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2005

Bailey, Shirley

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Interviewer: Dr. Mark Naison

Interviewee: Shirley Anderson Bailey

April 26, 2005

Mark Naison (MN): Welcome to the 112th interview the Bronx African American History Project, we are here with Shirley Anderson Bailey who grew up in the Morrisianian section of the Bronx, and this is at Fordham University on April 26, 2005. Now the first question is what year did your family move to the Bronx.

Shirley Anderson Bailey (SAB): As I can remember I believe it was 1941, or 42. I would say 1942.

MN: And where were they living before hand?

SAB: We lived at 116th street between----- I believe it was Lennox and Fifth, I am not sure.

MN: Do you remember what led your family to move from Harlem to the Bronx; did they ever talk about that?

SAB: Not that I recall, I do recall a little bit because my tells the story that we lived on a 116th street and there was a bar on the corner and in the summer time the windows were open, and when the bar led out the people would walk up and down the street, you know they would profanity.

MN: Right.

SAB: And my brother and I, my brother was a year younger than I so we used to repeat the words, and we would come to mother and ask her what it meant, and then she would ask us or even we would use, and then she would ask us were we heard it, and we said

you know people passing by. So she said don't use any of those words without asking me first, and then I think at one point she said to my aunt, I think it is time for us to leave this block, and she had a neighbor that lived across the street, who used to baby-sit us and both families moved to <inaudible> at the same time.

MN: Now so this was part of a whole movement of families from Harlem to the Bronx.

SAB: See I can't honestly say that, but I know two families right across hall from one another left together, and we went to the same apartment building.

MN: Interesting. Now was your family of southern ancestry or Caribbean?

SAB: Southern. My mother was born on the eastern shore of Maryland, Somerset County. My father was born in Oxford North Carolina, and I know my mother went to New York when she was 19 because she had an older sister who went a few years before, so as soon as she got out of high school, or shortly there after she went to New York.

MN: Right, now so she met your father in New York.

SAB: Exactly, now my father's family left North Carolina when he was age 7, and went to Harlem that much I know, and at some point they also relocated to the Bronx.

MN: Right. Now what sort of work did your father do?

SAB: Let me see, as far as I can remember it was like during the depression or before the depression and my father had a hard time finding a job so he went to Connecticut to look for work, and I am not sure what type of work he did, but interested in sandlot baseball and he did a lot of that. So the talk was more about him playing baseball than him working. I really don't know in those years-----

MN: Now was he living with the family when your family moved to the Bronx?

SAB: He was living-----no he wasn't living with us because he was living and working or looking for work in Connecticut; so he didn't relocate to the Bronx with us.

MN: Now did your mother work at that time?

SAB: She was going to school at night.

MN: And she had a high school education in the south?

SAB: She graduated from high school, and then when she came to New York she took courses at Hunter. That's what it was because she was taking courses during the day, and working at night.

MN: Right. So how many children were there in the family?

SAB: It was just two of us, my brother who is a year younger than I and myself.

MN: What are first recollections of <inaudible> place how old were you when you got there?

SAB: We were I think-----I was probably 7 when, probably 7 because I found a card from P.S 10 in Harlem, and I went to first grade in Harlem so I am guessing because I have no clear recollection that we moved to the Bronx when was about 7 years old. Now what I remember <inaudible> was like, it was like----it was a very unique street as I think in later, later years. I know there was a lot trees and two apartment buildings on each side of the street that faced one another, and the rest of the building, the rest of the streets were private homes, and it was only one block. Union Avenue was one end and Prospect was on another, and the unique thing about it was to me we were at two apartment buildings mixed with the residential compared to Harlem with I recall was all high rises,

then there was a vacant lot that was available for the kids to play with, and then there was P. S 40 on the corner so we had our own little paradise and it was one little block.

MN: And when you moved there was the block multi racial or it was mostly African Americans

SAB: You that's interesting, but I honestly don't remember, but I-----I think it was probably, see I don't honestly remember, I don't have a clear recollection there might have being some Caucasian families in 810 which was right across the street because the unique thing-----another unique thing about the block was that 811 just about every family in that building had children. There were only 4 apartments on a floor.

MN: And how many stories, it was a five story walk up.

SAB: So that's what about 20 families.

MN: And everybody had kids.

SAB: I would say 90 percent. In 810 which was across the street, I only remember one family that had two children and I can't honestly----I don't remember.

