



THE ALEXANDRIA ORAL HISTORY CENTER  
OFFICE OF HISTORIC ALEXANDRIA  
CITY OF ALEXANDRIA



# Oral History Interview

with

## Nora Malone

**Interviewer:** Naeem Scott

**Narrator:** Nora Malone

**Location of Interview:**

Alexandria City High School, 3330 King St, Alexandria, VA 22302

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**Transcriber:** *Michele Cawley, PhD*

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### Summary:

*Nora Malone reflects on her experience on her experiences while on the Alexandria City Remembrance Programs pilgrimage to Mobile, Alabama, to honor Joseph McCoy and Benjamin Thomas.*

### Notes:

*This interview was conducted by a student from Alexandria City High School, Naeem Scott. This interview was part of Student Experience Week in the Spring of 2023, where a select group of students served as interns for the Office of Historic Alexandria for 2 weeks. Students from Alexandria City High School were trained in oral history practices and then conducted their own interviews. This is one interview from this project.*

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<b>General</b>	Childhood; Alexandria Community Remembrance Project
<b>People</b>	
<b>Places</b>	Cambridge, Massachusetts; Alexandria City High School

**Nora Malone** [00:00:00] You press the red button. The red circle.

**Naeem Scott** [00:00:04] And we are live. Who am I speaking with?

**Nora Malone** [00:00:07] Nora Malone.

**Naeem Scott** [00:00:10] That is like a -32 girl. You got that.

**Nora Malone** [00:00:13] Nora Malone.

**Naeem Scott** [00:00:14] Okay. Now, Nora, tell us about your childhood. You say that you. You say that you were born in New York.

**Nora Malone** [00:00:24] Yes. Okay. I was born in Brooklyn. I lived in Bay Ridge specifically. We were in New York because that's where my entire family is from. That's where they went when they got off the boat from Ireland. Um, yeah, my dad's from Queens. My mom's from Long Island. They both went to school in New York. My dad went to Fordham in the Bronx, and my mom went to Cornell up in Ithaca. And they met at this job. They said they worked for this guy named Lenny. And it was a really weird job, but that's how they met while my dad was living in the Bronx. And then they moved to Brooklyn and then they had me. But we didn't live there for that long. I don't remember that.

**Naeem Scott** [00:01:08] And were you planned?

**Nora Malone** [00:01:12] (Laugh) I don't know. I. I think so. My mom always talks about how she wishes she could have had another kid because she wanted a boy named Theo. Um, and so I imagine that if they wanted, she wanted two, she wanted one. But I do know is that my dad was really excited that I was a girl, and he, like, wanted to buy, like, a circle mattress. You know, he made it look like I like the top of a tower and like, a castle and, like, a princess theme. But he was, it was really complicated so we just got a normal crib, and my bedroom was green themed. And yeah, and I remember one thing in that in that apartment in Brooklyn, I had these, like, washable markers, like Crayola markers and I was in my crib and I stood up and I took the markers into my crib and I drew all of myself and in 4 million different colors. And then my dad came into my room and saw me in the dark. And it looked like I had like a disease because my skin, every part of my skin was, like, covered in green and yellow and blue and red. He screamed. And then he looked at me closer and he was like, "No, you just covered yourself in markers." So then they had to wash me off. Yeah.

**Naeem Scott** [00:02:27] And so tell us about your hair journey. Was that a form of self-harm?

**Nora Malone** [00:02:31] Well, actually, when I was little I had curly hair. It was blond, really, really blond. My dad's hair, when he was little, was really, really blond. And it turned brown when he got to high school, so he thought the same thing would happen to me. And it was really blond and it was curly. And then I had it cut and it stopped being so curly. And it was really blond for a long time. And the first time I dyed it was in seventh grade and I got purple hair dye and I dyed streaks of it purple. And I thought that looks so cool. And then I went to the ocean and it just came out. Then I died my whole head red in eighth grade. And that was interesting, especially because I was synchronized figure skating, we weren't allowed to have dyed hair and it wouldn't come out because

red dye does not leave hair. So I had to get it dyed over brown and it was really weird and it was still red anyway. So I like brown hair for\_\_\_\_\_, so red. And then I moved and then I dyed it dead blue. And then I was like, hey, I can bleach my hair. So I bleached it and I got purple. It was really bright purple for a while. And then I dyed green randomly, and then I kept it green for about three years. And then I was like, maybe I should change my hair color for college and my prom dress is red. So I was like, we'll go with red. And I haven't seen a whole head of my natural hair since seventh grade.

