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Transcriber: Will Beller

Dr. Mark Naison (MN): [Opening words of interview lost] 161st interview of the Bronx African American History Project. Today is April 25, 2006. We are Fordham University with George Sabb and Naema Mubarak, and the Oral History of the African American Experience Graduate Class in room Dealy 102. So to begin with, could you tell us a little bit about your family, and where they were from originally, and how they came to New York City?

Naema Mubarak (NM): Well, we – I was born in South Carolina. My parents migrated to New York when I was about three months old, so there's no accent. I should have some accent, but I don't. I probably have the New York accent. But anyway, they migrated to New York I would say in the early 1930's, and I think our first stop was Brooklyn, and we moved from Brooklyn to – what was it 131st Street and Madison between 4th and 5th?

George Sabb (GS): Yes.

NM: And those were wonderful days too. And from there to Prospect Avenue, alright, and I don't, I don't recall Prospect. We must not have stayed there too long.

GS: No, no.

NM: You know, and from there we, we moved to Boston Road, right, and when I arrived at Boston Road, I was in the first grade, so I had to have been about six. So it took from – it took them six years to get from Brooklyn to Boston Road.

MN: Yes, now in South – where, what community in South Carolina were your parents from?

NM: Well, I think it's called Clarendon County, Sumter – in that general vicinity.

MN: Did you ever go back to visit relatives there?

NM: Yes, we – my mother's people were – I'm not sure if they were from South Carolina because she was raised by her cousin, and her mother lived in Florida most of the time. My father's people are mostly in that area, and we have gone back and visited different relatives there [Tape cuts out briefly]. You know, most people who migrated from the south, they have what's called heir's property, and you know your parents were able at that time to buy sections of land, and there's no way that you can sell it now because it's passed down from person to person [Tape cuts out briefly] – if for no other reason than to check what's happening.

MN: Right, to the land your family – now, what sort of work did your parents do?

NM: Well, my father retired from – it was –

GS: Bricks?

NM: – a steel –

GS: Steel company.

NM: – machine kind of steel and metal. Yes, and my mother did from a domestic to working in book binderies.

MN: Yes, now what are your first memories of the Boston Road neighborhood? You know, you're six years old – what, and what year was that?

GS: [Laughs]

NM: 19 –

MN: Oh, [Laughs] – sorry.

NM: When I was six years old, it was about 1941.

MN: Right, and what are your memories of the neighborhood?

NM: My fondest memory of Boston Road is Crotona Park. It was a beautiful park, and we would – my mother would take us to the park. We would sit around the lake. If you're familiar – if anyone is – that should be on an assignment to go to [Crosstalk] –

MN: Go to Crotona – how many people in this class have been to Crotona Park?

NM: – right, it was really beautiful – it's, they – it's still there, but it's not as beautiful as it was then.

GS: There's a rock, [Incomprehensible] rock that sits right there, and it's, you know, it hasn't moved, and it seems like if you push it, it will roll right into the lake. However, it hasn't been moved, and it's still there.

MN: Right, now when you moved to Boston Road in 1941, what – was it a multiracial neighborhood or predominantly African American?

NM: It was multiracial when we moved there.

GS: Mosaic.

NM: It was.

GS: Yes.

NM: The – all the small businesses in the area – there were one, two, three, about four businesses that were owned by African Americans. There was an Italian –

GS: Across the street, right?

NM: – vegetable market across the street.

GS: An Asian grocery store.

NM: [Laughs] An Asian grocery store. A Jewish plumber, remember. Oh, there was an array of nationalities and businesses right on our little block, and that was between 169th Street and Prospect Avenue, yes.

MN: Now, did you play a lot in the street?

NM: Oh yes, yes.

MN: [Laughs] Some of these people here may have grown up in suburban houses, so tell them – how many people grew up here in the suburbs with a real house with glass and lawns? Okay, so tell us a little bit about the street games and sort of what kids did in a neighborhood where – were most of the houses like walkups?

NM: Most of the houses were, yes, I guess what you would call tenement houses. The thing that I remember about my building is when you walked into the first vestibule or – okay, the mailboxes were – what is it, not – was it copper or bronze?

