kennedy is slain?

0:23:54 Annabella Robinson: Slain. Mm-hmm.

0:23:55 Debra Schwartz: So your husband wasn't the bodyguard to John Kennedy, but in fact for Robert Kennedy.

0:24:00 Annabella Robinson: Robert Kennedy, right.

0:24:02 Debra Schwartz: And so, he watched him being slain, and you mean to say that his blood pressure was higher for the rest of his life from that?

0:24:08 Annabella Robinson: Of course, we didn't know it right away, but I guess as soon as Glen started going to the doctor and getting examined.

0:24:16 Debra Schwartz: So, he was deeply affected by that?

0:24:18 Annabella Robinson: Oh yeah. He loved Robert. And then we were coming across the Golden Gate Bridge, here comes Robert in a little old Volkswagen with an open roof —

0:24:29 Debra Schwartz: Yeah, those with —

0:24:30 Annabella Robinson: Robert was standing up, waving at everybody, and we were right behind him. It was incredible to see that. We were so excited, honey, it was incredible.

0:24:40 Debra Schwartz: So after Glen went to College of Marin, how was it he was put into the fast track to become a federal marshal. What was his job after college? I mean, how did he get the position?

0:24:54 Annabella Robinson: Dr. Daniel Collins, who was a dentist in Marin City at the clinic. After I got out of the Air Force, we came into Marin City to live because we didn't have any other place to go.

0:25:12 Debra Schwartz: We better find out — we're missing a component here. We're missing how you met Glen?

0:25:19 Annabella Robinson: Glen was a ladies' softball coach.

0:25:21 Debra Schwartz: Oh, that's right, you mentioned that, a ladies' softball coach.

0:25:24 Annabella Robinson: I wanted to go out for tennis, and I went on the tennis courts and I met this young German, and we started playing tennis. So then Glen was the coach, and the ladies in the barracks kept saying, "Anne, we need more ladies on the Airmen, the baseball team." I wasn't that particular about going for baseball. So then, Glen had his eye on me for about two weeks. In the meantime, he was dating a lovely blonde from Belvedere. You know the Keaton family. The Keaton Mortuary?

0:26:01 Debra Schwartz: No, I'm not familiar.

0:26:03 Annabella Robinson: They have them all over Marin County. Anyway, their daughter was dating Glen. She was a beautiful blonde. They told Glen when they found out they said, “We want to give you \$5,000 if you leave our daughter alone and don’t date her.”

0:26:17 Debra Schwartz: That’s a lot of money.

0:26:19 Annabella Robinson: I told Glen, “You should’ve taken it and still dated her.” [laughs]

0:26:22 Annabella Robinson: So, anyway, he did go away to the service.

0:26:25 Debra Schwartz: He joined the service and that’s how he met you, because he was working in the Air Force, as well?

0:26:31 Annabella Robinson: Yeah, and all he did was play basketball. He named the team at Park’s Air Force base in Pleasanton the Blue Devils. He did nothing but play basketball for four years.

0:26:42 Debra Schwartz: His service was to play ball?

0:26:46 Annabella Robinson: That was it, and then —

0:26:47 Debra Schwartz: And then be a coach as well, which is how he met his wife to be.

0:26:50 Annabella Robinson: That’s all he did. And this is another record, you’ll love: he scored 68 points, all by himself, in one game for the United States Air Force. I forget what team they played. It was probably all Air Force teams. Then that’s more than Curry has scored yet.

0:27:11 Debra Schwartz: What did Glen looked like? Was he very tall?

0:27:17 Annabella Robinson: He was six-feet-two, very handsome, and I think what impressed me was his muscles. [laughs] He had a beautiful physique. He was tall, very good looking.

0:27:31 Debra Schwartz: But yet, you come from an environment with infused racism. Did you hesitate to go for a —

0:27:40 Annabella Robinson: I didn’t even see the color of him, because he was a basketball star and he had a beautiful body. All the ladies on the team, they said, “Anne, you seem to be his pet, he keeps hitting the balls to you.” He made me the best left fielder the team ever had, and they said, “Can’t you fix me up with Glen?” I was dating him for eight months and nobody knew about it. You know why? There was a beautiful girl in the

barracks. She had green eyes. She could have been another Elizabeth Taylor. She was lovely. So, anyway, the girls in the barracks found out she was dating a black airman and they beat her up right in the barracks. Isn't that horrible?

0:28:21 Debra Schwartz: I'm speechless. They beat her up.

0:28:23 Annabella Robinson: And then I was dating Glen. So, I didn't tell anybody in my barracks for eight months. They'd say, "Anne, where are you going every weekend? Where do you go?" I made up this fabulous story: "Oh, I met this man and he happens to be from Ohio. He lives in San Francisco, so I go and see him every weekend."

0:28:45 Debra Schwartz: You have an amazing capacity to deal with things.

0:28:50 Annabella Robinson: Well, you know the way my dad treated us. It was mean and brutal and we were so frightened of him that we had to cheat, honey. I grew up to be a cheater, but I'm glad I did. [laughs]

0:29:03 Debra Schwartz: Some skills hard learned but good to have.

0:29:07 Annabella Robinson: What I really like about my parents though — I did forgive them, not my mom, but my dad — they never put any hang-ups on us. They didn't know how. "You gotta be a lawyer. You gotta be this, you gotta do that." They never said anything like that. They didn't know how, probably.

0:29:27 Debra Schwartz: So, you've got a secret boyfriend. That could've been kind of hot, you know, sneaking around like that.

0:29:36 Annabella Robinson: Yeah, it was! [laughs] Anyway, when he took me off the base — now that base was a very strategic base. They had a guard at the gate. Every time, they had to look at you when you went out and when you came in, because all these airmen were sent to Korea. So Glen had to cover me on the floor of the back seat with a blanket.

0:30:01 Debra Schwartz: Oh my goodness.

0:30:05 Annabella Robinson: And I was just shaking. And then the minute we got away from the base — I was like, what, 22 — I'd just jump over — you know how when you're young you can just jump over the seat.

0:30:14 Debra Schwartz: You can just jump, right. You're petite; I imagine you were very —

0:30:17 Annabella Robinson: I was very small, and I looked great in my uniforms, too. We had two different kinds of uniforms. One you had to iron, it was cotton, with a cute little skirt and a top, and the other one was the blue outfit, you know?

0:30:28 Debra Schwartz: It's a little more stiff.

0:30:29 Annabella Robinson: I have pictures I'll show you.

0:30:31 Debra Schwartz: Yes, I'd love to get some photos. So you, wild thing that you are —

0:30:36 Annabella Robinson: I was.

0:30:37 Debra Schwartz: You have a secret life with a secret boyfriend. You have jumped away from your place of origin and the racism that lived there. You're now a California girl, and you're doing just what you want to do.

0:30:56 Annabella Robinson: That's right. I used to babysit for the base commander. They had a five-year-old boy. Then I got a job in the Officer's Club. And Evelyn and I — this 18-year-old — Evelyn and I would only date officers because they would wine and dine us in the city. They had cars. But anyway, one pilot — [chuckles]

0:31:24 Debra Schwartz: Funny. [chuckles]

0:31:29 Annabella Robinson: Evelyn and I wanted to go on the cable car for the first time. It was in June, and of course —

0:31:33 Debra Schwartz: June what? Do you remember the year? This is before you met Glen? Have we jumped —

0:31:36 Annabella Robinson: Just before I met Glen, yeah. So we were on the cable car and these two airmen, they had to jump on real fast, and they were right in front of us like this — you know how you hang on?

0:31:47 Debra Schwartz: Yeah, right. You're sitting down and they're hanging on so you're face-to-face. You can feel their breath.

0:31:50 Annabella Robinson: Yeah, and he's right there. They were both pilots. [chuckles]

0:32:00 Debra Schwartz: Just a little tidbit there.

0:32:00 Annabella Robinson: Ira Laney was his name, and he fell in love with me, and they were going to ship him out. And so he started writing me nine-page letters from Korea. And he said, "I'm gonna be coming back and I want you to meet me at — " This was before I met Glen. "I want you to meet me at the ship, wherever they come in." And I never heard from him. I wondered what happened to him. And then I met Glen and I married Glen. Oh, this is another one, you'll love this one. So anyway, they found out that Glen and I were going to get married.

0:32:39 Debra Schwartz: Wait, first tell us what happened to the guy that disappeared.

0:32:44 Annabella Robinson: Okay. After we got married we were sent to Alaska. He sent me a nice letter. He said, “Anne, the reason that I never had you meet me at the ship is because I was wounded.” And they cut part of his penis off. Oh my God, I cried. He said, “I can never have children and I didn’t know whether you wanted to be with me or not.” Isn’t that sad?

0:33:11 Debra Schwartz: Oh dear. That is a very difficult story.

0:33:14 Annabella Robinson: Yeah. The shrapnel I guess went in his — so anyway, that was the end of Ira. He was 39 at the time, and I was, what, 22.

0:33:22 Debra Schwartz: It was that little bit of shrapnel, and it would have maybe set a different course for your life.