MN: Did it feel like a very safe environment to grow up in like playing on the street?

SAB: Absolutely, that's where we played and we didn't go beyond <inaudible> place, we rarely went beyond except to go to school, and come home. But that was our park that was our play ground that was-----you had all the family interactive.

MN: And who watched over you, or you pretty much organized yourselves?

SAB: You know a lot of the mothers were home, I think my mother was one of the few women that worked. She went to work during the day, and she went to school at night, and as I recollect most of the other mothers were home, and most of the families were

two parent, and we had-----it was just my mother, brother, and I however we had a middle age couple that lived with us that took care of us.

MN: Really so you had-----what were their names?

SAB: Mr. and Mrs. Lee I never forget because he was blind and they had their room, it was a huge apartment the hall was very long, and we even had-----we all had our own separate bedrooms, and then we had a extra room when you came into the hall. So much larger families had that same-----it was 3C I remember no, so we were 3B.

MN: Now was-----did your mother emphasize school work was this something you and your brother were really encouraged in from early age?

SAB: Absolutely, because we used to live in the library that I remember.

MN: Which library?

SAB: Morrisian library.

MN: Did you walk there?

SAB: Yes, we walked every where.

MN: Now what was the trip-----did you go yourselves to the library or your mother went with you?

SAB: Well, my mother took us mostly to the library, and then at <inaudible> place there was so many levels of ages that 3 or 4 different age groups had their own little so they would go to the library together.

MN: So a lot of kids went to the library.

SAB: We did things together.

MN: Now was this an atmosphere in which education was sort of priced and encouraged?

SAB: I would say so. Yeah, homework was very important, school involvement of parents was very important, and the teacher would call your parent to school for the least little thing, I remember that because I was very talkative in school, and that's-----the most I got in trouble for was talking.

MN: Right, you went-----what was-----you first went to P.S 54 and what street was that on?

SAB: Interval Avenue and maybe Freeman Street, you see I know it was going towards the Freeman Street subway station and was on-----I believe it was on Interval, I can't tell you the cross street.

MN: And then you ended up going to P.S 99?

SAB: Right. I think it was about 2 years after we moved to Ritter Place, one summer when my brother and I went to Maryland for the summer when we came back my mother had moved to a 169th street which was around the corner and just two blocks away. We were devastated.

SAB: It wasn't even down the hill-----

MN: That she moved down the hill to a 169th and what union?

SAB: Right, right on the corner of Union, and so it was actually diagonally across from Ritter place because Union Avenue sort of curved, and then we had Freeman street, and then you had Ritter place, and 169th street so it wasn't like a long block, it was like a diagonal street, and the trolley ran on 169th street so there was no place to play, it was a two family house over a store; it was a candy store, and then we lived on the first floor, and the next family lived on the second.

MN: Now why did your mother move?

SAB: Well the Lee's decided to get their own apartment, and the apartment was too large for her to maintain and keep, so she moved to a smaller place.

MN: Without a tenant.

SAB: Right, right and the size too because now then we would have had two extra----two empty beds.

MN: Got it. Now what were the major recreational activities that you did in the street?

SAB: Punch ball, spin the box, <inaudible>, hide and seek, we used to play hide and seek, football.

MN: Now did girls play with the boys in these games on your block?

SAB: Football because I used to be, I don't know what you call it but I had long legs and I moved fast so I would be the person to catch the ball, and make the touchdown.

MN: So you were the end?

SAB: The end, I guess you would say that.

MN: So you were a valuable part of the-----

SAB: For a short time, I never played long, maybe one season.

MN: Now did you ever go to Crotona Park?

SAB: Yes. We used to-----Sunday, that was our Sunday outing in Crotona Park.

MN: And this was when you were on Ritter Place?

SAB: Both Ritter Place and 169th street.

MN: So what would a Sunday outing in Crotona Park be like?

SAB: Just walking, go by the lake, sit by the lake, a few you see we get all dressed up and go to Crotona Park. Sometimes we go after church.

MN: Now were was your family in church at this time?

SAB: Well my mother went to victory Baptist church, which was Union Avenue and 165th.

MN: Right.

SAB: I was in the girls scout at St. Augustine on the next block Union Avenue.

MN: That would be Prospect and 165th

SAB: No, Prospect and 165th so they were a block apart. St. Augustine had a lot of social activities for young people. They had the roller skating every Friday, there is always something going on. So because I was in the girls scout, I knew young people in St.