GS: And they kept them [Crosstalk] clean, and as you, that was the first little foyer, and then when you walked into the major hall, on the far wall there was this huge mirror on the wall. And I remember in the mornings, before we would come out to go to school or what not, the streets were – the supers would come out and wash the streets down, so the streets were clean, and there was of course [Tape cuts out briefly] – maybe two families only on the block, you know and the families [Tape cuts out briefly] – one, one automobile. So we had space to play, and we jumped double dutch, and there was a, a street right off of Boston Road, maybe a few stores down – Jefferson Place. And Jefferson Place was the place to play. Jefferson Place was the place to play, and that's where I would steal my brother's bicycle because we shared [Laughter], well they shared the bicycles, but I wanted to learn how to ride this bike, and I would take the bike and ride it up and down Jefferson place, bang into the few cars that were there, and I learned how to ride. Of course he would be really upset with me for –

MN: Right, now what did people do in the summer? You didn't have air conditioning, so how did people keep cool [Laughter]?

GS: No, well, you know what, it, it was, it was the sun rose on, on – you know the sun rose on one side of the street, so the ones that lived on the other side of the street where the sun was shining down, they stayed there or they came on our side. But there was a territorial thing, you know, and so, although you lived across the street, you know, don't go across there, you know, "George is not that cool and everything," and then, but then we would go down to the park. You

know, going down to the park wasn't that far from our neighborhood, and we would just go down to the park. We had the pool, Crotona Pool, that was available. Then we had sprinklers, you know. We couldn't – we had a two way street, so we couldn't put on that hydrant, you know, because we couldn't go out in the street, you know. Now around the corner from us was Jennings Street. Jennings Street was like a tough, tough block, and your mother would, or your father, would say, "Don't go around there and play with those kids around there," you know, so of course, who listens to their parents [Laughter]? So, so we would go out there and play and everything, but when you were young, I mean the heat – you don't care about the heat, you know, until you come in the house, and your mother says, "Take off those sneakers, take off that," you know, because you are stinking. You can smell it [Laughter]. Alright, yes, but it, it, it was – I just want to say, the games that we used to play, there was a, a game that we used to call, some called it Skellzy, we called it Mowdy's. Alright, it was a, a, a big box in the middle, and then there were 12 boxes around. Alright, so you had a little top to a soda bottle, or you have a checker that you were, were shooting. You know, so you're going to try to get those boxes. You

–

MN: Now these are, these are boxes in the sidewalk or –?

GS: On the sidewalk.

MN: Oh so the boxes and the sidewalk are –

GS: No you, you, you mapped them – you mapped it out. You mapped them out with chalk, and, and so you, you would try to, to get around those 12 boxes, and then you got to get to the middle of that.

MN: Oh so you flick it with your finger?

GS: Yes, right.

MN: So give him a soda top, and let's give, let's see an example.

NM: I think a lot of the kids still play that.

GS: But now, let me also say this: we used to, to, to weigh it down, we would take either an orange peel or a banana peel, and you'll put it on top of it, and, and make out a top, so you can really guide the thing, you know.

NM: Guilt [Laughter].

GS: Yes, right, so, so this is how – this was the technique: you would hold your finger here and shoot it with that finger, but it was like a little fantasy player. Sometimes someone would do their – they would just like rub it over the top like that, you know, and there were certain things

that you would say, you know. So that was one of the games. We used to play punch ball. We used to play hide and go seek. We used to play kick the can.

MN: Did you play, did you play stoop ball at all?

GS: Oh yes, stoop ball was one of the [Laughter] – stoop ball, but we didn't have – you know, you couldn't hit the ball too far because it will go out in the street.

MN: Yes and, right and–

GS: But – punch ball – I mean a lot of things –

NM: Stickball.

GS: – stickball. Hot peas and butter when you hide – you'll hide something – you'll hide a belt, mostly a belt – you'll hide a belt, and whoever hides the belt, everybody goes looking for it, and you say, "You're hot. You're cold. You're hot," and whoever gets close to it gets the belt, and you got to run back to the base, alright, before you get hit [Laughter].

MN: Yes – oh you mean hit with the belt?

GS: Yes, yes [Laughter].

MN: Oh, okay – I see.

GS: We used to play – hide and go seek was something, and, and we'd do it at night, so sometimes we used to wait, "5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30," to 100. Anybody around my base is it – this is what the saying was. So now [Tape cuts out briefly] – 25 people that you got to go looking for, alright. A lot of guys just go, and girls go, have dinner, you know [Incomprehensible]. But they're at home watching television, you know [Laughter]. Yes, this is what the 30 things you used to do when you were younger.

NM: That was before T.V.

