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Sophia Maier (SM): Okay, great. So yeah, if you just want to start by telling me a little bit about your family and how they ended up in the Bronx.

Michael Rosen (MR): If you go back to my parents, their parents came to the United States from Europe in the early part of the 20th century. They settled in the Lower East Side and like many people, actually, my maternal grandparents moved to the Bronx. My paternal grandparents stayed in Manhattan. And when my parents got married, they both moved to the Bronx, they lived in an area just north of Yankee Stadium, Anderson Avenue. They moved around and eventually wound up living in Parkchester. That's where I grew up until I was sixteen and went to college. Basically, that's kind of a very high level view of our history related to how we wound up in the Bronx.

SM: And what year were you born?

MR: I was born in 1943. In January.

SM: Okay. So tell me a little bit about the area that you were in? Were you in Parkchester, like proper, in the buildings or were you kind of nearby?

MR: I guess. I grew up on the Metropolitan Oval in Parkchester and actually spent all of my childhood there. And you know, it has pluses and minuses. There was grass and there were trees, and it was a pretty safe community, it was well organized. There was some regimentation, there were these security people who would keep us off the grass and that sort of thing. It was kind of not something that young children particularly cared for. But it was a good place to grow up. I went to a school right outside Parkchester, PS 106. At that time, Parkchester was populated by a mixed ethnic population of upwardly mobile people who really had significant aspirations for their children. So PS 106, I think, if I remember correctly, had the highest per capita IQ of any elementary school in the city at that time, and, you know, a majority of its students eventually went on to college and so called bigger and better things.

SM: That's great. And were — I had read that for a long time there were no non-white minorities allowed in in Parkchester. Correct?

MR: That's correct. And, you know, basically, the way they got around that, at least in their rental office, there were these signs, like, "We are full," or something like that. And that was an issue that went on for decades. My parents being liberal minded didn't really agree with that. And, for me, it was not an issue one way or another, you know, being basically a young kid it never dawned on me what was going on until I became a young teenager and I understood some of the ethical issues surrounding exclusion.

SM: Yeah, that makes a lot of sense. And so what kind of shops and amenities and different things were in the area?

MR: So at that time, I think, if I remember correctly, Parkchester had the first branch of Macy's. So we had Macy's. Macy's was like an anchor store of shopping but there were a number of restaurants. There were places like the Plymouth Shops, these various — there was a Thom McAn shoe store, a lot of the basic stuff. There was actually a Horn and Harden retail store. I remember there was a movie theater and it was really a classic movie theater with the big lobby and the kind of the stellar ceiling, and the viewing area called the Lowe's American. That was there. There were grocery stores, there were Gristedes, there was a bookstore, a barber shop, there were a number of different delis so that, you know, basically Parkchester had everything you would need — drugstores — it had everything you would need to get by. I mean, you didn't really have to leave Parkchester to survive. And so it was a pretty self contained community.

SM: And did you often go out or did you go out with your parents to other parts of the Bronx or other parts of the city?

MR: We did. You know, we visited relatives that were in Brooklyn and in Queens and out on Long Island and places like that. We took trips to the "country" like Sunday trips to Westchester and to various places that were within traveling distance of the city. Bear Mountain, places like that. Amusement areas and that sort of thing. We went on trips during the summer. And from a kid standpoint, my friends and I used to travel a lot on our own. We would take the subway down to go to New York Rangers hockey games. We'd go to Yankee Stadium on our own. We did a lot of things on our own. And one of the things we used to love to do was go to the gallery at the New York Stock Exchange and watch the action —

SM: — Wow —

MR: — all that excitement. So it — from our perspective, we felt very safe.

SM: Yeah, that was gonna be my next question, like was it a kind of safe environment.

MR: Yeah, we felt safe. We felt that we could go pretty much anywhere on our own without supervision— and my mother, I was an only child, and my parents, they were somewhat hovering

because I was an only child and all their eggs were in one basket, so to speak. They allowed me and my friends to do this. So that, you know, their parents, my friend's parents, allowed us to do this. At this point I would say that the most positive part of my childhood was having that freedom to do stuff. You know, go to Manhattan, and take advantage of a great city.