Augustine, so I went to victory with my mother until I was 17, and then I started going to St. Augustine, but she continued going to victory, and I eventually became a member of St. Augustine.

MN: Now were other kids on your block in the girl scouts or this was something you did pretty much yourself?

SAB: Ironically, none of my friends were in my girls scout troop, or in the girls scouts with me, and I can't----I think my friend Beverly on Prospect Avenue got me interested in girls scouts, and none of my other friends were interested.

MN: Were you in the one class pretty much all through elementary school and junior high, you know in the more advanced classes?

SAB: I think in-----not in elementary, but definitely in Junior High school because I remember being in 718, 719.

MN: Were you at all involved in music?

SAB: Not until high school, one term.

MN: Any teachers make a big impression on you in Junior High school?

SAB: That's ironic because no teacher-----yes Junior High school, let me back up my 7th grade teacher made a negative impression on me because she-----to my way of thinking she did not teach us, she would give us open book work, and she would seat at the desk and do her own whatever.

MN: So she didn't take her work that seriously?

SAB: I don't think so and then I was talking to my girlfriend just on Sunday, and we were in the same class, I didn't realize we were in the same class together, and she concurred and I approached her about it once the teacher, I asked her why is it that she never teaches us anything. And then when I left early to go to camp, I never will forget that was 7a, and I left early to go to camp, and when I got my report card she had skipped to 8a, I didn't go to 7a, I went to 8a from 7a, so that's how I was able I happened to graduate in January instead of June.

MN: She skipped you a grade, a half grade. Now was there a sense that the teachers in the schools in Morrisiana were not very dedicated, or this was an unusual situation?

SAB: I think it was very unusual, I can't remember another teacher who did make an impression, I don't remember her name but she was short, and she was very no nonsense and-----

MN: Did you have any experiences with racism in the neighborhood or was this something you were of?

SAB: I don't recall being away of it in the neighborhood, it could have been there, I don't recall any incidence or awareness maybe I was too young to-----

MN: What about outside the neighborhood were there places people-----you know your mother or other people told you, you know you shouldn't go?

SAB: Not to my recollection.

MN: So did you feel like you know pretty much your childhood was a pretty safe, secure one?

SAB: Yeah, for the most part, I don't remember having any fear of going anywhere, or doing anything I know we used to go to St. Augustine this was when I was a older teenager like 15, 16 and she used to go to the Skating <inaudible> on Friday night and we would come home at 10:00 and walk in the middle of the street. That's one thing that stands out, but other than that I don't remember been fearful.

MN: Were there gangs in the community that you were afraid of?

SAB: I knew-----when I was in high school I knew of one gang, I knew of them that's about it.

MN: Do you-----when you were in Junior High school 40 was it always your intention to go to Morris or did you have other schools that you thought of going to?

SAB: No, I didn't think of going to any other school. I think that was the neighborhood school, however it worked, you know I don't remember having choices or discussing choices.

MN: Now you got into-----what were your activities in high school on student activities other than?

SAB: In high school-----I remember I belonged to the-----I was, I ran, no that was in Junior high school, I ran for Vice-President of <inaudible> I was not very active in high school, extra-curricular, except in my senior year, I worked on the year book.

MN: Now when did you become involved in the African-----the jazz art society, and how did that begin?

SAB: When I was 20, I remember.

MN: So this was not when you were in High school?

SAB: No because Paul Maddox lived on Ritter Place, and I had started going to jazz-----I used to go jazz concerts, and different things.

MN: Where did you go jazz concerts in Manhattan or in the Bronx?

SAB: No, locally, locally.

MN: Where were the places you went to hear jazz?

SAB: Well my first exposure to jazz was at the Hunts point Towers and that's were I first heard Charley Parker, and I fell in love with the sound.

MN: Do you remember what year it was?

SAB: I was 14 or 15, you do the math. I was 14 or 15.

MN: And how----so he was playing at the-----

SAB: He used to play-----I think they used every Friday.

MN: Charlie Parker at the Hunts Point Towers.

SAB: I don't know if it was every Friday, but I know I didn't go every Friday.

MN: Did you go with friends?

SAB: We went in a group, we always did things in groups, like this time, most of my friends, I still had lot friends on Ritter place, but I had expanded to Prospect Avenue. I made friends with you know, a lot of people.