GS: That was before T.V. that's right. Who had T.V. then? Yes, so there were a lot of games that we, we had played, alright, until we got a little older, and I mean noticed that, "Oh, man, there's females. There are girls." You know, before we said, "Hey, no, no girls." And the girls would say, "Boys," you know, and then you start brushing your teeth and combing your hair, and so I said [Laughter], "Oh wow, look at, look at her, look at her." And then things started changing, you know, and then the little brothers are playing the [Incomprehensible] games. We were –

MN: Now, you mentioned Jennings Street. We interviewed a couple of people from Jennings Street. Do you remember the families the Himmelsteins?

GS: They lived on Prospect Avenue, right around the corner from Jennings Street, yes.

MN: And the Chandlers?

GS: Yes, all the Chandlers, yes [Crosstalk].

MN: Because they were big families. Now –

GS: Exactly right.

MN: – now, what floor did you live on in your building.

NM: We lived on the top.

MN: On the top floor, so is it the fifth floor?

NM: Yes.

GS: Yes.

MN: Yes, and how many rooms were in the apartment?

NM: One, two, three –

GS: It was five rooms, three bedrooms.

NM: – three, four, five. Yes.

GS: Five rooms, five rooms.

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

GS: Eight.

NM: There were eight of us.

MN: So there are eight of you, and were any relatives living there also?

NM: Mostly not, but of course as immigrants, well people who are moving around, you have family that is headed this way, you know, so they'd come, and they'd stay with you until they got on their feet, and they would move around, and then other family members would come. And then my mother was always – there was always some person in the area that didn't – that was homeless, and usually it was a young female. So we grew up with about three or four siblings that were not blood siblings, but were people that she, she took in and took care of.

MN: Wow, so there was this kind of, you know, generosity was something that was part of your family's experience.

NM: Oh yes, absolutely.

MN: Now what was the cuisine in your house? What, what sort of food was, was cooked?

GS: Everything, we used to talk about lamb, lamb, lamb stew, or, you know.

NM: [Laughs] Yes, he just mentioned he had gone to the restaurant, oh, [Crosstalk] and it reminded him of –

GS: My momma [Crosstalk].

NM: Hot cereal every morning – it was usually oatmeal, cream of wheat, [Incomprehensible], cornmeal.

GS: Yes.

NM: Mush – oh that was delicious [Laughter]. It was. It is. I still do it sometimes. That was generally the fare. In the winter time, you had a quarter of a slice of orange because there were eight of us, so we had to share these oranges. And a teaspoon of –

GS: Oh castle roy –

MN: Did you have [Crosstalk] pot liver oil?

GS: Under oil.

NM: Yes, yes.

MN: Really, okay.

Student Question: Why would you do that?

GS: Well if you catch a cold [Crosstalk] – nasty, but [Laughter] – but it, it, it kept – because I never wore a hat, and Momma used to say, “Put on that hat, boy,” and I, I would get out the door and put it in my pocket. My nose would be running all the time, you know, but I didn’t have a cold. My nose just ran, but it was – it, it helped me, you know.

MN: Now, did your, did your mother ever cook southern style, or this was more –

NM: Everything was southern style – smothered chops, smothered chicken, fried chicken, baked chicken.

MN: Did [Crosstalk] she ever do collard greens and neck bones?

GS: Oh yes.

NM: Yes, and they were traditional dishes [Tape cuts out briefly] – Easter – potato salad –

GS: Pig feet.

NM: – pig feet and – but that’s the main. And cakes –

GS: With bananas [Laughter] – with bananas between the layers – man, that – just – oh [Crosstalk]. She used to make a cake and put bananas between the layers, and I would die for it. I couldn’t wait for my birthday or something like that to come. And then Thanksgiving, if you want to take some gravy, I haven’t had it yet, you know, Momma, so she, she made gravy from the turkey that – I just wanted to drink the gravy [Laughter] – really. And she put it on top of the rice and stuff, and I would – oh it was something.

NM: And Thanksgiving was, oh gosh [Crosstalk]. It was not – it was, well – many Thanksgivings were not just our family.

GS: Right.

NM: You know, it was almost like everyone from the block would have to stop by, you know, and the turkey was never less than 23 pounds.

GS: Right [Laughs].

NM: It had to be, yes, those were wonderful –

MN: Now, now did people look out for each other on your block and in your building?

GS: Our door was open. We didn’t have – well, we had a lock on the door, I mean, but it wasn’t – it wouldn’t be locked. It wouldn’t be locked, and that’s – yes, everyone looked for one another – the village type quotation, “It takes a village,” and you know, on the stoop – the stoop was like a, a cathedral. You know, on the stoop you had the grownups, and, and they would – the stoop was the – well, you all know what the stoop is correct? And, and they would be there, and they would always see everything, you know, so and you stay on that stoop, you know, you can’t curse, you can’t, you know – you got to be right to be on the stoop. Now, there were some, some – the grownups that were on the stoop that weren’t really nice. You know, we weren’t angels or nothing like that, but you had to respect them. You had to respect them.