**Naeem Scott** [00:03:54] Lovely. And tell us about Cambridge.

**Nora Malone** [00:03:56] Oh, so we moved to Cambridge after we lived in Brooklyn.

**Naeem Scott** [00:03:59] And where is Cambridge?

**Nora Malone** [00:04:01] It's in Massachusetts, it's right next to Boston. It's basically is Boston, but it's just a smaller county. We moved I remember one of my early memories is we lived in an apartment first and Harvard Square. And when we were moving out of that apartment into our townhouse in Inman Square, I had this like statue of a polar bear that was my mom's that I was holding in the car for some reason. And there was a hole in the bottom, and I dropped my sunglasses in it and I was like, "Oh, no." My mom was freaking, yelling at me because she was like, "Oh, no, the sunglasses." And I just tipped it over and the sunglasses fell out. And she's like, "Oh, I guess it's fine." I was like, "Yeah." But it was Cambridge. We live mostly in Inman Square. Cambridge is made up of squares. I really like Cambridge. Cambridge and Boston are very much what I think of as home. Like I don't think of here as home. Cambridge is It's, it was a kind of place where people would knit like sweaters on trees and there was like all the coffee shops and it was right next to Harvard and MIT. So there's lots of college students, but they're like, not the kind that get ultra mega drunk and like poop on your lawn. They're like a little more intellectual, like they get drunk, but they do it in the privacy of their own campuses. And it was, I always, were always, I was always going places. And I always remember that there was always for some reason, like beads and stuff and like little gems in the sidewalks. And I would always find them and pick them up. And I think it was Tinkerbell. And there was always smashed fruit around for some reason. And we, we, I had this story, there's this gorilla in the neighborhood that would break up fruit because people would like break pumpkins. But those were like broken watermelons and like oranges on the ground. And it was, it was really nice. I really liked it there. It was just very homey, though they've torn up Inman Square now. It's all under construction, so it doesn't look the same. And I went to, so I went to Garden Nursery School for preschool, which is right next to Harvard. And that's where I met one of my friends who's still one of my friends today. We both had stuffed unicorns, except I had unwound my unicorn horns, so it was a goat. So instead of having the one horn, it had two, which my mother was confused by this. She was like, "what is?" And we would always do fundraisers near Harvard graduation, and my mom would make cake pops in Harvard colors and then sell them for like \$5 to Harvard graduate parents and get so much money for the school. It was, it was great. And I remember my dad came in once and made everybody pancakes and we slept in sleeping bags, which is like a camping seminar. It was really nice. It was really fun. And then I went to the public, uh, public elementary school. My friend did not, my friend went to a private school called Fayerweather District School, which we'll come back to later. I went to Cambridge Port, which was not in Cambridge Port. Cambridge Port is another part of of the Boston area, but it was in Cambridge. I loved it. It was a K-8 school when I started, but it turned into a K-5. I think if it stayed K-8 I would be a very different person because my middle school experience was far less

than amazing. I don't think anyone really likes middle school. But so I started there. It was really nice. I remember I got lots of bloody noses and the first time my kindergarten teacher carried me all the way up the stairs. And then by the second time and the third and the fourth, the fifth, he just gave me a box of tissues. Yeah. The guy in charge of the summer camp there was called Wade. And he was weird. But he taught me this. What is it? It's spiders doing push ups on a mirror.