0:33:30 Annabella Robinson: You never know.

0:33:30 Debra Schwartz: So you meet Glen, and you were dating him for eight months. I’m going to take a risk here and ask you something because you’re so forthright. This is before birth control, there’s no birth control pill. You had to be very careful about —

0:33:51 Annabella Robinson: We didn’t make love that much at first because we couldn’t. Then, when we came back from Alaska, we were married of course.

0:34:00 Debra Schwartz: I’m talking about before you were married.

0:34:02 Annabella Robinson: Yeah, we didn’t have —

0:34:02 Debra Schwartz: The dating. Were women pretty careful back then?

0:34:07 Annabella Robinson: Oh yeah.

0:34:07 Debra Schwartz: You were definitely —

0:34:09 Annabella Robinson: I would never let him ejaculate in me. I was so afraid because my father — you know what my father said? Our sex education? You’ll love this: “If you bring a baby home, I’ll kill you.” That was our sex education.

0:34:27 Debra Schwartz: But you and your friends did have intercourse, though you were just careful, or did you abstain before you had access? Could you get birth control at the base?

0:34:41 Annabella Robinson: No, because I didn’t want anybody to know I was even dating.

0:34:44 Debra Schwartz: So when you say dating, is that a euphemism for actually having relations with somebody? Were you sexually active before you were married? 'Cause this was during a time in this country before birth control, and things were different. Women took risks.

0:35:04 Annabella Robinson: Oh I know.

0:35:05 Debra Schwartz: You were a free spirit.

0:35:07 Annabella Robinson: When I was 18 years old, and 19, before I joined the service, I did make love to different men, but I would never let them ejaculate, because of what my father said.

0:35:23 Debra Schwartz: You are an adventurous spirit. Let's get back to Glen now that I know a little bit more about you. (And thanks for sharing.) You dated him for how many months? Eight months and then you were married?

0:35:35 Annabella Robinson: Somebody on the base found out somehow. I may have told somebody, one of my friends, not Evelyn. But after I did, I'll tell you what happened with that. Anyway, somebody on the base found out. So what they did to Glen was they shipped him to Alaska.

0:35:55 Debra Schwartz: When they found out that you had a serious relationship they shipped him off to separate you?

0:36:00 Annabella Robinson: And then they sent 11 men with his same AFSC [Air Force Specialty Code] number to go off to Korea to fight. To this day I always wondered how many of those men got killed.

0:36:11 Debra Schwartz: Because of your relationship.

0:36:14 Annabella Robinson: Because of them finding out we were going to get married.

0:36:17 Debra Schwartz: Were you challenged? Was this all hidden or did people come to you and —

0:36:23 Annabella Robinson: My squadron commander came. She talked to me for one hour. "Oh, your kids are going to really suffer. You should not marry this man. What about your parents?" This and that. For one hour she talked to me.

0:36:35 Debra Schwartz: And what was your response?

0:36:38 Annabella Robinson: I just listened to her I guess. I don't remember, dear, to tell you the truth.

0:36:42 Debra Schwartz: Were you not to be deterred? I mean, had you made up your mind? Those muscles must have been just beautiful.

0:36:48 Annabella Robinson: Yeah, so anyway —

0:36:48 Debra Schwartz: What other qualities did you like about Glen besides his physical beauty and acumen?

0:36:54 Annabella Robinson: He really didn't have that many. He was just a basketball star. I mean, he wasn't bright at all. He wasn't bright. And look at what he became. I can't believe it. Well, they say behind every good man is a good woman. I really helped him a lot. He needed his teeth fixed. I cried. They took 21 of his teeth out.

0:37:18 Debra Schwartz: Glen's?

0:37:19 Annabella Robinson: All at once.

0:37:20 Debra Schwartz: Who did this?

0:37:21 Annabella Robinson: The dentist.

0:37:23 Debra Schwartz: The base dentist? And why is this?

0:37:26 Annabella Robinson: Because he had cavities in them all, and in those days —

0:37:30 Debra Schwartz: They just gave him dentures.

0:37:31 Annabella Robinson: He had a denture. All those years, if I opened the bathroom door and he didn't have it locked, he'd push it tight. I never saw him without his teeth.

0:37:41 Debra Schwartz: I see.

0:37:42 Annabella Robinson: He was so vain. He was wonderful.

0:37:43 Debra Schwartz: Well, it's a little traumatizing.

0:37:47 Annabella Robinson: I'd say, "Glen, why don't you go to the dentist and see what they can do for your teeth?" So thanks to me, he did go, and he had a beautiful smile. Because he'd cover his mouth when he'd smile. I said, "You would have a beautiful smile if you would go and have your teeth taken care of." I didn't know they were going to pull 21 teeth.

0:38:12 Debra Schwartz: Oh my goodness. How many are in our mouths?

0:38:16 Annabella Robinson: Poor thing. I felt so bad. But anyway — [chuckles]

0:38:20 Debra Schwartz: So he gets shipped off to Alaska.

0:38:24 Annabella Robinson: We got married before that.

0:38:26 Debra Schwartz: So you just went ahead and married him. Did they know you were married when they shipped him off? Did they mean to separate you? Or did you just go ahead and get married and not tell anyone?

0:38:36 Annabella Robinson: No, we didn't tell them. We got married by this judge in Oakland. My maid of honor was black, and the best man was black. They were friendly. He was on the basketball team with Glen. And so the judge looked at me the whole time. He would not look at Glen. He would not look at the maid of honor or the best man. He must have been a racist judge. Can you imagine how he judged blacks or minorities on the bench?

0:39:10 Debra Schwartz: Interesting.

0:39:24 Annabella Robinson: Let's get back to Alaska. So they shipped him to Alaska, and I stayed with this couple in Marin City that we were friends with for a long time. I stayed with them and then I flew up to Alaska. And Glen got this little apartment with no locks on the door or anything. So we were there for two-and-a-half years.

0:39:43 Debra Schwartz: You lived where in Alaska?

0:39:46 Annabella Robinson: Fairbanks, Alaska, for two-and-a-half years. It was wonderful.

0:39:46 Debra Schwartz: My goodness.

0:39:48 Annabella Robinson: And there was nothing there but snow.

0:39:51 Debra Schwartz: But did you leave the Air Force at that time?

0:39:53 Annabella Robinson: Oh, you had to get out in those days. In those days you had to get a discharge.

0:39:58 Debra Schwartz: So did you ask for a discharge?

0:40:00 Annabella Robinson: No, they automatically give it to you.

0:40:02 Debra Schwartz: After serving how much time?

0:40:04 Annabella Robinson: Only about two years. I really joined to get away from that town and travel a little bit, but that was fine.

0:40:12 Debra Schwartz: So you were discharged, and you went to go live with your husband in Fairbanks, Alaska.

0:40:17 Annabella Robinson: And that's where our oldest son Marcus was born.

0:40:21 Debra Schwartz: What year was that?

0:40:21 Annabella Robinson: He was born in 1956, Marcus.

0:40:23 Debra Schwartz: Okay, so he's 62 now.

0:40:25 Annabella Robinson: Yeah, I know. He's a top realtor in Southern Marin now. He's been selling houses for 38 years or so. It's amazing. He's married to a Mexican dentist, Gabriela Garcia-Rojas, an excellent dentist. And he has two girls, beautiful girls.

0:40:52 Debra Schwartz: Okay, so you're in Fairbanks with your lovely husband and your new baby boy.

0:40:57 Annabella Robinson: That was quite an experience.

0:41:00 Debra Schwartz: Tell me about that.

0:41:01 Annabella Robinson: Well, there are two Air Force bases, Ladd Air Force Base and Eielson. Eielson is 26 miles away from Fairbanks. They sent Glen to Eielson, probably for meanness, I don't know. He could have gone right to Ladd, it was right there where we lived. He got on the bus every day and went to Eielson, and he did nothing but play basketball again.

0:41:24 Debra Schwartz: This is just so interesting. I guess they really keep morale up and keep the competitive spirit going. He was a basketball coach and a team organizer and all that. He was Mr. Basketball for the —

0:41:37 Annabella Robinson: He was, yeah. And that's when he scored 68 points. I forget what team he played. Maybe it was in Anchorage, Alaska. In the meantime, I got pregnant. Oh, I walked 16 blocks in 20 below weather to where I got a job there, working in a shop where they sold stereos and TVs, or whatever. I worked there for six months and then I got pregnant with Marcus, so I quit. And in Alaska, there's so much iron in the water that it turns everything brown, all my dishes turned brown. And so Marcus was born, and we had cloth diapers then. Do you know of any mother that would wash their baby's diapers by hand?

0:42:28: I had to wash his diapers by hand. We bought jugs of water. It was only like, \$0.50 for a five gallon and we had to heat the water. I heated the water, scrubbed them before I even scrubbed them, and hung them outside. My diapers were the only white diapers in the neighborhood. All the other women's diapers were brown. I even tell that to Marcus every now and then. "Marcus, don't you ever forget, your mother had to wash your — do you know of any other mother that washed their baby's diapers by hand?"