MN: So there was a norm – young people had to be respectful to elders?

GS: Oh yes, yes. You got beat up, you know – you would get beaten by the adult – by your mother, then by your father, then by your big sister [Laughter]. So –

MN: What if you were disrespectful to a teacher in school?

GS: Oh that was a no-no. Oh, man that was a no-no.

NM: Yes, that was totally unheard of.

GS: Yes, exactly.

NM: You didn't – it just, it just didn't happen.

MN: Just like today?

SQ: Oh, yes.

MN: We have several teachers in the room, so –

GS: Oh, okay, that's good. That's good.

MN: So there was, you know – would people tell your parents if they say you do something?

GS: Oh yes, oh yes. We used to call them snitches [Laughter]. I mean not – behind their back, yes.

NM: Yes, yes, there was – teachers and parents were formidable. There was just no – if a teacher – a teacher only came to your house when I was growing up if there was something wrong, you know, so –

MN: Yes, so teachers would go to your house if there was something wrong [Crosstalk] to – they made home visits?

NM: Yes, yes, yes they would. And you – there was just [Laughs] – you were just frightened out of your wits. You just didn't want that to happen.

GS: I'm dead. I'm dead.

NM: You know, you just didn't want that to happen. The classrooms were learning places. It was quiet, and you did your assignments. Your parents saw to it that you did your assignments, and your teachers recognized you for good work. And there weren't a lot of trips, you know, we didn't go on a lot of trips to different places with the school, you know.

GS: The zoo.

NM: But the school was a happy place, and especially junior high. The junior high school that I went to had a pool in the basement. I don't know if they guild junior high –

MN: Which junior high was this?

NM: 40.

GS: 40.

MN: You went to – what elementary school did you go to?

NM: I went to –

GS: 54.

NM: – true, I went to – I started out in 63, and then they changed boundaries.

MN: Right 63 was at Boston Road and 169th, and where was 54?

GS: At the bell on Freeman street.

MN: Okay, and are there any teachers that you vividly remember from your, your, your elementary school days?

NM: Yes there were – there was, oh God – not elementary so much. I remember mostly my junior high school teachers, and you know, because they really impacted – and, and I enjoyed. Those – elementary school – the elementary schools at that time, you had to participate in the classics. You also, and that's one of the things that stayed with me forever, that I learned to appreciate the classics in elementary school, and then high school just – junior high they called it then. They called it intermediate school – they called it intermediate schools now, but junior high school was just the icing on the cake. Junior high school then – I look at – it – I can compare the junior high school then with the high schools of today because the junior high schools at that point you were coming into yourself [Tape cuts out briefly] – in junior high school than you were allowed in your elementary school, and it was fun, and junior high school we were introduced to Shakespeare, and you had to memorize – I think – I have a friend that, that memorized *Hamlet* or some part of *Hamlet* because his teacher loved *Hamlet*. My teacher was *Julius Caesar*, so I had to memorize Brutus' –

GS: Mine was *Macbeth* [Laughter].

NM: But it, it was totally, totally different then the experience that I see, you know, youngsters have today.

GS: Let me tell you about Naema. Naema, Naema was always my, my inspiration. You know, she encouraged me a lot, you know. She's a very modest person, but a very knowledgeable person in life, not because she's my sister because it's a fact. She, she taught for thirty years, you know, in a junior high school, and, and she, she helped kids that, that, that are coming back to her and, you know, she, she controlled – I was there after – at one time she controls her [Incomprehensible and then tape cuts out briefly] – since I was in junior high school – no I'm just kidding. She, she was [Incomprehensible] – she was my inspiration, alright, other than my sisters. She was someone that I – and when I was in high school, and I was getting off the train, and I saw her, she still remembered me. So it was something that, that I always remembered about teachers in high – in junior high school I had a Ms. O'Neill – she was an African American – the first African American teacher I ever had, alright, and she was short, thin. But she was a fire, she was the fiery teacher, you know. She was our homeroom teacher, and I, you know, she, she made me feel like I could do a lot of things. You know, she made me feel like, you know,

that I can rise above a lot of things. It wasn't until I, I got out of school – you know I had to drop out of school when I got my high school diploma, and I got a degree, but it was after, you know, getting married – she was like the inspiration, you know. She said, “Come on there brother you can do this, you know, you can do that.” So back, you know, going back, there was a lot of the – I had some sisters that were – they were some dynamite – still do, still do, still do, but I just wanted to share that with you. She won't say it, you know, she won't say it, and as a teacher, you don't. I guess you know that. You know, certain things you don't just do. Are all of you teachers? No?

