

Joan Carr (Farnsworth House)
Interviewed by Shaniqua Osgood (2002)

My name is Joan Jackson Carr. My friends call me Joanie. I was born in Brooklyn, New York in August, 1930. When I was growing up in Jamaica Plain, it was totally different. All the stores were open. And there were no malls, so we all shopped on Centre Street, or in downtown Boston.

Some of my happiest memories are of Nantucket Island where we spent our summers when I was a child. One summer I made friends with a lady who lived near us named Madame Zara — not her real name! She was the fortune teller at the White Elephant Hotel at afternoon tea time. I was probably about seven or eight at the time, quite young, but very, very proud one day when I was invited to her house for dinner. That was quite something to be invited minus parents. I was the one who was invited, not them ... which I liked very much. I even remember we had corn on the cob. Her mother was a great lady and a wonderful cook. It's amazing the little things that stand out in your mind.

I still remember it as clear as if it were yesterday. I would meet her down the street because she lived near us, and always walked home with her. I'd take her hand and bounce along beside her and talk away a-mile-a-minute. She was full of fun, a very happy, sweet young woman. She was my pal all summer.

I also loved the walks my father and I would take at night in the fog. It's amazing how the street lights look at night in the fog. It was so pretty. I loved it! And to this day I love weather. I love rain ... I love fog. Yes, I'm an island person!

I also remember it was a big deal on Sunday mornings, everybody would converge on the one pharmacy, standing around, waiting for the boat to bring in the Sunday Papers. And I'd wait for my father to say, "Come on! Let's go down to the pharmacy and we'll wait for the papers." And I loved that for some reason. There'd be a mob of people standing around down there, hemming and hawing, and then we'd hear the boat come in, and the papers would come, and everybody would be waiting to grab their paper. Then, I couldn't wait to get home because my father would take the funnies right out of the paper and give them to me. So that was a big thing. Sunday mornings ... you had to do that.

I loved foggy nights for a walk, and, of course, normally we'd go to the beach every afternoon. And, if it was raining, my mother and I would go to the library. It was a really big, old library which had that wonderful library smell ... even more so because it was, you know, near the water. Yes, it had that mildew smell mixed in. I can still remember that smell.