SM: Yeah, that makes sense. And what did your parents do for a living?

MR: My mom was a legal secretary. And then she took the test and went into the civil service and was a school secretary. And that was great, because it gave her the opportunity to come home when I got home from school, so that was good for her. And , the employee benefits were great. My dad was in the printing industry. He was actually a proofreader. Because of his already having lost his dad when he was six years old, he grew up in the Lower East Side, he only went through eighth grade and then had to go to work. So he eventually got his high school equivalency degree. But that didn't end there. He was a self-educated, brilliant person who had a super high IQ. And I must say, intellectually, I'm probably a step down from my father. That's nothing that I'm ashamed of in any way. But he knew everything about everything. He would do great on Jeopardy.

SM: Yeah. And was education in general an important part of your upbringing or your home?

MR: Yes, it was. There was more pressure from my mom than my dad. There was a lot of pressure to succeed in school and to get good grades and to go on and to a really good college and there was a fair amount of pressure for me to get into a special school. I did go to Bronx Science and I graduated high school when I was sixteen. And started college at that age, which had its advantages and disadvantages.

SM: Yeah, I bet.

MR: Though, if I had to do it over again, I would not opt for that kind of accelerated path.

SM: Yeah, I feel like that, in part, is why the state and New York City stopped doing that. My mom was the same thing. She graduated at 16 years old. And it's like — and a lot of people that I speak with for these interviews, it's the same and I think that, in part, that's why they've stopped. It's very difficult to graduate early now.

MR: Yeah. Yeah, it is. And so, going off to college, I was 16. I was basically, for the most part, two years younger than my compatriots, but I was also an only child and having to commute to [Bronx] Science from Parkchester. You're talking a good hour cross town, either taking the bus or you could go down to take the subway. Go down to 125th Street, go back up on the Jerome Avenue line, and it didn't — it wasn't conducive to develop social intelligence, particularly related to dating, or just interacting. I mean, I always had girl friends, but I didn't have a girlfriend. And you know, in a suburban school, there

were always these after school activities, there were dances, there were proms and events like that. I don't think I ever went to a prom in high school.

SM: And so let's talk a little bit more about school. Are there any memories from public school that stand out to you?

MR: Yeah, so basically, I loved — I have really positive feelings. PS 106 was a fantastic elementary school. I had great teachers, every grade. It was fun, but particularly fun for me, because my sixth grade teacher was the mother of a television personality. It's certainly not in your time, but it was Shari Lewis, who had a little puppet called Lamb Chop. I don't know if you're aware of it but if you Google her —

SM: Yeah, I'll have to look it up.

MR: — and she was a really well known personality. She had a TV show. She actually came to visit our class.

SM: Oh wow.

MR: I was in the music class in fifth and sixth grade because I played the violin. We had our own little orchestra, our class, which was cool. Great teachers, supportive environment, probably one of the best elementary schools in the city. It's interesting, I went back, maybe 25 years ago, just to visit. It was different, but the smell was the same. It was the same cafeteria-like smell of I don't know what it was, kind of tomato soup or whatever. [Laughs] But it was the same smell. I walked in and I said — you know how you have the memory for smells? And I have a memory for that smell that I said, “Oh my god, it's the same.” The kids were multi-ethnic, as opposed to being much more homogeneous. When I was at 106, it was about maybe 70% Jewish. A lot of the Catholic, Irish and Italian kids, went to the local parochial schools, St. Raymond's and St. Helena's, so it was not a real cross section of the world. Of course, when I went back maybe 25 years later, it was very much a cross section of the world. Elementary school as a whole was a positive experience with, as I said, great teachers who really took an interest in the children. I was the first graduating class of Junior High School 127, which was just down the block from 106. I didn't go to kindergarten. I went to nursery school, both my parents worked, so I had to go to some kind of daycare place. They taught me how to read. And so, when they evaluated me for entry into PS 106, they said I was “too advanced” for kindergarten. So when I started the first grade I was nine months to a year younger than the other kids in first grade.