MN: Some are.

GS: Some are, but this a graduate course right?

MN: Yes.

GS: Oh so that's, that's, that's great. Some may end up as professors. Now was music a big part of your family, and what sort of music did your parents listen to?

NM: Well my brother, my oldest brother introduced us to [Crosstalk] – jazz but there was –

GS: Bebop?

NM: – I just can't think of it.

GS: [Incomprehensible].

NM: No it was like a semi-classical. Oh, I can't think of it. But my oldest brother was the one who brought the music into the house. He brought jazz and Manhattan, what was it – Manhattan Towers or something, I can't think of it, but it was an array of music. It was jazz. It was some classical. It was rhythm and blues. It wasn't rhythm and blues then. It was blues or rhythm [Laughter], right, that was what we listened to mostly, yes.

GS: And, and the, the Tito Puente and the –

NM: Oh yes, but the – yes, oh yes that was – that was a little bit later.

GS: Yes.

NM: I remember that, but as a young, a young child I don't remember that.

MN: Now, did, did you participate in music programs in the schools?

GS: Are you asking here?

MN: Yes.

NM: Well, well in elementary school at that point music was the glee club. Alright, and I am still tone deaf [Laughter]. I can't carry a tune. I, I, I can, I can count rhythms. And then there's junior high school. Was – did 40 have a band?

GS: 40 had a band.

MN: Yes.

NM: Okay, 40 had a band, yes, alright.

MN: When did the street corner singing groups start in your neighborhood?

GS: 50's, you know [Crosstalk].

MN: And was that something –

NM: That was with the Feasters – that was the –

GS: The Chords, right.

NM: They were the Chords, and what was that song that they –?

GS: Sh-Boom.

NM: Sh-boom.

MN: Right.

NM: That was the song that they had written and recorded, and then someone else –

GS: The Crew Cuts.

MN: Right, yes.

NM: – made it, and they made the money from it, but they were the original authors of that song, but that was the first that started – were they?

GS: They, they were the first in –

NM: In the neighborhood.

GS: – in the neighborhood. Then, then Jackie and the Chantels, [Incomprehensible] my, my sister in laws were in the [Incomprehensible] at the show, along with, with – because the Paul Hendelstein and the Heartbreakers – now there were – this guy that his name was Jerry Jackson, J.J. Jackson, and he had a big hit. He lived right on Union Avenue, right – matter of fact, right around the corner from Jennings Street. He had a big hit back in the days. And then there were –

NM: Jazz.

GS: – jazz, which was Capers – the Capers Family. The Friendly Capers and the [Incomprehensible] Capers.

MN: Now where did they live?

GS: They lived on Union Avenue in the same building that Jerry, Jerry, J.J. Jackson.

MN: Right, now Valerie Capers is a great jazz pianist, who is a retired professor of music at Bronx Community College.

GS: Oh, okay.

MN: I have her CD *Wagner Takes the "A" Train* [Laughter], which you know – and, and her brother was Bobby Capers?

GS: Bobby Capers played, played alto sax – played with many of, of groups. One comes to mind – Mongo Santamaria he played with.

MN: Really?

GS: Maxine, Maxine Sullivan lived on Ritter Place right around the corner, but there was also an individual by the name of Arthur, Arthur Jenkins.

MN: Yes, we interviewed him.

GS: You did? [Incomprehensible]

MN: Right, and so he was part of your cohort?

GS: Yes.

MN: Because he was a great Latin piano player.

GS: Yes, yes, and now he plays with the makings – I mean, the makings – the people, what's her name – Chaka Khan. He was on Warner Brothers and he did a lot of things with, with a lot, a lot of stars, but he's a studio musician, you know, so they get to, to play with a multitude –

MN: Now do you remember a club called the Royal Mansion on Boston Road that was a Latin music venue? Does that ring a bell?

NM: That rings a bell with me – the Royal Mansion.

MN: It was on the, the, the west side of Boston Road – 1312 Boston Road, and – what were – what was the [Tape cuts out briefly] – you know?

NM: Well, in my late teens there were – there was the McKinley Ballroom. There was the Royal Mansion. There was, McKinley Ballroom, Boston Road Ballroom –

GS: Blue Morocco wasn't there?

MN: Blue Morocco was –

NM: This is before. This is before.