0:42:58 Debra Schwartz: Most mothers at that time would have had a diaper service. The trucks came.

0:43:03 Annabella Robinson: I did when I got home with my other children.

0:43:05 Debra Schwartz: You could rely on the diaper service.

0:43:07 Annabella Robinson: Not in Alaska. They didn't have it. They didn't have it there.

0:43:09 Debra Schwartz: Oh, that's love.

0:43:10 Annabella Robinson: 1956.

0:43:12 Debra Schwartz: Okay, so you're living in Alaska. When is it that you came to Mill Valley?

0:43:17 Annabella Robinson: We came back from Alaska and we lived in Marin City for five years.

0:43:22 Debra Schwartz: What year did you come back to Marin City?

0:43:27 Annabella Robinson: Well, two and a half years from say, 19 — we got married in '56, so '57, '58, probably '58 and half of 1959, we came back.

0:43:39 Debra Schwartz: Okay.

0:43:40 Annabella Robinson: He got discharged in Seattle, Washington, and then we came right to Marin City because we had no place to go. And we stayed with his mom and dad in this teeny little apartment with his two sisters.

0:43:51 Debra Schwartz: And your baby, did you have more than one baby by then?

0:43:53 Annabella Robinson: No, just Marcus, thank goodness. Then we found an apartment, and Glen got a job. He had three jobs when we first were married. He worked in a liquor store in Marin City, he taught an exercise class for overweight women, and then he worked in Sausalito. You know the chutes that they put on airplanes, those escape chutes? They were made in Sausalito. So, he got a job there, too. So we managed to save \$2,000 within five years. Wasn't that nice?

0:44:20 Debra Schwartz: Mm-hmm.

0:44:21 Annabella Robinson: So then, after five years, Marcus was in pre-school in Mill Valley, so we wanted to move out —

0:44:32 Debra Schwartz: Over by the community church? Which pre-school?

0:44:36 Annabella Robinson: No, it was on Marin Avenue. It was run by a woman from England. She was extremely strict, and she told me, “If the children here don’t behave, I whip them with a strap.” With a belt. She told me that, yeah. Can you believe in those days? Marcus was in pre-school, so he was what? Three. Three years old then.

0:45:02 Debra Schwartz: And yet you took your children there?

0:45:04 Annabella Robinson: Oh yeah. I was very disciplined with my children. Not mean or anything, but anyway Marcus was always good. He didn’t need a spanking. But then he went to school where we moved to in Homestead Valley, there was a school right down the street, so that’s where he went.

0:45:25 Debra Schwartz: Did you buy a house in Homestead?

0:45:27 Annabella Robinson: This is an incredible story. Okay, so my mom wanted to come and meet Glen, which — oh, getting back to my mom.

0:45:36 Debra Schwartz: Oh yeah. My goodness, what were your parents thinking?

0:45:40 Annabella Robinson: My father never knew. I would never tell him.

0:45:43 Debra Schwartz: You never told him you were married to a black man?

0:45:45 Annabella Robinson: I was afraid of him. I’ll tell you what happened. But anyway, I wrote mother and my sisters. All my sisters put me down. My mom had one of my sisters write a letter, a long letter. And she said in her broken English, “Anna, why you wanna marry a black man? There’s a lot of men out there.” I’ll never forget Mother saying that in the letter. After we moved in our home, Mother did come. But how we got our home was, we knew this couple in Marin City. They were Caucasian. He was Russian and she was American. They had two little kids and they lived near us. We didn’t socialize that much with them but just, “Hi, how are you?” This and that.

0:46:29: He was a small-time builder. Anyway, he moved away. We didn’t know where he moved. So, Marcus was going on five years old. We wanted to get a better school for him, ’cause schools weren’t that good then. They were okay. And in those days, if a realtor would sell a black family a house, they’d get fired on the spot.

0:46:52 Debra Schwartz: Right.

0:46:53 Annabella Robinson: You know that.

0:46:54 Debra Schwartz: There was an institutional racism within this country, red-lining, I believe it was called, where it was understood, especially in suburban areas, that there were places that you couldn't sell a house to a black family.

0:47:13 Annabella Robinson: I know.

0:47:13 Debra Schwartz: Or people of color.

0:47:16 Annabella Robinson: Mm-hmm.

0:47:16 Debra Schwartz: I remember studying this when I was at Berkeley. There was a whole philosophy behind it. The real estate values, would they go up, would they go down?

0:47:28 Annabella Robinson: Anyway, with these two kids, we went out looking for a home. My mother was coming with one of my sisters and maybe a nephew. So we were looking for a house because we were living in Marin City and they were all shacks there really. They were just shacks. So, Molly and Maxine moved away and we were out looking for signs for sale on the lawn. I don't know what possessed us to go up North Ferndale up on Madrone Park Circle in Homestead Valley. There was this Jewish family. They wanted to sell us their home, and they wanted \$24,000 for it. It had a beautiful view of the mountain, but it looked like a barn. You know how the barns were shaped like that?

0:48:09 Debra Schwartz: Mm-hmm.

0:48:11 Annabella Robinson: Wonderful family.

0:48:12 Debra Schwartz: What was the family's name?

0:48:13 Annabella Robinson: He was an attorney. I don't remember their names.

0:48:19 Debra Schwartz: Okay.

0:48:19 Annabella Robinson: But anyway, we were coming down the street and, lo and behold, who was at the mail boxes? Those two little kids that lived in Marin City.

0:48:26 Debra Schwartz: That was your sign.

0:48:28 Annabella Robinson: I said, "Glen, look. Those are the Maloof kids." I said, "Glen, stop the car." I'm glad that he didn't just keep going, 'cause you know how men don't like to stop. They keep going. So I said, "Are you the Maloof kids?" "Yes, we're the Maloof kids." "And where do you live?" And they turned and pointed across the

street towards the house we bought. I said, "Is your mom home?" "Yeah, they're there." No sign on the deck or nothing. I said Glen, "Let's back up and say hi to Maxine." And we didn't even know them that well. So I knock on the door, and she opened the door and said, "What are you doing in the neighborhood?" I said, "We're looking for a house." She said, "This one's for sale."

0:49:07 Annabella Robinson: Then I started crying. She said, "Well, come on in. Molly!" His nickname was Molly. He was a Russian, right? She said, "Come on in. Molly's out on the deck."

0:49:20 Debra Schwartz: Wait. Was it their house for sale or the house across the street?

0:49:22 Annabella Robinson: No, their house.

0:49:24 Debra Schwartz: Okay, so the Jewish family —

0:49:27 Annabella Robinson: Was up the street on Madrone Park circle, and we were coming down.

0:49:30 Debra Schwartz: But then you see your friends, and their house is also for sale.

0:49:32 Annabella Robinson: Yeah, no sign or nothing. Maxine said, "Well, this house is for sale. Molly built it as a spec house to see if it would sell. We don't even have it on the market yet." Then I walked in the entrance way, and I said, "Well, we'll buy it. We'll take it." She said, "But don't you wanna see the rest of the house?" I said, "No, we'll take it." [chuckles] That's how desperate we were. So we went out on the deck and Molly was sitting there, and we sat down. He gave us a glass of wine and we started talking. He said, "I want \$24,700 for the house." And then he said, "How much do you have in the bank?"

0:50:08: You couldn't get a loan either then. Blacks couldn't get a loan. So I said, "We saved \$2,000." He said, "Well, you're going to need a little more than that." And my heart sank. I said, "Oh, no." He wanted \$5,400 down. We only had \$2,000. Do you know, he lent us the second part? He didn't even know us that well, but he was extremely liberal. They branded him as a communist because he hated America so much because of what they did to the minorities. So anyway, we said, "Okay." We were so excited.

0:50:45 Debra Schwartz: Where did they go?

0:50:47 Annabella Robinson: Well, he bought five lots up on the hill, not too far from us and built some homes up there and lived there for a long time. We had them over for dinner. But I was young. I was, what, 29 or so, and I didn't know to really have them over more. I really feel sorry about that.

0:51:05 Debra Schwartz: So you're living now on what street? Ferndale?

0:51:08 Annabella Robinson: North Ferndale Avenue, yes, for 50 years.

0:51:11 Debra Schwartz: What's the address?

0:51:12 Annabella Robinson: 309. Oh my God. We were so excited. Then my mom came.

0:51:17 Debra Schwartz: How big was the house?

0:51:18 Annabella Robinson: Well, it was just the upper floor, three bedrooms and one bath. Marcus was the only child then. Later, I had Curtis, and then we had Staci. They each had their own bedrooms. And then through the years, we wanted a bigger house, so we added a whole downstairs. Now we have six bedrooms and three baths.

0:51:43 Debra Schwartz: Are you still living there now?

0:51:45 Annabella Robinson: Curtis has been living with me for 15 years.

0:51:49 Debra Schwartz: We'll get to Curtis after we talk a little bit more about your story.

0:51:54 Annabella Robinson: B, yeah, we were thrilled. Then my mom came on the train. She got off the train in Richmond.

0:52:02 Debra Schwartz: Oh my.