SM: Yeah, from the start.

MR: Yeah, from the start. And then we did this special — you know, the advanced, the accelerated program. So I did seventh, eighth and ninth in two years. I used to joke about it. I said, “Instead of learning very little in three years, I learned very little in two years.” But I mean, it's probably unfair. But

nevertheless, it was a joke I made. So that's where the two years were accounted for. Basically, starting early in elementary school, skipping kindergarten and doing grade seventh, eighth, ninth in two.

SM: And so is there anything from your two years in junior high school — you said it was 127 right?

MR: Right.

SM: — that kind of stand out to you specifically?

MR: No. [Laughs]

SM: That's alright. It's just, it's very funny to me that's a universal middle school, like junior high school response, I swear.

MR: You know, I have this feeling like nothing much happened. I mean, the things that stand out is silly things, like, because it was a new school, they didn't have the shop classes that we normally have. So I wound up taking sewing.

SM: Oh really?

MR: And, of course coming at this from the kind of biased male perspective of the 1950s, as you know, sewing was probably at the bottom of the list of things I wanted to do. And I remember getting help from an uncle of mine, who was very proficient in using a sewing machine to help me with my project for that class. It's just amazing that not much stands out.

SM: But I think that's a great story. And as someone studying Jewish history, it's like, well, the thing about the fact that you took sewing and it wasn't relevant, but thinking about your parents' generation, of course, the Jews were the ones who were in the garment industry so it actually would have been a helpful skill then.

MR: Yeah, I guess. That was it, but again, you know, it's amazing how uneventful JHS actually was.

SM: And so what about Bronx Science? Did you feel like you were kind of fitting in? You were ready to handle the academic difficulty of Bronx Science?

MR: Yeah. I'll start with an overview. I thought [Bronx] Science had its pluses and minuses. Of course, there was a lot of academic competition, you can imagine. And I was — we had over 700 kids, and I was in the top 100, maybe top 10% but certainly not the top 5% or 1%. And so, there was a downside to [Bronx] Science. If you were interested, for example, in going to an Ivy League school, and you were not among the top 10 or 15 kids, your chances were pretty much zero. I don't think that in retrospect the

desire to go to one of those schools is so important. I went to an excellent college. I loved my time at the University of Rochester. It actually turned out, even though I got wait listed at Cornell and eventually didn't get in, and I didn't get into Columbia, I got into Rochester, I did get a scholarship from the school. And it was a perfect placement. But looking at it from the time I was at [Bronx] Science, there were kids there who went on to become Nobel Laureates. I mean, I consider myself a smart person but I don't consider myself a brilliant person. I mean, I don't know how you feel about yourself, but that's how I feel about myself.

SM: No, I'm there with you.

MR: But that's kind of the way I felt. I mean, there were advantages to being around really smart people like that, because, they do push you to try your best to excel. Not in a personal way, but "Hey, that kid's real smart, I want to try to be competitive with him or her and do the best I can do as well." So that was good. It was a mixed thing. Academically, it was superb. It was a great place for teachers, and we had a lot of really good teachers. We had our duds as well in the teaching staff. And socially high school was, as I alluded to before, it wasn't much. I mean, I didn't have a girlfriend. I didn't really date anybody. I went to school there. I got up early in the morning, I took a bus or subway, I got to school. In the evening I sometimes stayed late for clubs and after school activities, but then I'd go home, and then I'd study and then I go to bed and then school again. And then it wasn't like I met a lot of my high school friends on weekends and kind of cruise around the city. And being a suburban kid where you can start driving early. I was a sophomore in college before I even qualified to drive in New York in those days. So I think it was a social negative. I think if I had gone to one of the local schools, Monroe or Columbus, I think I would have gone to Columbus based on where I lived in Parkchester, I probably would have been a top student, maybe I would have qualified for one of the best colleges. But in retrospect, it didn't really matter. As a matter of fact, I wound up at the school that turned out to be perfect for me. So, I think going to [Bronx] Science is more positive than negative. It wasn't one of those things where – like my grandson who just graduated from a local school here in Connecticut who had such a well rounded experience. It was good academically, he had a really solid group of school related friends, maybe 15 core friends, he had a girlfriend. he was on the baseball team and he's very athletic — and I thought he had a more well rounded high school experience, than I did.