MN: Before the Blue Morocco?

NM: Yes, this is before the – and bands would come in, and your parents had no – I mean it was okay for you to leave the house and come back [Tape cuts out briefly] – and we would dance from the time you got there until the time you left.

MN: Yes, did you ever go to the Hunt's Point Palace?

NM: Yes, oh yes.

GS: You had to dance to be there, man.

NM: Tito Puente.

GS: Tito Puento.

NM: Pacheco, oh, names that if you mention I would remember.

MN: Now how did you get – you know, the Hunt's Point Palace is a nice hike. Would you walk back after a show was over?

GS: Oh yes, yes, it was safe then. It was safe, you know, yes.

MN: So you felt safe going almost anywhere at any hour.

NM: Well we weren't allowed any hour [Laughter], but Crotona Pool closed at nine or ten o'clock.

MN: At night?

GS: Yes.

NM: At night, yes, in the summer, so we were allowed to – and families would walk through the park to the pool and walk home, and it was not a problem – not a problem. And the same thing with Hunt's Point – your group would walk over to Hunt's Point and dance until they closed it, and it was a total mixture of the Hispanic culture that was there and people – and the African American people who were there, and we had great [Incomprehensible]. It was wonderful, yes.

MN: Did – when you were growing up in Boston Road, I mean you're living in a you know, an apartment with eight kids, and other people staying there – did you have a dream of owning a

place of your own, or was this world pretty much a self-contained – did you think about, “Oh someday I’m going to have a house in the country.”

NM: No.

MN: Or you didn’t think ahead?

NM: We didn’t think, you know, when you are growing up in a situation that you would say is almost pristine [Tape cuts out briefly] – and playing and just having fun, you know, but once you – once high school came into play, and you started to think on a different level, then at that time, with high school and then your first job, and at those steps in life – then you start to think, “Well yes it’s time to spread my wings and, you know, try to do other things.”

GS: You know, and I’m thinking of back then – we, we, we were happy, you know we were happy, so we didn’t think about skills. I didn’t want to do what my father did, you know. He came in everyday, and while he was there with my mother I was, I was happy, you know –

MN: What sort of work – so your father worked in a steel –

GS: The steel mill, but that was like before I, I was able to know. I’ll get a quarter, and I would be happy. I was happy for that, but now we had skills. You know, all my friends always had skills. Other than playing sports, we all had skills. It was one of the, the individuals whose father was a super – so he had to do a lot of things, so we used to watch, you know, we used to watch. You know, a splice in a wire, you know I knew how to splice, you know, splice a wire and everything. I watched guys put a – change an engine to a car. You know, I went to [Incomprehensible] and said – I was telling you all before I was able to do certain things, but I didn’t have no great idea – I mean when I was a kid I wanted to be a cowboy [Laughter], you know, but that’s no real life to live [Laughter]. You know, but it, it wasn’t, it wasn’t something that [Crosstalk].

NM: When you come from a large family, everyone in that family has a wonderful gift. You know, when you walk into a classroom, everyone in that classroom has a wonderful gift. Right, and I had a brother who was dyslexic, and he went into the printing business, and he became one of the most sought after printers in Manhattan. He did printing. He did lithographs. He did – and he could not read above maybe a fourth, fifth grade level, you know, but – and he was handsome.

GS: He sure was [Laughter]. He was.

NM: But, you know, so – and at that time, employment was available. It wasn’t so hard. It wasn’t hard for us the way it is hard for you people. Apartments were available. Jobs were available. You know, education was available. Whether you could afford it or not it was there for you. So it –

MN: When you were adolescents, were you able to get part time jobs to help the family.

NM: Yes, yes because all of the – if you wanted to make a few dollars, you could. You could walk into the grocery store and say, “Mother’s Day is coming and I got to do something for the neighborhood. I’ll babysit for so and so.”

GS: I used to wash windows. I used to wash windows and stuff.

MN: Wow.

NM: Yes doing all kinds o things [Crosstalk]. There was a friend of mine who, who can take apart a car and just about put it together. You know, people had so many skills just from – because I guess they were not involved with the technology that a lot of the young people are involved in today that takes them away from gardening and cooking and some of the things that they might feel – the mundane things, like – it was different then. The electricians, the plumbers who had businesses on the block – the construction, right, our guys learned to do construction. Some went into construction. Some went to plumbers. Some were electricians, you know, and they did very well for themselves and their families, you know, and of course, also at that period of time, later on, well – yes by the time I was in my early 20’s, that was when the drugs started to come into the neighborhood.