0:52:02 Annabella Robinson: And the train, they brought her in. She wouldn't fly, of course. And she met Glen. I think I did the cooking. Glen wasn't a chef then, but he became a gourmet chef. But anyway, Mother taught me how to make this gnocchi, the Italian gnocchi, the potato dumpling. And they had a wonderful time. So out of four son-in-laws, she loved Glen the best after she met him.

0:52:26 Debra Schwartz: The smile on your face is beautiful.

0:52:30 Annabella Robinson: Oh, thank you. Once you meet people of different nationalities — there's only one race, it's the human race. People say the black race, the white — but the reason why there's supposedly a black race and a white race is that the white race wanted to separate the black race from the white race. But there's only one race, that's the human race. Right? You agree with me there? This is the human race. We're all from the same — I don't know, from the amoeba, or from whatever you believe in. But we're all related, really.

0:53:08 Debra Schwartz: As I understand it, the only reason why we have a difference of skin color is proximity to the equator. People that have lived further from the equator

have lighter skin, so they can absorb vitamin D. People that live closer to the equator, have more melanin so they can protect their skin from the sun. It's just a practical change the body makes to adapt to its environment.

0:53:31 Annabella Robinson: That's right, definitely.

0:53:38 Debra Schwartz: What I'd like to talk about a little bit, now that you've got your home in Homestead, and your children are going to school in Mill Valley, were there other black families in Mill Valley at the time? Tell me a little bit what it was like for you and your family living here? Basically, the history of black families living here at that time.

0:54:04 Annabella Robinson: Well, Maxine — the wonderful person that sold us the house — she said, "Anne I'm going to have a welcome-to-the-neighborhood party, so we can filter out the bigots." She actually said that. [laughs]

0:54:19 Debra Schwartz: What a progressive woman.

0:54:19 Annabella Robinson: Yeah, she was wonderful. So anyway, the lady across the street, she had a little boy seven years old, when Marcus was five or six, almost six. That little boy, when he'd come home from school, he'd call Marcus — Marcus was playing out on the front deck — he'd say, "Nigger, go home. You go home. You don't belong here."

0:54:40 Debra Schwartz: Oh dear.

0:54:41 Annabella Robinson: Seven years old. So we knew his parents wouldn't come to the party. We filtered out the bigots. And then there were two other families up the street.

0:54:50 Debra Schwartz: Because that little boy was getting it from home.

0:54:52 Annabella Robinson: Definitely. So they moved away, finally they moved. We didn't want them in our neighborhood anyway, and the other two families moved away.

0:55:00 Debra Schwartz: The two families — you mean the other bigots in the neighborhood?

0:55:03 Annabella Robinson: They were two bigots, yeah. They moved away.

0:55:04 Debra Schwartz: How did they demonstrate their bigotry? Did they overtly say things to you?

0:55:09 Annabella Robinson: No. They lived up the street. Maxine evidently knew them. But anyway, when Maxine gave us that welcome-to-the-neighborhood party, Glen

said, “Anne why don’t we do the same, but not to get rid of the bigots, just to welcome new neighbors into the neighborhood?” We did that for 40 years.

0:55:29 Debra Schwartz: So you were the welcoming committee, as you had been welcomed.

0:55:32 Annabella Robinson: For 40 years, yes.

0:55:34 Debra Schwartz: So people would come and you’d say, “Howdy neighbor. Come on over and meet your neighbors.”

0:55:38 Annabella Robinson: Well, no. We had barbecues and it would be at your house one year and the others would say, “We’ll have it at my house next year.” All the way up North Ferndale and then on then on Melrose, a street parallel — all the people on Melrose. We’d have 50, 60 people at different barbeques. Everybody would bring things and Glen would do the cooking all those years.

0:56:00 Debra Schwartz: So, to know Glen was to love Glen. Is that sort of what I’m getting about him?

0:56:03 Annabella Robinson: He became a gourmet chef.

0:56:05 Debra Schwartz: Well that’s always nice.

0:56:07 Annabella Robinson: I didn’t cook for 30 years. We entertained sit-down formal dinners for almost 40 years, I would say.

0:56:15 Debra Schwartz: Was Matthew Davis your neighbor?

0:56:19 Annabella Robinson: Davis. Did he live on North Ferndale?

0:56:22 Debra Schwartz: I believe so, he lived very close. He’s the hiker. The one who lived with the Beatniks, Kerouac and that gang, over on Montford. I interviewed him. I believe he was right off —

0:56:32 Annabella Robinson: Oh, maybe so.

0:56:34 Debra Schwartz: Very nice man.

0:56:34 Annabella Robinson: Alan Watts was our neighbor.

0:56:36 Debra Schwartz: Alan Watts was your neighbor?

0:56:38 Annabella Robinson: Yeah, down the street. The house is still there. They’ve remodeled it, of course, through the years.

0:56:42 Debra Schwartz: Do you mean the one on Montford or on Ferndale?

0:56:45 Annabella Robinson: It's on Laverne. As you go down North Ferndale you could run right into it, if you didn't make a right.

0:56:52 Debra Schwartz: Oh, maybe that's where I'm remembering now. Maybe Matthew Davis was on Laverne actually.

0:56:58 Annabella Robinson: Maybe he lived there after Alan.

0:57:00 Debra Schwartz: Did you socialize with Alan Watts?

0:57:01 Annabella Robinson: No, never knew who he was or nothing. It would have been nice.

0:57:05 Debra Schwartz: So how about the black families? You mentioned before this interview other families that had preceded you.

0:57:12 Annabella Robinson: Well, yeah. This couple from Marin City, they bought a home. They were the first black family in Marin City.

0:57:18 Debra Schwartz: Wait. In Marin City or Mill Valley?

0:57:21 Annabella Robinson: They were the first black family that lived in Marin City and they were the first black family that moved to Mill Valley.

0:57:28 Debra Schwartz: And their name?

0:57:29 Annabella Robinson: I don't remember their names, but one of the daughters became a judge. Dearman or something like that, I forget her full name. They went to Hawaii for a week or so, and when they came home their house was burned down to the ground.

0:57:43 Debra Schwartz: In Mill Valley? So this was a message.

0:57:48 Annabella Robinson: Mm-hmm. And then Dan Collins.

0:57:50 Debra Schwartz: And that was what year?

0:57:51 Annabella Robinson: Ah, probably '46, '47, '48 or '49. I'm not sure.

0:58:00 Debra Schwartz: Do you know what happened to them after that? Did they rebuild?

0:58:03 Annabella Robinson: I'm not sure. We never did know the family we just had heard this.

0:58:08 Debra Schwartz: And how about the other family?

0:58:10 Annabella Robinson: Dr. Daniel Collins. He bought a beautiful home, just at the base of the mountain, up on Summit. And the neighbors got together, and they went over to his house and they told Dan, “We don’t want you in this neighborhood.” And Dan looked at them and he said, “Look, if you pay me three times as much as I paid for this house, you can have it.” And they never bothered him since. [laughs] Now the third family was Bob and Madeline Pitts. Bob worked for H.U.D. You know what H.U.D. is?

0:58:42 Debra Schwartz: Mm-hmm. Maybe you can tell people that might be listening what H.U.D. is.

0:58:45 Annabella Robinson: Housing and Urban Development. He was the head of H.U.D. in the San Francisco Bay Area. Madeline Pitts was the granddaughter of a slave. Her great-grandmother — maybe her grandmother — was a slave. Madeline and Bob, we became friends with them. They were the third family. Bob used to come over and help Marcus with his math. He was a very bright young man. So we became friends with them. Madeline just died, not even three or four weeks ago. She was in her late 90s. That was the third family, and we were the fourth family.

0:59:29 Debra Schwartz: But you were a little different in that you were biracial. The other families were all black. You were a white woman married to a black man. Was it different for you? Did black people ever vibe you for crossing that line and marrying a black man?

0:59:47 Annabella Robinson: Never. Because we went to Marin City for years. Glen’s two sisters never left Marin City. I think whenever you segregate any kind of people, whether they’re Jews or blacks or Mexicans, it does something to them. The blacks in Marin City don’t trust the whites at all. They never moved out of Marin City. A lot of them are still there. I belong to a social club there called the Sunshine Club, and I’ve known these ladies for almost 50 years that belong to the club. A couple of men belong to it, too. I also work at the food bank on Mondays in Marin City. A lot of these men come through the line, and I’ll say, “Do you remember Glen Robinson?” And the guys will say, “Yeah, I remember Glen Robinson.” I say, “Well I’m his wife.” And they go, “Oh my God, you’re his wife?” [chuckles]

1:00:33 Debra Schwartz: And then it’s all groovy.

1:00:36 Annabella Robinson: Oh yeah. Now I shake some of their hands when they come through to get food. So anyway, we didn’t have any problems. But there was that one incident with that little boy. And then one other problem. Marcus was 14 years old. A state highway patrolman came up the street and Marcus ran off the deck, ’cause I was at my neighbor’s two houses up having coffee. So he stopped the car and he asked Marcus, “Why are you running off that deck?” And Marcus said, “Well I live here.” And you

know what the state highway patrolman said? “Do you have any identification on you?” A 14-year-old boy! Marcus said, “No,” and then he left. Marcus told me about that.