MN: Now were you were at this point in Junior High school or in High school when you first saw Charlie Parker?

SAB: What were you when you were in your 14's is that high school or junior school?

MN: It could be-----

MN: Who else was there on the program with Charlie Parker?

SAB: I don't remember, I just remember him, but see there were two sides, Eleanor and I were just talking about this Sunday, there was the jazz side, and there was the Do-Wop side; they didn't call it Do-Wop then, I used to call them they Ah-Ah boys.

MN: The Ah- Ah boys?

SAB: Yeah, you know they did good chorus.

MN: Okay, so these-----

SAB: So all of my friends would go to-----were the groups were singing, and I would go were the musicians were playing so before we left to go home they would always say we have to go find Shirley.

MN: So this was in the Hunts Point Towers, they had two different shows?

SAB: Two different sides.

MN: Okay, and there were separate venues or they were part of the same room.

SAB: I think it was part of the same room, see I didn't remember that there were sides until Eleanor refreshed my recollection.

MN: So there would be Do-Wop singers in one side of the room, and then jazz in the other.

SAB: Now see I don't know if they called it Do-Wop.

MN: It might have been rhythm and blues that was the term they used-----

SAB: Well you know they were the 6 or 8 or 4 guys who always nicely dressed and they had their hair done nicely, and they were always dressed neatly, but Charlie Parker it was something about him, I mean they just were telling Sunday that he always had the wrinkled shirt and brown suit, but it was the music you know I was drawn to.

MN: Now was there any particular person, who made you interested in jazz, did your mother listen to jazz?

SAB: I don't think so, and I liked the sound, and I just gravitated towards it. That's the best I can-----

MN: Did you get records?

SAB: Yeah, I think I was 12 or 13 years old. My aunt who knew I was interested in jazz gave me my first album collection which I still have jazz of the <inaudible> the 78 I think it is.

MN: Now did you have any friends in school who are interested in jazz?

SAB: Not that I can recall.

MN: Did you ever go to any of the other venues like club 8:45?

SAB: Well the jazz art society used to-----we used to have concerts there.

MN: On Sunday afternoons?

SAB: Was it Sunday? Some Sundays I know we had a couple of Friday, or Saturday night malfunctions.

MN: Before you were, when you were like 15 or 16 did you ever go to club 8:45 or that was an adult place that couldn't real got to?

SAB: I never hung out there, I went basically for the music, but then as I got into my 20's, you know the Prospect Avenue station was there, and I had a couple that used to go to the 8:40, no I never hung out in the 8: 45.

MN: Now did you have any friends who were musicians, who play the music?

SAB: I did, I had-----now this is also on my early 20's there was-----I don't even remember how I met this fella but he had a little combo, I can't remember the street he lived on it was off of Freeman Street, and they used to practice at his house on Saturday, and I used to go sit in on the practice. Then when I was in early 20's, my girlfriend and I met Lou Donaldson, she was an-----then I became, we became friendly with Lou Donaldson and his group.

MN: Now was Lou Donaldson from this neighborhood?

SAB: Lou Donaldson I believe he still lives in the Bronx, in the north-east Bronx, but those years I don't remember, you know whether he lived in New York or whether he came to New York, so we used to go hear him a lot the 8:45; I think he did about Jazz art society concerts.

MN: Now were did-----how did you come to meet like Bob Gums and <inaudible>?

SAB: I started telling you-----Paul Maddox lives still on Ritter place, and by this time I was on a 169th street.

MN: How do you spell his name?

MN: M-A-D-D-O-X

SAB: Right and he told me about this club the jazz art society.

MN: Now so he did he goes to Morris?

SAB: No, Paul went, Paul was about 2 years younger than I was or he might have been a year younger because he was my brothers friend, and I know he didn't go to Morris, but he put in touch with the jazz art society, and I went to one of their meetings-----and they said, you know it was all male, and I said I could be the secretary, and so that's how it happened.

MN: And Paul was one of the members?

SAB: Right, and then alarm day and my brother went to visual arts high school. but I didn't stay a member too long because I was always very restless, and I move from one thing to another.

MN: Right. How old were you when you started like going to parties, and were there a lot of that-----

SAB: Maybe, you know they used have something called the Jump, have you ever had sat up with-----

MN: The jump.

SAB: A jump, a jump.