MN: Right, so that’s that was –

NM: And that was a motivation also too.

MN: So you, you know, you’re talking about an environment which is very nurturing, supportive, you know, I mean I’m thinking of all of you, you know, some of you work with kids – what’s, you know, what’s different about what they’re describing from what you see in your experience?

SQ: These kids don’t want to get out, or they don’t see a way to get out, you know they don’t, you know, this is they live in the projects, their second, third generations in the projects. Where do you live? Where are you from? Oh, the projects of Hoboken. That’s it. They don’t take school very seriously. Like, what’s passing? Oh, it’s a D. D’s passing? A 60’s passing? That’s great. You know, as long as I can do just enough to get the D, hang out, and that’s good. So like the way that you’re talking, it’s like very – like there not – the respect for their elders and their parents, I mean they’d just as soon say, “What are you looking at?” As opposed to, “Oh, I really should be respectful because they might tell my mother?” You know, they’d probably dare you to tell their mother. You know as opposed to it being a threat for, for discipline, you know to behave in a certain situation.

NM: Well those of you who are in teaching, I just don’t know what to tell you except that it’s just up to you to find a way. I think – I, I dealt most of my 25 years with the Board of Ed was with children who were intellectually challenged or physically challenged, and emotionally disturbed, you know, but you – if you’re going to teach, you have to be a people person, and if

you are, then you will find the channel to, to reach those students that really need reaching. You know, there's a – a channel is there. You just have to find it, and when you find the channel, then – that's where you start having your successes, but other than that I don't know what to tell you because the world that I – the youngsters were on the edge of technology. My youngsters were at the edge, so there was – it was not difficult for me understanding where they were and where they came from to work with them, but it – you know, I don't know what you would find at this point. And maybe it would be exactly that – technology to kind of help you to find that channel.

MN: Now when did you decide you wanted to become a teacher? Was this something that, you know, you came to in, in junior high, in high school, in college, or afterwards?

NM: I think it's something that I always wanted to do, yes, yes. Because you know, we would play games, you Christmas you get a little chalkboard, and I'd be the teacher, you know [Tape cuts out briefly].

MN: Now did your family belong to any church in the Bronx?

NM: St. Augustine's.

GS: St. Augustine's. Not Augustine.

MN: So you were raised Catholic?

GS: Catholic, yes.

MN: And, right, now was your, was your mother raised Catholic in South Carolina or did she become Catholic when she was living in New York City?

NM: She was Baptist.

MN: She was a Baptist?

NM: Most – yes.

MN: So how did you end up becoming Catholic?

NM: Well, that was the church of the community.

GS: Yes.

MN: Fascinating, so it was –

NM: So – I don't remember going to –

GS: I went, I went to [Crosstalk].

NM: I'm trying to remember like a Baptist church.

GS: Across the street from us, you know, but they – we had that stereotype, you they were, which was, they were yelling, you know, and screaming, and so [Crosstalk].

NM: They were the ones – that was the church that we stood outside and [END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE; BEGIN TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO] – [Some of the interview is lost].

MN: Go ahead.

SQ: You said that you always thought that you were going to become a teacher. Was it because in that transitional era between Civil Rights and the Modern Era for lack of a better expression – like so many women, because you're my mom's age, and so many of her friends were teachers, were your – did your friends become teachers as well, or what other kinds of things did your friends do?

NM: Well, I had – it was such an erratic – my friends were teachers. They were accountants. They were nurses. They were doctors [Laughs]. You know –

SQ: Yes, so you did [Crosstalk].

NM: Right.

MN: Yes, I want to –

SQ: Because my mother's, my mother says that, that the guidance counselors said, "Okay, you're black, and you can either be a nurse or a teacher or a phone operator." You know, because that was the kind of things that they were [Crosstalk].

MN: Now one of the tings, oh sorry.

NM: Just saying, there was that too – just an array came out that [Crosstalk].

MN: Now, Naema, before you came, George was talking about how romantic the music you grew up with was, and did the music encourage people to get married at a relatively young age? [Laughter and Crosstalk] No, no because I'm saying I remember, "Johnny, you're so young, but you're going to get married." [Laughter] You know, and, and – you know, was the – was – talk a little bit about that, you know, gender roles, and men and women, dating marriage, and that kind of thing in that time.

NM: Well perhaps at that time, many of the females – you did not, you would not be intimate until after high school. After high school, everyone was going to breakout and let it [Laughter], but not until after high school. But there were accidents, you know, before, and – but it was not so easily accepted in that society as it is now. You know, my niece is going to Binghamton University, and her – when she became pregnant, they said, "Okay, you take a semester off, and when you come back, you know, we have childcare services provided for you." That was totally not the case then.