**Naeem Scott** [00:07:49] Oh, wow.

**Nora Malone** [00:07:51] Yeah. I mean, I went to school. It was fine. It was nice. Yeah, we had a dog. We already had a dog. Oh, okay. We got. Well, we got a cat. Her name was Cute because we had a cat. My mom's like, what you want to name? And I said, "Cute." She said "that's a stupid name for a cat. Let's name her Chloe." I was like "no, Cute." So we called her Cute Chloe, but we just call her Cutie. We got her when I was in kindergarten. Then we got our dog Buddy when I was in first grade. He came on a van from Tennessee, and we were actually on TV when we adopted him. And we just ended up calling him Buddy because he's nice. And then we got Maggie, my cat, when I was in. I think I was in second grade. I remember getting her. That was really fun. She fell asleep on like my mom's hand in a little cage and is very sweet. And then in fifth grade, we got Honey Lemon, who is our Golden Retriever. That was nice. I remember in first grade, there was this girl named Maggie who had the same birthday as me and was also born in Brooklyn. And at first, I liked her because we were friends. But then she started copying everything I would do, and it made me really mad. So I always hope that I got after her in the share circle, because if I got before for her, she would do the same thing I did and I was pissed.

**Naeem Scott** [00:09:08] So she was like a bitch.

**Nora Malone** [00:09:11] Yeah. No, we were. I don't know why. And then, well, I was on I was going to middle school. My mom and dad had heard horror stories from my best friend who I met through the public high school. She was a year older than me, and her brother had gone to the school and he, there's all these horror stories, but like, they would take like photos of girls, up girl skirts and like share them. And there was lots of lots of bad stuff going on at that middle school. And it was falling apart like tiles were falling out, rats were in the ceilings, They'd fall through the ceilings. And I almost went to a charter school, but I didn't want to go to a charter school. I didn't want to leave my friends. I hated the charter school. It didn't have a gym. It didn't have a library. I remember like crying in my bedroom telling my dad how much I did not want to go to this charter school. I wanted to go to the same school that everyone else did. And I didn't want to go to Catholic school either because my parents were both Catholic. Well, my mom was still Lutheran at that point, but she converted later. But like, I wasn't super into it. Like, I never been super into it and I just didn't want to do that. And, so I went to the public high school and it was horrible, the public middle school, and it was really bad. It was in the basement of an elementary school, because they tore down the building. Yeah, and it sucked. It was not good. Everyone was mean. I don't know. The principal was mean. I had a teacher who would jump up on desks and scream at us. And if you. He would do push ups in the end of class and he'd cheer. Which ever class go the most push ups would get a pizza party at the end of the year. Which is interesting. So I switched. There was a straight school where my friend had gone from grade school. I was a scholarship kid. It was like a hippie private school. I feel like hippies had money.

**Naeem Scott** [00:11:14] And so tell me about your high school experience so far.

**Nora Malone** [00:11:20] Well, I went to. I went to Cambridge Regional Latin, which was the public high school, which I also thought to go to. I remember because we almost moved to D.C. at the end of my eighth grade. I remember my dad asking me like, would you rather me apply for jobs in D.C. or in New York? And for some reason I was like D.C. because I was like, if I was in New York, I'd be closer to my family. I don't know why that made me so mad, but it did. And so he applied for jobs in D.C., and I was really sad that I was going have to leave. And I was googling this high school. Like this was a DC job. And I'm also looking at like it was I realize now was probably Bishop Ireton and I was like, I don't want to go to Catholic school. And I'm like, "Oh, we'll do it." So I took the SAT and then he didn't get the job and I was like, "great. I got to go to high school in Cambridge." This is all I wanted to do. So my freshman year, I had a really good time. I liked freshman year, like I had friends, I had good friends. I would go for lunch hour. I was able to combine both the friends I made in my new middle school and the friends from my previous middle school and I'd make while making friends from new schools. It was a pretty big high school. It was all up in the city. I could walk there. It was near all these coffee shops. You go for lunch. I liked my teachers. I liked like being there. My best friend at that point, my close friend from my preschool had gone to a private middle school that their mom worked at, high school that their mom worked at. But yeah, I liked it there. But then my dad applied for another job in D.C. and got it. So I moved. I remember knowing, learning. I would move basically like two weeks before everything shut down. And then I moved on the my last day of high school, I had a geometry final, but my geometry teacher hadn't taught us online at all. And we did semester schedules, so it had like two weeks of him and then COVID happened. And then I just didn't learn. And so I remember being in the car, driving to Alexandria and like, logging on to like, Google meet to see if he would come on and he didn't and they didn't take a final. Yeah. I don't know. Because I remember when we drove down here, we wanted to do it all night, but we had to stop in New Jersey at this really sketchy motel.