MN: No.

SAB: Well I guess <inaudible> was an in prompt party and my fiends started having them about at 16 maybe now mother was very strict, and I remember the first jump I went to was at Eleanor's house on Prospect round the corner for me. I was on 169th and she was Prospect, I didn't have to cross the street, I just went up to the corner, turned right, and then her house was back there.

MN: Were her parents there?

SAB: Yeah. So she had a jump at her house, my mother knew Eleanor she had met Eleanor, so she told me that I should go but I had to be home by 10 o'clock I never will forget. I left Eleanor's house at one minute to 10 and ran all the way home.

MN: Some people talk about red light, green light parties were you know.

SAB: The lights were low, I mean I don't know if they were red or green, but they were low.

MN: And then other people talk about-----

SAB: Blue lights in the basements, we didn't have a basements.

MN: Did you ever go to the after school center at P.S. 99 or you know talent shows there?

SAB: I think I went, after school I don't think so.

MN: Were the <inaudible>

SAB: I remember going to a summer center at 40 but only like for one season.

MN: Right.

SAB: I don't know what I did after school; I must have went home and did homework.

MN: What about <inaudible> neighborhood housing?

SAB: I went there a lot.

MN: And this was when you were in elementary school, junior high, or high school, or all of the above.

SAB: Probably Junior High school.

MN: What sort of things did you do <inaudible> neighborhoods?

SAB: One of my fondest memories of <inaudible> neighborhood <inaudible> was taking fencing. I took a fencing-----I only took a few lessons, it was exciting, and then I was restless, that was the nature of the beast. But my maternal grandmother, aunt, and an uncle and their family lived in a three family house right next to the <inaudible> so I was there a lot; I was there a lot at the <inaudible>

MN: Now what sort of work did you do when you graduated from high school?

SAB: Let me see, when I graduated from high school, back track a little. At 16, I got a job part time working at New York Hospital, and that was a memorable time because my friend Eleanor, we got the job at the same time so we went to work together. I stayed there until I graduated from high school, and I was a dietician's aid, diet aid, and the last year I went to high school instead of going away, I went to summer school so I can stay home and work, so then when I graduated from high school, I left New York Hospital as part time, I never went full time, and I did odd jobs like I had one job in a watch factory counting the little insides of watch. It was so intricate I just left, but then I went to business school, and I did secretary work, and I did----after I went to business school, I did legal secretary, and then I went back to school, and took court recording, and that's where I ended up.

MN: So you became a court reporter?

SAB: Yeah, later in life.

MN: And what year did you meet your husband?

SAB: Now that's interesting because the first time I laid eyes on him was at a wedding reception of the same family that I went to wedding reception with but of course it was an older brother, and his family and my best girlfriend's family were good friends. Now I was 16 and he was 20 so he was too old for me, but then-----

MN: Did his family live in the area?

SAB: At that time they lived in Harlem, and then I moved to the Bronx, I moved in 55-----I moved from 169th street to Williams Bridge.

MN: Okay so that this is from-----your family started at Ritter Place, then to 169th and Union, then to <inaudible> place.

SAB: No, no.

MN: And then to the north Bronx?

SAB: Right, and then mother remarried in-----I guess it was, I was about 20 in 1955, about 55, and then I moved out on my own. So I moved to Williams Bridge.

MN: And then you got your own apartment up there?

SAB: Yeah. I----myself and my friend that lived right around the corner, we got an apartment, and I was on the train one day, and I ran into Albert who I had met at there wedding reception in like 4 years ago. So by now I am 20 and he is 25, so we were closer-----no I was older because I got married when I was 25, so I guess I was maybe I was 22, 23 yeah so we were close at age, and then we started going out, by that his family

had moved to the Bronx from Harlem so they were living on 219th street, and I was living on 225th.

MN: Right, okay.

SAB: So our paths crossed.

MN: Now when you moved to the north Bronx was it your feeling that the neighborhood where you grew up in was starting to deteriorate was that one of the motivations?

SAB: No, no I didn't see any deterioration. It was just that my mother remarried, and I had-----you know, I had been, I had the free run of the house, and now I was a young lady I just felt uncomfortable having a strange man, well he wasn't strange, but you know, and so I just said, well it time for me <inaudible> so that's what I did.

MN: At what point did you feel that your old neighborhood was not the same place?

SAB: Well I moved from the Bronx in 1960.