1:01:18: I made him come to my house and apologize to my son with his captain or whoever. He had a crew cut and he looked like — I don’t like to label people — like a German gestapo with dark glasses on. So I asked him, I said, “Why do you have your sunglasses on in the house?” And he said, “I always wear them.” I said, “My mother always taught me when I talk to somebody, I like to look into their eyes.” I told him that. And so he did. I wish I could remember — I should have taped what he said to Marcus. I can’t remember.

1:02:03 Debra Schwartz: You don’t remember? Was it conciliatory or was it one of those passive aggressive remarks?

1:02:09 Annabella Robinson: I don’t remember, honey.

1:02:10 Debra Schwartz: Did it affect Marcus badly?

1:02:13 Annabella Robinson: No, look at him, what he achieved. He went to San Francisco State, majored in two —

1:02:21 Debra Schwartz: Two degrees?

1:02:24 Annabella Robinson: Business and psychology.

1:02:26 Debra Schwartz: And then he became a real estate guy.

1:02:29 Annabella Robinson: At 21. He went to real estate school, and he’s been selling houses ever since. And I had my preschool —

1:02:53 Debra Schwartz: Well, let’s talk about this. I didn’t mention this in the beginning with your intro, but you ran a preschool for many years.

1:03:00 Annabella Robinson: A licensed preschool in my home. I only worked with six children a morning, but I had 12 enrolled. I staggered the children. Like on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday I had the two-and-a-half to three-year-olds, and then Tuesday and Thursday I had the two to two-and-a-half-year-olds. I changed six diapers every morning for the two-and-a-half-year olds. But it was wonderful. Anyway, this couple comes down the stairs and she was German and he was African American. And they had a daughter. He was a very famous football player. He’s in the Hall of Fame, Jimmy Johnson. They lived in Mill Valley, as you go up toward the mountain. When Jimmy would walk downtown in Mill Valley, we had a motorcycle cop here in Mill Valley —

1:03:55 Debra Schwartz: Officer Johnson?

1:03:57 Annabella Robinson: He was horrible.

1:03:58 Debra Schwartz: That's Officer Johnson.

1:04:00 Annabella Robinson: He would follow him, and at the red light he'd say, "Do you live here?" Jimmy would come back and tell me this.

1:04:06 Debra Schwartz: He harassed everybody.

1:04:06 Annabella Robinson: He was horrible.

1:04:09 Debra Schwartz: He was. I'll tell you what, though. I never speed anywhere in Mill Valley. He left an impression on me. He'd get you for going two miles over the speed limit.

1:04:21 Annabella Robinson: I know. They got rid of him finally. [chuckles] But this one day, Jimmy was downtown walking, got in his car, and that patrolman followed him all the way home, knocked on his door, and Jimmy opened the door. He said, "Do you live here?"

1:04:35 Debra Schwartz: Wow!

1:04:36 Annabella Robinson: Wow.

1:04:37 Debra Schwartz: I'm not sure it's Officer Johnson, by the way. I just want to state for the record.

1:04:41 Annabella Robinson: So anyway, that was another thing that happened to Jimmy Johnson.

1:04:45 Debra Schwartz: How about for your children? Did they ever have trouble?

1:04:50 Annabella Robinson: They never really came back and told me anything. That was the only thing that Marcus told me, about when he was 14. Oh, another thing: when Marcus was examined one time — he was 14 — the doctor measured his penis. And I was stupid. I didn't go and say, "Why did you measure his penis?"

1:05:07 Debra Schwartz: So you had a pediatrician?

1:05:09 Annabella Robinson: I don't remember who the doctor was.

1:05:11 Debra Schwartz: And the doctor was actually measuring the length of his penis?

1:05:14 Annabella Robinson: At 14.

1:05:15 Debra Schwartz: Is this is to collect data with that legend of the —

1:05:19 Annabella Robinson: That blacks are supposed to have — [laughs] It's not true!

1:05:24 Debra Schwartz: Okay. [laughs]

1:05:26 Annabella Robinson: But anyway, when they went to Homestead School, my kids were the only blacks in each class. Maybe the kids were different then, I don't know. Maybe they showed a little more compassion.

1:05:39 Debra Schwartz: Well, now we're going into the '60s and '70s.

1:05:44 Annabella Robinson: '70s, '60s.

1:05:47 Debra Schwartz: When was Curtis born?

1:05:50 Annabella Robinson: He was born in 1965.

1:05:53 Debra Schwartz: And Staci was born in?

1:05:54 Annabella Robinson: Three years later, '68.

1:05:57 Debra Schwartz: Okay. So there's some social change going on, and certainly there's a lot going on in the Civil Rights movement. California is a more liberal area overall — not in all places, at that time, but more in the urban areas. And, of course, there's all the activism with gay rights going on in San Francisco by the '60s. That's going on and Civil Rights, so more liberal. But what was it like in Mill Valley? Was that evident when you lived here? Did you see changes going on?

1:06:41 Annabella Robinson: Oh yeah. A lot of Japanese were coming in — not too many — and maybe Chinese, too. My neighbor across street, he's a retired pediatrician, and his son just married a Chinese woman, a cute little thing, and then his other son married a lady from Costa Rica. So there're a lot of interracial marriages now going on in Mill Valley.

1:07:03 Debra Schwartz: Did anybody ever describe you as a vanguard in social change? I mean, you were mentioning before the interview about the movie *Loving*.

1:07:16 Annabella Robinson: No, we never went through what they went through. That was incredible.

1:07:19 Debra Schwartz: This is a movie about —

1:07:20 Annabella Robinson: Oh I know. They went to the Supreme Court.

1:07:23 Debra Schwartz: Yeah.

1:07:23 Annabella Robinson: And they won.

1:07:24 Debra Schwartz: This couple. They were not allowed to live together. What city were they living in?

1:07:30 Annabella Robinson: Virginia. I'm not sure of the city.

1:07:32 Debra Schwartz: They were forbidden to live together. Even the children —

1:07:36 Annabella Robinson: I know. The stories —

1:07:39 Debra Schwartz: Black woman, white man.

1:07:42 Annabella Robinson: Another woman whom you would love to interview is Melba Beals. Do you remember Melba Beals?

1:07:50 Debra Schwartz: No.

1:07:50 Annabella Robinson: It wouldn't be for Mill Valley archives, but my friend interviewed her twice. Glen and I met her in 1968. Melba Beals was one of nine that integrated the Little Rock, Arkansas schools.

1:08:06 Debra Schwartz: Oh my goodness. That could not have been easy.

1:08:07 Annabella Robinson: She has two books out.

1:08:09 Debra Schwartz: Where does she live?

1:08:10 Annabella Robinson: I go to her house and visit with her and we bring food and whatever, tea or whatever. She lives in San Rafael, in Peacock Gap now. Oh, you would love her. And she never carried a chip on her shoulder. Her mother and father gave her up because they were so afraid they [racist whites] were going to kill her. And a family from Santa Rosa —

1:08:33 Debra Schwartz: What do you mean they were afraid they were going to kill her?

1:08:35 Annabella Robinson: When she was going back and forth to school?

1:08:39 Debra Schwartz: Oh, they thought —

1:08:42 Annabella Robinson: She stayed there, went to school there, and then when she was 17, when she graduated from there, I think that's when her mother and father — imagine giving your child up like that because of the —

1:08:52 Debra Schwartz: They were worried that she was going to get killed where she lived.

1:08:55 Annabella Robinson: You've got to read her books. I have both her books if you want to borrow them.

1:09:00 Debra Schwartz: I would love to. What are the names of the books?

1:09:02 Annabella Robinson: What are they now? I don't remember them well.

1:09:06 Debra Schwartz: Well, I'll look her up. Melba Beals.

1:09:07 Annabella Robinson: Melba Beals.

1:09:10 Debra Schwartz: How about your time in Mill Valley, do you remember people or places that had particular significance for you?

1:09:19 Annabella Robinson: After everybody got to know us, they were wonderful. We have like seven or eight doctors on our street. It takes education, you have to be educated. If you live in a rural area, and you don't mingle with anybody, and you don't know what's going on in the world, you just don't know how to tolerate one another and get along.

1:09:43 Debra Schwartz: I guess the solution for racism is to interact with each other. Racism as an idea dissolves when the reality of interaction takes place. So do you remember certain — it's always nice to kind of travel back to Mill Valley, to different times, and to think of some of the stores or restaurants that you enjoyed. Were there places that you particularly remember?

1:10:07 Annabella Robinson: D'Angelo's was here I think [laughter]

1:10:09 Debra Schwartz: D'Angelo. Before that it was Davood's.

1:10:12 Annabella Robinson: Davood's?

1:10:13 Debra Schwartz: Davood's.

1:10:16 Annabella Robinson: Oh, Davood's.

1:10:17 Debra Schwartz: Yes, it was Mediterranean food.