SM: Yeah. You mentioned you were involved in some clubs and extracurriculars. Did you play any sports or anything?

MR: I did. I've mostly played sports with my local friends. And the type of game that is played and adapted to the facilities that you have in a city. Parkchester was probably better than a lot of other places where you improvise with things like stickball and stoopball and other pick-up games. And I was always interested in sports. So I was a big baseball fan and actually a fan of almost all sports. So very much involved that way. But I never played organized sports.

SM: Yeah.

MR: They were really — in Parkchester when I was growing up, we didn't have a little league kind of opportunity for us. And the girls definitely had nothing in those days. It took a long time for girl's sports to get to the place where they are now, which is a great thing.

SM: And just kind of going off of that, I always like to ask, as a man growing up during this period, did you feel like your peers at like Bronx Science, or in school or just girls your age in general, had the same kind of opportunities and expectations that you did?

MR: It's a great question.

SM: It always stumps people, I'm sorry.

MR: No, no, but it's — it's a good question. I'd like to try to address it. So I didn't really think a lot about it. At [Bronx] Science, first of all, there was a male preponderance. If I remember — I don't know what the ratio was heavily in the favor of males. I never really thought much about it. I interacted with girls, like I interacted with people, like I interacted with my male friends and never thought much about it. If a girl was particularly attractive, I certainly had those male genes in me to think about that, but otherwise, it never entered my mind about girls being anything other than other people that were equal to me. That's an honest assessment. I'm not claiming to be some kind of advanced thinking individual, it just was what it was, I interacted with guys and gals. Of course, most of my friends, close friends who I did things with after school or during the summer, were guys. That's just the way it was, but certainly in the school environment, or, you know, when the opportunity presented itself, girls were people. I didn't think of it one way or another, nor did I think that they somehow had an inferior place in society, or were discriminated against, but it just never came into my thoughts. And I had a mom who was a pretty assertive individual — if she was any role model from a female standpoint for me, she wasn't going to let anybody get away with anything. She was a really loving mom, but she was a tough lady and she asserted herself.

SM: Yeah, that's great. And so switching gears a little bit, tell me about Jewish life growing up, was your family religious at all?

MR: I was waiting for this question to come up. Okay, so just some of the basics. So I went to religious school — Hebrew school as we called it — after school. I think it was two days a week Tuesday and Thursday at Temple Emanuel in Parkchester. Temple Emanuel was on Benedict Avenue outside of Parkchester. I'm not sure, but it could be a mosque now.

SM: It might be. I mean, that area now is very predominantly like Pakistani, Southeast Asian.

MR: Yeah.

SM: Very Muslim.

MR: Yeah. So it might be a mosque. But, in any case, so I went to school, I actually went for two years and was going to do my third year there right leading up to my bar mitzvah. But at the end of the second year — so my friend, actually my best friend in elementary school and junior high school into high school, who unfortunately, recently passed away, and he got an obituary in the *Times*, his name was Todd Gitlin, and he was a sociologist and he was a professor of journalism at Columbia. And so Todd and I were in class together, and we were by far the smartest kids in the class. When it came to the awards ceremony at the end, the teacher gave the best student award to her cousin who was a student in the class. And I was so pissed off that I said to my mother, “I’m not going back there.” So I wound up actually getting tutored for my bar mitzvah. I went to the person’s house. And I was tutored by her for the time that led up to my bar mitzvah. And I remember vividly — so you know how sometimes in your memories — obviously, you don’t have as many years to remember as I do — but sometimes things stick out? And the one thing that stuck out was that every time I went to her house, she was making noodle kugel.