MN: You moved to Queens.

SAB: I didn't see any; I didn't see any real deterioration that I can recollect.

MN: Okay, so it wasn't till much later that things started to, you know buildings started to burn or anything like that.

SAB: Not in my, in the area that I grew up, if you go there now.

MN: Everything is the same, looks the same.

SAB: It's much different, except that P.S 40 and I don't know what year this happened, but all the houses on that side of the street, the apartment building, and the private, I think there were only three private houses, and the vacant lot. So they were all demolished, and the school was extended to unions, so now P.S 40 goes from Union Avenue to Prospect

Avenue, one side of the street. The other side of the street as far as I know is the apartment building and the private houses.

MN: Now were you aware of Maxine Sullivan living on the block?

SAB: Yeah, but I didn't know she was playing <inaudible> until I became an adult.

MN: So you knew who she was, but you know-----

SAB: Yeah, we knew her house, we knew the house.

MN: Was Paula Morris somebody-----her daughter, somebody you grew up with?

SAB: You see I never remember her daughter, I just remember her, and one of my friends mother used to you know be her house keeper, and you never saw her, you never saw Maxine Sullivan, and it wasn't until later years that I you know saw pictures of her, and oh she used to live on my block, now that kind of thing. But she might-----during that time the late 40's, and the 50's she might have still been actively traveling, so maybe she would-----

MN: Now tell a little bit about that, that great, was it <inaudible> and the travelers?

SAB: Oh Teddy's candy store, Teddy's candy store was on Prospect Avenue.

MN: 169TH.

SAB: On Prospect about two doors from a 169th, I can't say North, South, and East or West because I was not-----I am directionally challenged sometimes. Let see if you were going towards the Grand Concourse that's going west, okay so Teddy's was on the south-east corner of Prospect, and then there was a bar on my side, and I then I think there was a variety store on the other corner, and I don't remember what was on the fourth corner, and you know the teenagers used to meet there, it was like a soda shop,

candy store, and Teddy knew everybody. You know the fellas used to come, and wherever the fellas are, the girls are, you know that kind of thing. And it was a lively gathering place and of course he knew everybody, he knew all the teenagers, and it was a fun place.

MN: Was there any like things in the neighborhood that were negative, where there like places like bars which were known for being rough places like the one in Harlem, was there anything comparable, you know there was prostitution, or you know or violence?

SAB: Not to my knowledge, there was a bar right-----I lived on a 169th in Union between union and Prospect, and there was a bar on the corner of Prospect, and a 169th but that was one of the quietest bars I can remember, and I don't remember the name of it.

MN: So you didn't have-----you know what you had in Harlem.

SAB: Not that I recall, and only that Harlem experience from you know-----what mother related to us in the later years.

MN: Is there anything else that I forgotten to ask you that you would like to put on the record, things that you would like to talk about that I haven't brought up?

SAB: What I thought was interesting, I met some friends today, retired supreme court employees, two of them grew up in the Bronx, and so I told them about project, and I have their e-mails <inaudible> and then on Sunday, I was with friends that I grew up with in the Bronx, you know 57 years ago, and we have been in touch over the years, and my friend Eleanor and I were just reminiscing about growing up in the Bronx and one thing she said that, you know she said we had-----my teenage years were the best years of my life. We had a lot of fun as teenagers, and we talked about some of the things that we used

to do. One of the things we used to go do a lot on first dates was going to the white castle for hamburgers.

MN: On which <inaudible>?

SAB: On southern Boulevard.

MN: Rockner.

SAB: Rockner Boulevard the white castle.

MN: And would you go by car.

SAB: Yeah by car. And, now this is removing from the teenage to the early 20's.

MN: Right.

SAB: Because I had a friend who lived in Harlem, a male friend who lived in Harlem, and he took music lessons in the Bronx, and every Wednesday he had music lessons, so after music lessons he would come to my house, he was driving, he had a car, he would come to my house, pick me up, and we would go for hamburgers at white castle.

MN: Right.

SAB: And that was how big Wednesday nights was, and then the white stone drive in.

MN: The Theater.

SAB: Yes.

MN: That was a drive-in theatre.

SAB: Now Eleanor was-----we were reminiscing on Sunday, and she said to us, to me, remember that time we went to the drive-in with those two guys, and got fresh with us, we got out of the car, and started walking. Now I remember the incident, but I don't remember how we got back to a 169th street and Prospect.