1:10:19 Annabella Robinson: No, before that restaurant was there, there was a drugstore — Staci was a teenager — Lockwood's Drugstore.

1:10:24 Debra Schwartz: Oh, and the woman with the arthritis who worked there, she was very nice, the salesperson. So Staci worked at Lockwood's, which was a wonderful

pharmacy. Okay, so let's talk about what was in Mill Valley at that time. When was Staci working at Lockwood's?

1:10:43 Annabella Robinson: Oh, I don't remember, when she was 16.

1:10:45 Debra Schwartz: That would have been in the '70s. Back then there were about four hardware stores in Mill Valley.

1:10:55 Annabella Robinson: Four what dear?

1:10:55 Debra Schwartz: Hardware stores.

1:10:56 Annabella Robinson: Yes.

1:10:56 Debra Schwartz: What else do you remember? The pet store, the stationary store, the general store?

1:11:04 Annabella Robinson: Oh yes, yes, the general store.

1:11:05 Debra Schwartz: Canepa Farms.

1:11:06 Annabella Robinson: All of those. I went to all of those. I loved that general store.

1:11:13 Debra Schwartz: Yes, that was a wonderful store.

1:11:14 Annabella Robinson: Now they have all the furniture and clothing and jewelry. It's a tourist town now.

1:11:21 Debra Schwartz: Yeah. Back then it was a real working town.

1:11:24 Annabella Robinson: Yes it was. There were hardly any cars and you could get out of Mill Valley or come back into Mill Valley. Now going to the beach on the weekend is incredible.

1:11:32 Debra Schwartz: There are more people.

1:11:32 Annabella Robinson: Where do you live, dear?

1:11:33 Debra Schwartz: I live up above town, Blithedale Ridge.

1:11:37 Annabella Robinson: Oh, okay.

1:11:40 Debra Schwartz: So we live up and away from town. But nonetheless, I think everyone living here has to deal with the congestion on Miller and Blithedale, and it's an annoyance to say the least. There's more people. I've interviewed many people who have

lived in Mill Valley for a very long time, and often people talk about the time when families only had one car.

1:12:03 Annabella Robinson: Right. Yeah.

1:12:03 Debra Schwartz: Not multiple cars.

1:12:05 Annabella Robinson: We had one car. That was it.

1:12:07 Debra Schwartz: Did you —

1:12:07 Annabella Robinson: I rode the bus a lot.

1:12:09 Debra Schwartz: Do you remember when the depot was an actual bus depot?

1:12:19 Annabella Robinson: I don't remember. Maybe.

1:12:19 Debra Schwartz: Did you and your family enjoy Mt. Tamalpais? Were you outdoorsy people?

1:12:25 Annabella Robinson: No. Glen worked so much. He traveled. When he became deputy marshal, he was gone all the time. Mm-hmm.

1:12:33 Debra Schwartz: When did Glen die?

1:12:38 Annabella Robinson: He died 12 years ago in 2005.

1:12:42 Debra Schwartz: He would've been how old when he passed away?

1:12:44 Annabella Robinson: He was only 73.

1:12:47 Debra Schwartz: My goodness.

1:12:47 Annabella Robinson: He was a gourmet cook and he ate all the wrong things. He had glaucoma. He had high blood pressure. He had diabetes. Did I say that? He had diabetes. He had to give himself shots. He wouldn't give them at the right times. But he was a fabulous cook.

1:13:10 Debra Schwartz: So he went from having this gorgeous body that you couldn't resist to a body that probably he filled out a little bit.

1:13:19 Annabella Robinson: Yeah. He got a little tummy on him, but he didn't want me to gain any weight. He said, "I want you to look like a 21-year-old." I said, "What?" I said, "What about you?" And he said, "Well, it looks good on men." I said, "Oh."

1:13:33 Debra Schwartz: Oh my. Double standard. So you never really — or did you at any time — face public scrutiny over marrying a black man?

1:13:45 Annabella Robinson: The only time was when we were in Alaska. I was standing waiting for the bus and these airmen came by, about four or five in a car or whatever, and they kept — they drove by and they kept looking at me and looking at me, and I was glad they left 'cause I was by myself waiting for the bus. I tell everybody the reason why people don't say anything but they kind of looked at us like that was because we were such a beautiful couple.

1:14:11 Debra Schwartz: Mm-hmm.

1:14:12 Annabella Robinson: Yeah.

1:14:13 Debra Schwartz: Let's talk about your son, Curtis. He's my doctor.

1:14:18 Annabella Robinson: Yes.

1:14:20 Debra Schwartz: Many people in Mill Valley regard his office — and a couple of other physicians in town — as the last bastion of the old-timey kind of medicine. You can go in to his office, which is a simple, humble office at any time. You don't have to have an appointment.

1:14:38 Annabella Robinson: Walk-ins. You see that sign, "Walk-ins, welcome."

1:14:40 Debra Schwartz: Yeah. "Walk-ins, welcome." They are the most responsive, wonderful office. If you call with an emergency, they're there for you. This is real hometown care that your son, Curtis, provides with his office and his wonderful staff.

1:14:56 Annabella Robinson: Yeah.

1:14:56 Debra Schwartz: And for that, I am very, very grateful.

1:15:00 Annabella Robinson: Oh good.

1:15:00 Debra Schwartz: It's a great security to know that we have that in our town.

1:15:03 Annabella Robinson: I know.

1:15:04 Debra Schwartz: So let's talk a little bit about Curtis. Initially, I had talked to Curtis about interviewing him, but he insisted on you.

1:15:10 Annabella Robinson: He is so good.

1:15:11 Debra Schwartz: He and Staci had a discussion and decided that you were the one to talk to. You were the keeper of the memories.

1:15:17 Annabella Robinson: Awww.

1:15:17 Debra Schwartz: So talk about —

1:15:19 Annabella Robinson: He said, “Be sure and tell Debra, I’m sorry that I couldn’t do it,” or something like that when I left today.

1:15:25 Debra Schwartz: Well, he can tell me himself. When somebody gets sick in the family, I’ll be there. Tell me a little bit about Curtis, ’cause he has done a lot, and not just for Mill Valley. Why don’t you go ahead? You have full license to brag as his mother.

1:15:39 Annabella Robinson: He just made the Pacific Sun, the “Best Doctor in Marin.”

1:15:43 Debra Schwartz: Yes.

1:15:43 Annabella Robinson: You saw that?

1:15:44 Debra Schwartz: No, I did not see that.

1:15:47 Annabella Robinson: Yeah.

1:15:47 Debra Schwartz: People’s choice.

1:15:49 Annabella Robinson: Mm-hmm. He was quite a soccer player. He played tennis, but not like Marcus. Marcus was ranked in Northern California for tennis. Curtis played tennis, too. He played soccer for Tam High. He was quite good.

1:16:04 Debra Schwartz: And then he went off to school. I believe he was at Princeton, correct?

1:16:08 Annabella Robinson: First, he went down to UC Santa Barbara. He became the president of the student body. Can you believe that? President of the student body. And he wanted to change the whole system in a year’s time, because they didn’t have any black ethnic studies and all that down there then.

1:16:29 Debra Schwartz: Mm-hmm.

1:16:31 Annabella Robinson: Then he graduated. He wanted to stay five years there.

1:16:34 Debra Schwartz: At UC Santa Barbara? I would too. Have you seen that beach right next to campus?

1:16:38 Annabella Robinson: I went down to spend a whole week with him. That was wonderful. And then he got accepted at UCLA. So that's when he went to medical school.

1:16:47 Debra Schwartz: UCLA.

1:16:47 Annabella Robinson: He studied very hard.

1:16:48 Debra Schwartz: I was thinking that our Mill Valley Historical Society President Eric Macris said that he went to school with Curtis. And I confused it, because Eric went to Princeton, but in fact they went to Tam High together.

1:17:00 Annabella Robinson: And who's he again? Who is the name?

1:17:01 Debra Schwartz: Eric Macris. He's the Historical Society President. Anyway, Curtis went on to UCLA and studied medicine there.

1:17:10 Annabella Robinson: Then he got accepted right away in Phoenix, Arizona to work in the hospital there for two and a half years. And he got married. I think he got married down there when he was in medical school. And that was okay for nine years, but it didn't work out. He had three kids by Maité. She was from Ecuador, and she was working on her Masters in — was it anthropology? Something like that. I forget. So that didn't work out. He has three beautiful children: two boys and a girl. The oldest boy is 26. That's Ismael. And Ítalo is 25, almost 25. Ítalo just got a wonderful job in the financial district, and he's only like 24 and a half. He's very outgoing and he's a photographer, too. You could see him on Facebook. He does all these wonderful videos. Micaela is 20 now. She is in University of Hawaii. She's home for the summer.

1:18:18 Debra Schwartz: So Curtis and you are sharing the house over on Ferndale?

1:18:23 Annabella Robinson: North Ferndale, yes.

1:18:25 Debra Schwartz: And did you say the children are living with you too?