SM: Every time?

MR: Every time.. Which is silly, you know, but you latch onto something that seemingly is not that meaningful. Maybe it is meaningful, if you think of Jewish culture and stuff like that. So I was bar mitzvahed, and then after that — just in terms of family — Jewish infrastructure within family, clearly had a Jewish identity. But I think we would probably qualify as culturally Jewish even though my parents were very adamant about my being bar mitzvahed. And the fact remains that we celebrated Passover and Hanukkah, and maybe would go to temple on the High Holy Days. Sometimes we would go with my relatives, my mom’s brother, who lived in the Bronx, and we’d go to his temple or where he was active, but basically I would go to services, and, I hope that none of this is insulting, but I was terribly bored. I do have an element, I am convinced, Sophia, of ADHD. Sitting in one place for an extended period of time is not easy for me. It’s interesting, I’m a physician. And, you know, going to medical meetings was always a challenge, because it would take a really terrific speaker to engage me for the 45 minutes. I’m sure over the years in your schooling, you’ve had professors who were captivating and others who are hard to watch.

SM: Oh, yes.

MR: So it was torture. I will honestly say that I had a hard time identifying with — and I don’t want any of this to be insulting to people’s religions — but I had a hard time identifying with sitting there saying the same things pretty much over and over again, every Saturday, or whatever services one went to, and I would daydream. I would daydream things like achieving some great feat in sports or – I don’t know if

you ever read James Thurber's book, *The Secret World of Walter Mitty*, but it's wonderful. It's worth reading. Thurber is a great writer, and it's about this guy who daydreams all these things and that's how I would pass the time as I was sitting in services. So, while my Jewish identity never wavered, I had minimal interest in participating in a formal way. I am sure that is probably shared, for better or for worse by many others. I don't judge myself. I don't regret it. My dad — he started studying Hebrew again when he was retired, when he was an adult, he became more observant. Not fanatically so, but more observant as an older person, and I think it reflected a spiritual need for him. I haven't felt the same spiritual need.

SM: Not yet, I don't know. There's still time maybe.

MR: There may be as I tend to be kind of a rationalist type of person, you know. I do have a spiritual part of me. Some things grab me, you know, somehow the Mourner's Kaddish grabs me. There is something solemn and special about it. If you ever have gone to the Cloisters and heard a Gregorian chant, you know, on the Catholic side, it is very engaging, captivating mystical sounding kind of thing. So to that element — and of course, there are elements of it in Judaism, such as the Kol Nidre service, the musical element of it was captivating. My wife's father was a professional violist and he would play Kol Nidre, on the viola for his temple's service, and I had a chance to hear that and it was quite special. So, there were elements of that kind of attracted me. I've always been interested in Jewish history. That's something and so that the identity is there — the food was. [Laughs] I've always enjoyed Jewish foods, bagels and — I don't know if that's cultural —

SM: Absolutely! No it is.

MR: For some it's related, for us it's religious. But, yeah, I mean, I don't know if that kind of answers your question about my interaction with Judaism.

SM: Yeah. No, I think that's really fantastic. And so, I guess my next question would be for you, when you left the Bronx and you went up to Rochester, did you feel any sort of culture shock or anything like that?

MR: Yeah. Well, let me let me talk a little bit about — because I think it's sort of somewhat relevant — when I went up to Rochester. Of course, I'm a 16 year old. And I had a couple of friends, actually one friend from Bronx Science, one good friend from Bronx Science went to Rochester with me, as it turned out, we didn't have a falling out, but we just grew apart in college. It happened fairly early. Actually, he and I have rekindled the friendship after decades. And it was helped by our 50th college reunion. So when I went to college, my mother had suggested that maybe it would be good from a social standpoint to join Hillel. So I joined Hillel and at one of our first meetings, the leader of Hillel, who happened to be a rabbi in Rochester, he came right out and said, "One of the major reasons for having Hillel is to prevent intermarriage." And that just was the end of it for me; I said, "I'm out of here." One of the things

that Hillel did do before my parting of the ways is that for the initial High Holy Days, they had the kids go to homes of Jewish residents in the Rochester area for the High Holy Days for the break fast, at the end of Yom Kippur. And I did and it was an interesting experience. I think the people whose house I went to, they were very much interested in having one of the Jewish boys who attended date their senior high school daughter.