MN: So you left the car?

SAB: We got out of the car, and after that I don't remember, I don't remember, I vaguely-----I think we might have walked, and then they picked us up and offered to take us back.

MN: Now on the note were there any girls in your circle who became pregnant in high school or that didn't happen?

SAB: One of my best friends, 57 year friend, I was in her wedding, she got married at 16, she became pregnant and got married at 16, and she had 7 lovely, wonderful, successful, adorable, loving, caring adult children you know is a wonderful family. Her daughter is one of the ones that got married on Sunday, so that was the teenage pregnancy success story.

MN: Was this a big issue in the neighborhood?

SAB: Not big, they weren't, you know, not big.

MN: What about drugs, were there any guys you knew got into heroin was this something that hit in the 50's?

SAB: Now this is interesting, there was a young man on Ritter place, a lovely young man who somehow got involved in drugs, but he-----his father was a musician, and I think his father was raising him and his daughter because I don't ever remember his mother, but all there-----the police officers knew him, and one say we were walking down Prospect Avenue, all five of us including him, and remember him saying keep walking, just keep walking because he was-----he didn't want us to be you know associated with

him. We knew of addicts, but I don't know, it didn't seem to be a major, major, a major problem.

MN: Okay, anything else you would like to add to this?

SAB: You asked me about <inaudible> right, has the name <inaudible> come up?

MN: From that movie about South Africa, somebody mentioned-----.

SAB: No it wasn't, I can't remember the name of the movie, but it took place in Haiti I believe, it was carnival.

MN: Right, so <inaudible>.

SAB: Right she lived on Jennings Street, and she was a classmate in Morris.

MN: Of yours.

SAB: Yes.

MN: And was her name <inaudible>.

SAB: <Inaudible>.

MN: Yeah but she is a-----.

SAB: I think she maintained that name also. I understand that this is ironic, the circle of life. The church that I was attending in Nassau County in Long Island, the music director, I don't know how we got into a conversion about movies, and music, and he was giving voice lessons in Westchester County, and he told me she had some medical challenges, and she was trying to regroup, you know.

MN: Now was she involved in music when she was growing up?

SAB: No, she became big when she got into movie, so that's you know her name became big, and then she disappeared from high school.

MN: Were there a lot of street corner singers that you remember?

SAB: Yeah the <inaudible> has the name come from Jennings Street.

MN: So they were from Jennings Street between where and where?

SAB: Jennings ran, that part of Jennings went parallel to Ritter place, so between Prospect and Union.

MN: And did they sing in the street corners or they sang at Morris?

SAB: I don't remember them at Morris, I don't remember on street corners.

MN: You just heard that they cut a record?

SAB: No, we used to hear them, but maybe we did hear them on the street corners, maybe on the stoop.

MN: Were there a lot of people singing on the stoops?

SAB: Not that I recall.

MN: So it wasn't like that there was this music everywhere?

SAB: Not <inaudible> maybe it was somewhere else.

MN: Okay, now what about Latin music, did you get exposed much in you teen years, did you dance Latin?

SAB: Only in the late teens, my friend Eleanor loved Machita, and she used to go hear Machita a lot. I don't remember anything.

MN: Were there any Puerto Rican-----

[END OF SIDE A]

MN: Union Prospect, a 169th Jennings when you were like you know 16 or 17 was it mostly an African American area?

SAB: Right.

MN: With maybe a sprinkling of White families and-----

SAB: I remember our landlord lived on our block, on a 169th to say <inaudible> and she lived like in the center because my mother used to send me once a month to pay the rent, and she lived still on the block in one of the houses.

MN: Were there-----of the black people on the block were most of them from the south or some were from the Caribbean also?

SAB: You see I don't-----

MN: Well that wasn't an important distinction?

SAB: No, but I do know that my two best friends and I only found this out later as an adult that their family, their heritage both families were from Barbados, but other than that.

MN: But this wasn't something you thought a lot about as a kid?

SAB: No, no.

MN: Now would you say, you know growing up you was optimistic about the future, or you know that wasn't something you thought much about?

SAB: I didn't much about the future----I mean optimistic, I didn't even much <inaudible>.

MN: Right, okay, okay well let's wind it up then. Thank you very much.

SAB: Okay, hope you ain't forgetting anything else.

MN: Wow, excellent.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