1:18:27 Annabella Robinson: Well, no. The two older ones aren't now. Ismael and Ítalo, they're with their mom, but they come on weekends and spend time with us. Micaela comes home for the summer. She's with me, but she'll go on weekends to her mom who lives in Novato. And then Curtis has two by his new lovely wife, Xania, She's from Jamaica. They have Curtis Jr. and Semira.

1:18:56 Debra Schwartz: Does she work at the office?

1:19:00 Annabella Robinson: Pardon.

1:19:01 Debra Schwartz: Curtis's wife — what's her name again?

1:19:02 Annabella Robinson: Xania.

1:19:03 Debra Schwartz: Xania, She works —

1:19:03 Annabella Robinson: She works — you probably met her.

1:19:05 Debra Schwartz: Yeah, I think I must have.

1:19:07 Annabella Robinson: Xania. She looks a lot like Staci.

1:19:09 Debra Schwartz: Yes, I know. I've confused them before, 'cause Staci works at the office and Xania works at the office. This is a family business. Few other doctors in town have their families working with them.

1:19:21 Annabella Robinson: Yeah, so Curtis is very happy now and he runs all the time, he comes home from work, and he's like, "Mom, I'm going on a run." He'll run, and he does the Dipsea by himself sometimes.

1:19:35 Debra Schwartz: Well, he's still a young pup. And he's done some other things besides running this office here in town, 'cause he has the clinic, too. Tell me about that.

1:19:44 Annabella Robinson: He has what honey?

1:19:44 Debra Schwartz: The clinic in Marin City.

1:19:46 Annabella Robinson: Oh, yeah, that's going well hopefully now. He said, "I hope it goes well."

1:19:51 Debra Schwartz: Tell me a little about the clinic.

1:19:55 Annabella Robinson: Well, he and Xania got together and they spent almost two years getting a proposal together to get money to restart the clinic. I think they got around a \$1 million to start the clinic. He hired a dentist, he hired a doctor, and we have a receptionist there, and I don't know who else, a nurse maybe, but hopefully, it's going well.

1:20:14 Debra Schwartz: So this is a clinic for the residents of Marin City?

1:20:18 Annabella Robinson: Well, yeah. They come from Sausalito, they can come from San Rafael there, too, if they want. They have a clinic also in San Rafael.

1:20:24 Debra Schwartz: Yes, he has a clinic in San Rafael as well.

1:20:26 Annabella Robinson: No, he doesn't.

1:20:27 Debra Schwartz: No?

1:20:28 Annabella Robinson: Curtis, no, no. He has nothing to do with that. He just started the one in Marin City.

1:20:31 Debra Schwartz: So he has the one in Marin city. Do people pay at the clinic or is it state subsidized?

1:20:38 Annabella Robinson: I'm not sure, honey, probably subsidized. A lot of them are elderly, and they're on Medicaid, Medicare, whatever that is.

1:20:49 Debra Schwartz: How long had the clinic been running?

1:20:53 Annabella Robinson: Probably for three years now, maybe three or four years.

1:20:57 Debra Schwartz: What compelled him to be so involved in the community, in the care of his community?

1:21:03 Annabella Robinson: Well, he figures his father grew up there, and so maybe he's just — and he worked there too. When he started the clinic, he was the doctor there.

1:21:14 Debra Schwartz: He was going to both offices.

1:21:17 Annabella Robinson: Back and forth. I think so. And then after he hired this doctor and this dentist, he doesn't have anything to do with it, anymore.

1:21:32 Debra Schwartz: Tell me about Staci.

1:21:32 Annabella Robinson: Staci, oh, she's my love. I'm glad I have a daughter in the family. Staci, she started writing poems. She was about 10 years old and she loved to write poems, little poems. So she became a writer. She graduated from UCLA, majoring in history, but she said, "Mom, you know, I don't think I really want to be a teacher." She loves to write, so she became a writer. She did Tupac Shakur's autobiography, published Simon and Schuster.

1:22:04 Debra Schwartz: Did she grew up with him? Because he grew up in Marin City.

1:22:09 Annabella Robinson: With Tupac?

1:22:10 Debra Schwartz: Yes.

1:22:10 Annabella Robinson: He was there for a while. No. She got to really know him when he was down in Los Angeles. Staci lived in LA. After she graduated from UCLA, she stayed down there and she worked for UCLA in the department where the

donations would come in, she'd keep track of all this, whatever. She worked for UCLA. Then she worked for an agent for football players. She worked for him for maybe two years. Then she met this young boy who was in a class with her at UCLA. She didn't know he was a football player. She went with him for about 10 years while she lived there, and he played for the LA Rams, the Los Angeles Rams.

1:22:54 Debra Schwartz: What's his name?

1:22:56 Annabella Robinson: Roman Phifer. He was an inside linebacker. So they went together for almost 10 years, and they were going to get married. A month before the wedding, he called her up at 3:00 in the morning and he said, "Staci, I don't think this is going work." It was the best thing he did.

1:23:12 Debra Schwartz: Didn't you like him?

1:23:14 Annabella Robinson: He was okay but he wasn't that — is this being recorded?

1:23:19 Debra Schwartz: Yes. You can not answer.

1:23:22 Annabella Robinson: Anyway, they broke the wedding off. A month before the wedding, I bought her a dress. It was beautiful. She would have made a beautiful bride. But anyway, then she would come up here to visit and see all her seven girls from maybe 6th, 7th and 8th grade all the way up to high school. They all graduated together, and they're all still very close, all nine of them.

1:23:52 Debra Schwartz: So her best friends from school are still her best friends later in life.

1:23:56 Annabella Robinson: They're all close together. They see each other. They talk on the phone. One lives in New York on Park Avenue, or Park Drive. What is it? Park Avenue? Staci just told me, she said, "Mom, for our 50th" — she's going to be 50 in December, and they want to all get together and rent a big house up in Napa, I guess, or whatever. They all want to get together, so they're working on that now. The majority of them are going to go, too. Most of them are married, but I think two are left that are not married. That's what she's planning on. But anyway, she wrote Tupac Shakur's autobiography, and Simon & Schuster paid her well, but they didn't publish it. They said it wasn't gripping enough and all that. And her mom liked it. Staci knew Tupac's mom very well. Do you know anything about her at all?

1:24:48 Debra Schwartz: Only through his music. His mother had addiction issues. For those that may be older who are listening, Tupac was a rapper, one of the early rappers. He had an early demise, and amazing music. He writes about his mom. Still, if I hear him singing about "Dear Mama," I cry every time.

1:25:09 Annabella Robinson: I know.

1:25:10 Debra Schwartz: Please tell me about his mother.

1:25:12 Annabella Robinson: His mom was very bright. She went to prison because she was a Black Panther. She was her own defense and got out of jail.

1:25:22 Debra Schwartz: So she was friends with Angela Davis?

1:25:24 Annabella Robinson: Yeah, probably. Mm-hmm. So anyway, Staci, when she was in LA, Molly, one of her closest girlfriends from high school, was down there and Molly was in love with Tupac Shakur. They went together for a long time. And so when Staci would go down, she'd be with Tupac and Molly at parties. And Tupac told Staci, "Well, if you're not satisfied, if you're ever not satisfied with your job, you come to work for me." Tupac was a poet too, did you know that?

1:26:11 Debra Schwartz: Mm-hmm.

1:26:11 Annabella Robinson: He wrote beautiful — I have his book of poetry. The poem that I really like he wrote for his mother, "The Rose that Grows Out of the Stone."¹ It was beautiful.

1:26:20 Debra Schwartz: Do you remember the words?

1:26:22 Annabella Robinson: No, I wish I did. I'll have to see if I can find it. It was beautiful. Imagine a rose growing out of just a crack in the stone. That was lovely. So anyway, she'd come up to spend weekends with some of her other girlfriends up here. And it took her a long time to get over Roman. Her friend Hannah said, "Staci, I have this nice young man. I want you to meet him." And Staci said, "No, I don't want to meet anybody," for two years. She finally met Jerome and then she ended up marrying Jerome. Wonderful husband, wonderful father. She has two little boys, Quincy and Jace. Quincy is 13 this month. Jace is 11. So anyway, they're happily married, and they live up the street from me in a lovely cottage.

1:27:24 Debra Schwartz: So now, as we're winding down with this interview, let's talk a little bit about you again, shall we? Listening to your story, I see an interesting dichotomy. I guess maybe it's not a dichotomy, but an interesting balance. Someone that was raised with such rigidity and trauma — you're kind of like the rose grew out of the stone, too.

1:27:58 Annabella Robinson: Yeah.

1:28:00 Debra Schwartz: Somehow or another there's a freshness about you, an enthusiasm. You don't seem to have a chip on your shoulder —

1:28:11 Annabella Robinson: No.

¹ Annabella slightly misremembered the title of the poem, "The Rose that Grew from Concrete."—Editor.

1:28:11 Debra Schwartz: About what happened to you when you were younger. But you had a very traumatic childhood. You were raised in an area that was socially constraining, yet you don't seem to carry it with you. You went off and very young, fell in love with this guy and married him. He was black. You traveled here and there, and seemed to enjoy yourself nicely. You thrived. You thrived in a lot of different environments. Are you just an easy-going gal, is that it?