**Naeem Scott** [00:13:40] And tell me about your experience at ACHS.

**Nora Malone** [00:13:48] Well, I remember googling it and it looks, when I first started googling it in eighth grade and again in freshman year, it looked a lot like a more classic high school, football field, like parking. You're outside, you're in the suburban area. My high school is not like that at all. Everybody walked or took the T. We would play on like Harvard's sports fields because we didn't have our own. It was very much an urban school like it was right in the middle of. There wasn't any green space. And I was like, "oh, this will be interesting. I don't know. I don't know how to do this type of thing." And this is not how I'd kind of planned my high school experience. And I started online, and I remember on the first day of online school, it's over the computer they had given me had a broken camera and it was Zoom. And I want you to trust me to turn on cameras. And I felt so mad at the school. And that rage just continued. I didn't, I mean online year was fine. I slowly kind of made friends. I was taking guitar lessons at the time. And I was, we had a group me in my AP world class where we'd complain about the teacher. And I joined a club that I saw on campus. And as before, it's whatever you make it, which I'm still part of. And that was nice. But I mean, I went in for hybrid as soon as I could. That was really awkward because the only class I had multiple people in was usually just my AP world class because I would go and there were other people there and stuff. And that was when we started. We still were starting at ten. But then my Spanish class was empty. It was just me. So a lot of my teachers hadn't come back. So I would spend doing Zoom class in the cafeteria. ut I just wanted to be in the school. And I remember my AP world teacher in a

shocking stroke of niceness took me and a new student and another new student. He was from Singapore, but he was actually from Philadelphia. Ben Breen came on.

**Naeem Scott** [00:15:51] Oh, yes, Ben.

**Nora Malone** [00:15:53] He moved here at the same time as me, and she gave us a tour and I was like, "Oh, this is cool. I know somebody." And then he never spoke me again, but that's okay. I don't think we would have gotten along anyway. But I mean, mean it was fine. Eventually she just started coming in and I at least knew the layout of the school and the order of the school before I, you know, was thrown into it. Yeah, I mean.

**Naeem Scott** [00:16:18] Tell us about your experience in the theater department at school.

**Nora Malone** [00:16:23] Well, I in my choose my classes after my sophomore year for my junior year, and I didn't know anything about any of the course departments. And of course, my counselor sucked and she was like, oh I fyi, you have to take a sequential elective. I was like, "well, I'm in journalism 2, because that was the paper. And she's like, "Well you have to take I was like, "I can't. It's a freshman year class." So I looked at this thing, I saw stagecraft, and I was like, you know what that's fine. I was kind of involved in theater in middle school and in high school freshman year. And I was like, and I'd done wood shop so look okay. And I took Stagecraft 1. And that was a class and I was like, oh, okay now I do like this. And it got me involved in the fall play, Facing the Truth. And I was a spotlight operator because they asked if anyone could do it. And I knew I wanted I wanted to pick, to have something that was individual. I didn't want to be like a running group member. So I raised my hand and I did that and I kind of just blew me up into the world. Because it was nice too, because for my whole life I've been a figure skater, so I always had stuff to do after school, so I couldn't do after school activities because I always had practice and then I did suddenly didn't. And I was like, I need to do stuff with my life because my dad was otherwise going to make me go join the rowing team, which I did not want to do because they had practice every single day. I was like, I don't want to do that. It was like, you need to have friends. And I was like, I'll figure it out. So I joined the theater department and I went and I did all the I've done all the shows. I did the fall play my junior year. I went to One Act, then went the spring musical, done the Writers' Fest and then the fall play again. And then One Act again and then the Spring musical again. And I did, I was, I was a spotlight operator. I was prop manager. I was wing manager. I was a co-director and I was stage manager. So I've done all the little levels of the bureaucracy of the theater department. I think overall, when I look back on it, I will like my time in the theater, but I'll be happy that I did it. Though there is many a time in which I'm sitting there involved in it and I go, I wish I had done something else. Because sometimes it is aggravating, especially when you have to, when you're in leadership and you have to attempt to get people to be proactive, who are not naturally proactive. Oh, yeah. That was nice. I think overall, like yeah and I'll probably do something about it in college. I just don't want to do theater with people who are majoring in theater.