SM: Yup [Laughs].

MR: And I just was not particularly taken by her. I had no interest in that. But it was — I look back at it with amusement, so to speak, you know, it was funny, but it was a great dinner. I mean, the food was great.

SM: That's all that matters.

MR: The food was great. So after that I did a join a fraternity that was, let's say, two thirds Jewish.

SM: Okay.

MR: A lot of my friends were in it. And I did have non-Jewish friends. I had a mix of friends in college, but I did join a fraternity. There was not anything really — other than the ethnic mix of the boys — there wasn't anything particularly Jewish about it. There were just a lot of guys who came mostly from the New York area, some of them came from upstate New York, but mostly from the New York metropolitan area. In college, there were some elements of antisemitism, but not much. You know, I was interested in another fraternity, and I got blackballed because I was Jewish. And it was upsetting. I didn't experience a lot of that. I will tell you a little, anecdotally, that when I took the crosstown bus to [Bronx] Science, there were a number of high schools using the bus. So we had some kids going up to Evander Childs, you had some kids going down to Cardinal Hayes, which was down in the South Bronx. On that particular line, you'd transfer in either north or south. I went north and they went south and we received some anti-Jewish hazing by the Cardinal Hayes boys on the bus. Nothing physical, more kind of taunting, teasing type of stuff. Did it terribly upset me? Was I scared by it? Absolutely not. Did I like it? No. College it just didn't really — so the Jewish history part of college kind of ended early on. Would I have stayed with Hillel if it weren't for that first encounter? I probably wouldn't have. As I developed my friendships with various kids and my college routine, I probably wouldn't have.

SM: And so did you return to the city after you finished college?

MR: I did. I came back to the city to go to NYU Medical School. When I was a kid, and as I mentioned to you before, I took advantage of the city and did all kinds of things. We'd go to lots of — my friends and I — we'd go to museums, we'd go to — I mentioned the stock exchange. We'd go to sports events, we would go to Times Square, walk around and do fun things like that. We even on one occasion, if

you're interested, I can tell you at some point, even got ourselves an interview with the famous artist Salvador Dalí. Have you ever heard of Salvador Dalí?

SM: Yeah, I've heard of Salvador Dalí. Of course I have.

MR: So yeah, we talked to Dalí. That was in high school. A group of friends of mine. The story of how we got that interview with him is a saga, to say the least. But yeah, so it — what was the question again?

SM: Just about moving back to the city after you left.

MR: So when I moved back after being at the U of R [University of Rochester] for four years. It was very much of a mixed blessing for me. I could go home on weekends. My parents were in the Bronx still. They had by that time moved from Parkchester to the co-ops — to Co-op City.

SM: Okay, yeah.

MR: And they got to a better apartment there and the price was good. And so they were in Co-op City. So I had the opportunity to go home, but things that I accepted when I was a kid started to really annoy me, like the noise. I took advantage of New York when I was in med school and my dad and I would do things together. We heard the Philadelphia Orchestra Series at Carnegie Hall and we'd got to museums. I'd meet him for — he worked in Manhattan — so we'd meet for dinner and stuff, but I didn't enjoy the city as much the second time around. It just kind of got to me. And if you asked me, in retrospect, might I have done something different? I would have to say, the answer might be yes. But who knows? But, it had pluses and minuses. I did make a lot of friends from college. But, it's interesting that the friends that I've kept over the decades are mostly friends from high school. It's interesting, you know, when I reflect upon it. And maybe one of the advantages in nowadays is that there's so many good ways of keeping in touch. So, you know, my son, really the main reason he uses Facebook is to keep in touch with the various generations and layers of friends that he has. And I don't do Facebook, quite frankly. I'm not particularly interested in social media involvement. I do LinkedIn and Doximity for doctors. But that's about it. But my son is really great at keeping in touch. So, you know, I do have regrets. I regret not keeping in touch with some of the people I should have kept in touch with. It's hard, it's not easy to maintain friendships, I'm sure you find the same challenges yourself. Going back to your question, it was kind of a mixed blessing — and one of the things that happened — so, when I met my future wife, I kind of, because it was a family thing, went back to going to High Holy Day services. And her father was very much involved with his instrument and in the services, but all the issues I had of just having a hard time sitting still for an extended period of time and not particularly being interested in saying prayers was still there. That hadn't changed much, though, I did look forward to the lox and bagels after breaking the fast!