1:28:41 Annabella Robinson: Yeah. I think about the past every now and then, but then it just leaves me. Now we're talking all about it, but when I'm at home I don't think about it at all, thank goodness.

1:28:56 Debra Schwartz: And you're busy. Tell me about your life in Mill Valley now.

1:29:04 Annabella Robinson: You should see my calendar. It's incredible.

1:29:08 Debra Schwartz: Tell me.

1:29:08 Annabella Robinson: On Mondays I do the food bank from 10:00 to 1:30 or 2:00. Tuesdays I belong to the Mill Valley Community Center Senior Club, and we have chair yoga every Tuesday. Then we have bag lunch, and then we have Bingo. I love this group. There's about 25 of us, and they're all wonderful seniors. We have such a good time. And then on Wednesdays, I belong to another social club called the Sunshine Club. It's all black. I'm the only white one. All these ladies and a couple of men belong to it, and they all grew up in Marin City. It's just a social club. We have bake sales at different times to raise money for our club. We go to the gambling casino; we have fun there. And most of them go to [chuckles] enjoy the lunches there, what do they call them? All the food is out, and you help yourself.

1:30:05 Debra Schwartz: Buffets.

1:30:06 Annabella Robinson: Buffet. Then on Wednesdays and Fridays I usually have my massage. And then on Saturdays I go to the acupuncturist.

1:30:22 Debra Schwartz: And at this point you are now how old?

1:30:26 Annabella Robinson: 87.

1:30:27 Debra Schwartz: It's shocking to me. People can't see because they're not here with me looking through my eyes at you. There's just no way you look that age.

1:30:35 Annabella Robinson: Thank you.

1:30:36 Debra Schwartz: Absolutely no way.

1:30:37 Annabella Robinson: Thank you for your compliment. [chuckles]

1:30:39 Debra Schwartz: You are beautiful.

1:30:42 Annabella Robinson: When I talk on the phone, when I call Comcast, and they're in Honduras or they're in Jamaica or they're in the Philippines, and we start talking about ages or something, I don't know how it comes up, they say, "You mean to tell me you're a senior. You don't sound like a senior."

1:31:00 Debra Schwartz: You have an essence, a bright youthful essence for sure, and spirit.

1:31:10 Annabella Robinson: Well, they say you should never let the child leave your body. Once you do, you get old fast. So I laugh a lot, and I have two dogs, two wonderful little Cairn Terriers. They know 70 words. When I walk them in the morning, and we either go up the street or down the street, so I talk. I say, "Should we go up the street or down the street?" I'll say, "Okay, let's go up the street." And they turn and we go up the street. [chuckles] It's amazing.

1:31:36 Debra Schwartz: You've made choices in your life against the grain. You learned to lie so you could do what you wanted with your father. You walked away from the social mores of the day. You've entered into new worlds. You've smiled, I'm sure. And what would you tell to somebody, anybody having to break barriers, or having to push aside barriers in their life? What are the secrets to your happiness?

1:32:16 Annabella Robinson: Well, I never had anything when I was a kid. I never had a baby doll, never had a Christmas tree, never had a telephone in the house, no music. So I think it's important that as you grow up, if you've had the kind of life that I've had, forget it. Forgive your parents, or whoever did anything to you, forgive them. And then you never look back, you just look forward. As our dear Obama has always said, "Never look back, move forward."

1:32:56 Debra Schwartz: Well, I think that's a beautiful way to end this interview.

1:33:00 Annabella Robinson: Thank you, dear.

1:33:02 Debra Schwartz: Thank you so much for your story and for sitting with me today. This has been wonderful.

1:33:07 Annabella Robinson: Thank you for having me.

1:33:09 Debra Schwartz: I'm so glad we had the opportunity to talk, and for me to meet you at last.

1:33:11 Annabella Robinson: We'll have to go out to lunch. I'll take you out to lunch.

1:33:14 Debra Schwartz: I believe you just had lunch with somebody I interviewed just the other day. John Boettiger, the grandson of —

1:33:22 Annabella Robinson: Oh, that's right.

1:33:22 Debra Schwartz: Oh hey, you know what? I think there's one thing we forgot to talk about, we have to add on, I realize. But first, John Boettiger, the grandson of Eleanor and Franklin Roosevelt.

1:33:30 Annabella Robinson: Franklin, yeah.

1:33:32 Debra Schwartz: Did you have a nice lunch?

1:33:33 Annabella Robinson: Oh yeah. I took him to the Mountain Home Inn. It was a lovely lunch.

1:33:44 Debra Schwartz: Nice setting.

1:33:44 Annabella Robinson: Oh, It's a beautiful setting and we walked out — I said, "Let's look at the view, John." We looked down on Mill Valley, you know the view up there, it was very nice.

1:33:52 Debra Schwartz: Yeah.

1:33:53 Annabella Robinson: So anyway —

1:33:55 Debra Schwartz: What we didn't talk about was with Glen and Patty Hearst.

1:34:00 Annabella Robinson: Oh, that's something else. Glen handled Patty Hearst. When this case went in papers from all over the world, he was on the front page with Patty. I still have a lot of the papers. Glen and a couple of deputy marshals found her, and I don't know how the word got out, but they found her in San Francisco. So Glen picked her up and they put her in the county jail, I guess — yeah, in the San Francisco County Jail at first. When the trial started, Glen deputized me because they didn't have a female deputy marshal at the time, so he deputized me as the first female deputy U.S. marshal. Anyway, when the trial went on, every night at 5:00, I'd go to the city. Marcus was old enough to take care of Staci and Curtis. So I would go in the city. The jury was sequestered at the Holiday Inn. We had the whole 20th floor. All the doors we had locks on, so the jurors couldn't walk out and go off anywhere.

1:35:15 Annabella Robinson: So what I had to do was I had to monitor the television. I'd sit with them when they were watching TV. If something came on about the case, I had to change the channel immediately. And I had to listen to the telephone conversations. This one couple had just gotten married, and he was a juror. Anyway, I did that for six weeks. We took them out every night, the jury, we took them out every night for dinner, to the theater, to the shows in order to keep them happy. That's what I did for

six weeks. We were supposed to stay up all night long, Glen and I, and I'd leave at 7:00 in the morning, come back home, take care of my kids, get them off to school wherever. When they put Patty Hearst in a jail in San Bruno, every day Glen went to pick her up, and he had to get a different route because they wanted to kill her.

1:36:20 Debra Schwartz: They being?

1:36:21 Annabella Robinson: Whoever was left from the Symbionese Liberation Army, you know, that she went with. She really liked being with them, so she got a lot of attention.

1:36:31 Debra Schwartz: We'll just get a little context. This is the relative, the granddaughter of — or I forget exactly where she was in the Hearst family — but an extremely wealthy family. She gets kidnapped by the S.L.A. and, according to her defense, brain-washed. You're shaking your head no.

1:36:55 Annabella Robinson: No, they never kept her in a closet. They were all black weren't they? Were the majority of them black or some of them were black? I'm not sure. Usually blacks don't treat their people like that. As much as they've been through, the blacks, all for 400 years or so, they still show a lot of compassion for one another, you know what I mean? I think she enjoyed being with them. They [her parents] sent Patty away when she was 12 years old to boarding school.

1:37:24 Debra Schwartz: Her family sent her away.

1:37:25 Annabella Robinson: Yeah, her family and she never got any attention from them — no love or affection. But anyway, Glen did that for six weeks and I could have gone with him, because, he had deputized me but I was afraid. I didn't want to go 'cause somebody might, you know, harm or kill both of us.

1:37:44 Debra Schwartz: And you have children.

1:37:44 Annabella Robinson: Yes.

1:37:44 Debra Schwartz: Right. Well, that's a little addition. I'm glad we caught that at the end. So now, what I didn't say when I introduced you, now I can say with a certain certainty. I have just enjoyed interviewing you, Annabella, a woman, a mother — a good mother, as you said — and a grandmother.

1:38:08 Annabella Robinson: Grandmother of nine.

1:38:10 Debra Schwartz: Of nine. A preschool teacher — excuse me, a preschool, well I guess not really teacher, but a provider.

1:38:18 Annabella Robinson: Well, what?

1:38:18 Debra Schwartz: You ran your own preschool.

1:38:20 Annabella Robinson: I was 39 years old, and I was going to the church at Marin City, the Presbyterian church, and I worked in the church school for two-and-a-half and three-year-olds. And the Director said to me, “Anne, you are a natural, you should go to the College of Marin and get your degree in early childhood education.” And that’s what I did.

1:38:44 Debra Schwartz: And so you were a teacher. You were a preschool teacher and deputy marshal.

1:38:48 Annabella Robinson: U.S. marshal, female.

1:38:49 Debra Schwartz: U.S. marshal, and free spirit.

1:38:56 Annabella Robinson: Very free spirit. [chuckles]

1:39:00 Debra Schwartz: Thank you so much. And that concludes our interview.

1:39:03 Annabella Robinson: Thank you for having me.