**Naeem Scott** [00:18:46] Yeah.

**Nora Malone** [00:18:46] Cause I don't know. I feel like both I wouldn't know as much as it wouldn't be helpful, but also they'll be kind of Know it all.

**Naeem Scott** [00:19:03] Tell us about your grandfather.

**Nora Malone** [00:19:06] Oh, well on my, on my mom, on my mom's side, mostly. He well, he so he was from, he lived in Long Island with my my, my mom. And then when he retired, he was an artist. He was a painter, he was drawing. He would work on newspapers mostly, and draw like the little bits on the sides. He got fired when my mom started college, which was great for everyone involved. And then he got another job and he moved to Maine and with my grandma and they had this big house and they have this like big open area because Maine was great and we go up there a lot. I loved it there. We do all of the major holidays there. We'd do Christmas, we'd do Easter because there's all this space and you could and it would snow a lot and I loved it. I loved that house. And there was like a swing set and it was really fun. I when I taught myself to like jump off the swing set because I'd always been scared and you could hike out really far into the just like the wilderness. And I loved it because I am a city kid and I always was a city kid, but I liked going outdoors and you never really could. There's only so much wilderness in like, Boston. So that was really nice. But my grandma died. I was in middle school. I think it was it was like sixth grade, maybe fifth grade, because I remember in sixth grade my mom broke her leg really badly and she was not on crutches when my grandma died, I don't think, but she was either about to get on them or just off them. So was probably around fifth or sixth grade. And it was like the first time I had someone close to me like, actually die. And the thing is, is it didn't. And like I was like close with my grandma on that side, like we would do stuff together a lot. Like we would do like artwork. She was disabled, so she didn't like go a lot of places, but we would do like artwork, We would like cook together, we would like watch T.V.. I would go around like riding around in the back of a wheelchair, actually, like on the electric wheelchair. And it like, didn't affect me at all. And I was like, it wasn't a good time in my life. Middle school was not good and kind of, I think harmed the relationship between me and my mom. I remember, she was just mad at me because I, like, had no reaction when I was at the funeral, but I generally didn't like to me it just made sense. I was like, she's old, she died, she was in the hospital for a while. That makes sense. And my mom did not like that reasoning, so I just kind of pretended that I was sad. Um, and then my grandfather was on his home and he was doing, he was doing good for a while. We would visit him. He was like going out and he was, he had like friends in the, in the local little town. He would go to church, he would like go out and do yard stuff. He was a painter so he would paint all these paintings, all these copies of all these paintings all over his house. And it was good for a long time. I loved going down there. We would go down there and and he'd have like all this food laid out and we'd go play golf because he liked playing golf. We'd go outside, we'd go round in his truck, we'd go. It was nice. It was really nice. Um. (giggling)