SM: Yeah, breaking the fast, right. That's great. Yeah, can't go wrong with some good lox and bagels, for sure. And so were you aware of the changes that were starting to take place in the city going into the 60s?

MR: I was, yeah. I was just being mindful. I was more mindful about things like safety. And the city went through some difficult times. I certainly was aware of that, and the contrast to when I grew up, basically I grew up in the 50s. So, I mean, I was a 50s kid, I was an adolescent in the 50s. And into the early 60s, because of the age I went to college. But I was aware and where — it came to be less of a kid carefree kind of thing. And maybe that's one of the other things that influenced my not being as happy when I went back to the city. So yes, but it was definitely, very much in my mind at that point.

SM: So when did you eventually leave New York?

MR: So I graduated medical school in 1967. And then I interned at Yale New Haven Hospital in New Haven, and spent my first year residency there. So I spent two years from '69 to '71 in Connecticut. I got married in 1969. Sorry. So '67 to '69 I was an intern resident at Yale. And then I spent two years in the public health service with the CDC as an Epidemic Intelligence Service Officer assigned to the DC Health Department. That was a great two years. I really enjoyed that experience and being in DC and, you know, we didn't have kids yet.

SM: Yeah. Was that something that you kind of chose to do? I know that Vietnam would have been going on in this sort of time.

MR: Yeah, you hit that one on the head. I never would have gone to Canada or stuff like that. But I wasn't particularly interested in putting my life on the line for a conflict that I didn't strongly believe in to begin with. So, back when I was a senior in med school, I traveled and had an interview at the CDC for a position which would be in lieu of military service. And I got it, you know, I persisted, I went out to Atlanta at my own expense. I interviewed, I followed up with them on multiple occasions. And I got that position. So it was very much with the war in mind, and I didn't want — I never thought of myself as being a cowardly person. I am not afraid to fight for what I believe in. But I didn't think that this was the fight I wanted to engage in that I wanted to risk losing my life to this conflict. So in lieu of that, I made a contribution in another way.

SM: Yeah. That's great. And so, I guess my kind of wrapping up question is usually, you know, when you think back about your time in the Bronx, what kind of emotions or sentiments do you associate with it?

MR: So Sophia, it's interesting. So I subscribe — I don't know if you're familiar with the magazine *Back In the Bronx*. Are you familiar?

SM: Yeah.