**Naeem Scott** [00:22:20] And that brings us to the end of our time.

**Nora Malone** [00:22:27] And then during COVID, he got a little weird because he was alone all the time. And then my grandma, my aunt, my mom's twin sister went up to visit him and he had a seizure in his office. And it was also kind of a stroke. But he continuously refuses that he did not have a stroke, even though the doctor said he did. And so we were like, okay, well, he cannot be up there. He can't be up there on his own because he's like old and he can't get places on his own. And he was, he was my grandmother's caregiver for a very long time. And I think part of what happened, what happened when she died is that he didn't have stuff to do anymore. But so we're like, okay, we got to do something. And my grandmother, my aunt and my mom haven't really gotten along for a long time. They got along mostly when I was young and my cousin was young, cause my grandmother, so she obviously Long Island and then she went to Oberlin and then somehow moved to Somerville, which is right next to Cambridge. So suddenly me and my mom and my aunt



were living near each other again. So when my aunt had her kid, he's about four years younger than me, like they would hang out a lot and they were doing pretty good. And then when we moved down here, oh, they fell apart after that. But and when my aunt got divorced, but then we moved down here. Um, I don't know, they just my, my mom, I think, has always felt that my aunt was the lesser responsible one and that because my mom kind of had to do all the cleaning in her house when she was young and my aunt, my both my mother is naturally smart and so is my aunt. But my my mom feels like thaty aunt wasted that because they're twin sisters and she feels like my aunt because my aunt will get to all these \_\_\_\_\_ with her and then wouldn't do any of the work. And then we get kicked down and stuff like that. Um, I think personally that my aunt just took a different path and I like my aunt. Um, I think she's cool. I don't like her kid, but I don't have to be raised by her. But so we brought him down here to Sunrise Alexandria, which is a old folks home. Um, it's kind of up near the Giant.

**Naeem Scott** [00:24:47] I know where it is.

**Nora Malone** [00:24:48] Yeah, and we moved him in, and he was, like, all happy about it for a period of time. Um, and then he would just get really angry because, well, the thing is, is he definitely has dementia, so he doesn't, like, really think about it. And the thing is, they didn't actually he hasn't been diagnosed, but there's a point at which he's just like, well, we know that you have dementia, especially because he like, wasn't taking his insulin. That was part of the reason he had the stroke. And so he would always, he would just get really mad all the time about all the stuff we were doing and how we were taking away his autonomy and that he didn't. And he would try to and he would get all these Internet scams or he would drop his phone in the trash can. He would fall down and he would just get mad at everybody. And eventually he was just like, we just stopped talking to him. Because we're still paying for him to live in this place. But like, my mom just stopped. I had to block him actually, cause he called me and it was just like, "hey, shithead, it's your grandpa." And he would call me all the time whenever he messed up on stuff. So I just blocked him. And he doesn't even use his phone that much. And he just part of he's going well, because he's an artist. He drew. He draws cards. He drew me. I mean, I painted me a beautiful watercolor painting for my birthday, like he's a wonderful artist. And I think he just goes through swings. And I think that's what happens when you have dementia, is you go through times when you're really happy and when you're fine. But like, he's not going to come to my graduation. I think that's part of the reason is like, I don't think he'll be able to sit through the whole thing because he's does not really, like he's a better walker now. But obviously when you're old and you fall down, you hit your head, you have a seizure and you lose some of those walking skills. But we haven't seen him. We didn't cel, we celebrated Christmas with him two years ago. We haven't seen, I'm not seeing him in a long time. He had a girlfriend. I think she died. So. And then my other grandfather is. He doesn't even like to leave like his house, like in Queens. He's not coming to my graduation either, because he hasn't left. he hasn't even seen our new house.

**Naeem Scott** [00:26:52] Hmm.

**Nora Malone** [00:26:53] He doesn't. He told me that he would not come to the Bronx, even though I'm going to college in the Bronx and he lives in Queens. We do Thanksgiving in at our house. And so I'm going to come from campus, and I was like, "Oh, I'll take the train." And I didn't even assume that he would drive me. And he said, "I'm not going to the Bronx." I was like, "I wasn't going to ask you to drive me." He's weird. He's just, he's does this thing now where

whenever my grandmother serves dinner immediately before she does, he goes up to use the bathroom so that everyone has to wait for him. Which is so. And he used to cook. He was a really good cook. My grandmother, bless her heart, not a good cook. And now he complains about her food, but also won't cook and isn't doing anything. And he just sits in the chair and stares out with dogs. Like he sits on the stoop and looks at the street. And it's Woodhaven. It's not that interesting. I don't know. It's. It's. The Malone's.