MR: So I subscribe to that publication. And I read every issue, back to back. So it's a very telling thing, I think, in the sense that I still — so, the first question I would ask myself is, Michael, do you have nostalgia about growing up in the Bronx? And I do. I do have nostalgia about growing up in the Bronx and about the people. *Back in the Bronx* has this classified section at the back of each issue where people are looking for other people. And I always look in that to see if somebody could be looking for me. Unfortunately, I've never seen anybody looking for me. I'm crushed. Anyway, but, you know, I always look at it. And a few times, people have looked for somebody who I knew so I've replied to them. That's never led to any kind of sustained relationship. But when I look back it's not negative. I think my wife grew up on Long Island, in Glen Cove. In high school, I think I would have had more fun in a suburban high school, it would have been more of a social experience than at Bronx Science. Do I tear my hair out because of the lack of that opportunity? No. My feeling about growing up in the Bronx is, it is what it was. I am nostalgic about it. That nostalgia I think it's kind of a positive emotion, I would say, thinking back. No one says I hated it. I didn't hate it, but didn't love it. You had certain things that were good about it and other things that weren't. To be able to get on the subway and go to Manhattan or to go to a Yankee game or whatever, that was really great. That kind of freedom suburban kids don't have; you need a car for everything. So I think it's — like on balance, if you pushed me up against the wall about it, I think that was more positive than negative. And I think the nostalgia part reflects that. If I had to look back at my life, and would I change anything or replace it by something else? I'm pretty much satisfied with how things have gone. And you always have to think about the downstream effects of any change you make in your life, and what the impacts are down the line. I'm sure you think about that, as well. And I would have to say that the only things I would change are certain things that I did that I wouldn't do, or I didn't do and I would do. You know, certain opportunities that I feel were missed, and those sorts of things. Again, I don't pull my hair out about it, or I'm not anguished about it. But the lessons I've learned, I try to impart on my grandkids and young people I come in contact with. And I coach youth baseball so I'm involved with eleven and twelve year olds on a regular basis and try to impart, within reason, that kind of wisdom that I've developed over the years. So I think, structurally speaking, I don't think I'd change anything right now.

SM: Well, is there anything else you'd like to add before I finish the recording. Maybe any other famous people that you've met? I know you mentioned that on the —

MR: Okay. Can I just quickly tell you about Dalí?

SM: Yes, please.

MR: So, basically, I had some interesting friends. One of my friends, who was kind of a freewheeling, kind of enthusiastic guy, he called up one day. It was summer. And he said to me and a friend of mine, he called him up as well, "Let's go see Salvador Dalí." Which made no sense at all.

SM: Yeah, you're like, "What?"

MR: It made absolutely no sense at all. We were very into his surrealistic paintings, his melting watches painting. So I said, "What are you talking about?" He says, "Let's do it." So we looked Dali up in the phone book, yes. I mean, the phone book! And it turns out, he had a kind of offshoot enterprise called Salvador Dalí Jewelers and it was on Fifth Avenue. We took the subway into Manhattan, and we went to this place and, and it had heavily guarded doors, steel doors, because I guess there were a lot of expensive gems. We said, "We're from Bronx Science and we want to interview Mr. Dalí." And they said, "Oh, he's at the St. Regis Hotel. That's where he lives." So we went to the St. Regis Hotel. And we actually — I mean, this would never happen these days. We picked up the house phone in the lobby of the St. Regis Hotel. And we said "We'd like to be connected to the room of Mr. Dalí." And they connected us to the room and his lifelong lady friend answered. And we told her who we were and she said, "He's going to be at a gallery. He has an exhibition on 57th Street." So we went there. And sure enough, he shows up. He's got this handlebar mustache, his cane, and he proceeded to spend about 45 minutes with us going from painting to painting. I couldn't understand a word he was saying, he was talking about all these crazy things like antimatter and atomic particles—

SM: Oh yeah, I've read his stuff in Spanish, it's worse.

MR: I know. He was a character and we got to talk with him and that was it. So you know, it started off with this preposterous idea about seeing him and we wound up seeing that guy. It's kind of one of my great stories of childhood.

SM: That's fantastic. I feel like I can now say that I've been one person removed from meeting Salvador Dalí.

MR: Yeah. So that was certainly a highlight of things and —

SM: — I feel like — no, go ahead. Go ahead.

MR: I was fortunate also, as a practicing physician, to take care of some celebrity people but one of the top ones was Arthur Miller, the playwright. You know, *Death of a Salesman*. Through him I met interesting other people. In our area of Connecticut there are a lot of authors and theatrical people and folks like that. I really enjoyed — it was nice sharing this with you. I hope it was productive for you, I think, more than anything else. By the way, what are your plans? Are you going to grad school?

SM: Yeah. Hold on let me —