MN: As a young woman were – was your goal to, to get married, or were – was there a career goal that was at least as important as a marriage goal in your generation?

NM: I think there was. I think basically at that time, it was to get married and have a family, and I was I guess fortunate enough to be married to someone who accepted my needing to go further my education. Yes, I was very supportive.

MN: Did you – what high school did you end up going to?

NM: I went to Walton High.

MN: And what was that like at that time?

NM: [Talking in background] Well, it was high school, all girls, and there was no communication when you changed period. You were quiet. You walked on one side of the hall. If you were going this way, you'd walk the other side. If you were going that way, you could wave and, you know, but there was not – no loud talking. Interracial – I met someone wonderful young people that I will never forget in that school that were very supportive. The staff there that they had was – it was just hard, you know, they – no failure was acceptable. You had to – you were motivated to do your best, and that was Walton High. I – it's, it's no longer all girls.

GS: Yes, it's coed.

MN: Right, yes.

NM: And Clinton was an all boys school. That was our brother school, right.

MN: Yes.

SQ: I don't know if this was asked while I was in the restroom. Do you still live in Morrisania?

NM: No.

SQ: Okay.

NM: I live in the Bronx. I am a Bronxite [Laughter], right. I live in the Bronx off Baychester and 241st Street.

SQ: Okay, Wakefield? Is that the Wakefield section?

NM: Yes.

SQ: Okay, and what about you?

GS: I'm in Englewood, New Jersey [Crosstalk and tape cuts out briefly].

NM: He was supposed to – what is it – the game at Roosevelt?

GS: Oh, yes, the, the – referee the game.

MN: So you still come back to go back to Morrisania?

GS: Oh, yes, oh, the area on Boston Road – I, I love that area, you know, I [Crosstalk] – excuse me, I'm sorry.

SQ: So if you love it why did you – this is just a question that –

GS: Oh, that's good.

SQ: – I always have. Why do people leave? Like, what, what made – what was your motivation to not stay?

GS: Well, essentially, I mean – we, we, we all got married, and, and moved on. I always had a, I'm sorry – I always had a, a thing that I wanted to buy the building that I lived in, and, and I came close, close to it, and the city had, had it – somebody had bought it. You know, but it was something that I – and my – the visions that I had because a lot of people in the neighborhood, they became very affluent. Things became rich. The guys became rich, and females became rich, and they – I was telling them before they got rich, "Let's, let's, let's buy that, man, when it, when it was being condemned. You know, when, when, when the Bronx looked like it was a battle zone, that each house was blown up and everything. Now, it's almost – almost too late, almost too late. But to answer your question, why didn't I go back there?"

SQ: Oh, how come you don't live there now?

GS: Oh, oh yes, it's just marriage and, and moving up, and unconsciously maybe, you know, you, you feel that ready to move a little, a little up. You know, you, you work, go to school, strive to get better, so maybe, you know, you want to be in that, that situation. You know, look at me. I'm, I'm here. You know, I'm here. I'm not – I'm not down here no more, which is not all that great, you know, not all that great, but it's good for survival, you know.

NM: Okay, but what motivated a lot of people also to move out of the neighborhood was because it was on a downward trend at that time.

GS: People were nuts.

NM: The Bronx was burning. The drugs were coming in. The schools were not good because in my early [Tape cuts out briefly] years of marriage, I lived – I, I moved – I lived in, on 156th Street in St. Mary's Houses. Now when we moved in there, they were supposed to be middle income, you know, for the middle class, right.

SQ: Was this to Mitchell-Lama?

NM: Yes, yes, and after a few years there, that drug and everything came to influence the neighborhood. So then my husband and I decided, well we'll send the children to private school. So we're paying, we're paying for private school. We're paying the rent, and the rents were high, and since they were privy to your income tax, which when you're salaried [Crosstalk] – your situation stayed the same, but your rent was –

SQ: Surcharged.

NM: – you know. So, you know, we took account of what was happening, and that's when we decided – when we moved up to Riverdale. This way the children – we could afford to live in a better neighborhood. The children went to the neighborhood schools, which were [Tape cuts out briefly] excellent, and so that's what motivated a lot of people to leave the area at that time.

SQ: Prior to the drug flow, you said that it was time to stretch your wings. I think you said it was time to stretch your wings when you started thinking about moving out on your own, did you see yourself in that neighborhood, but just on your own prior to the downward spiral of the Bronx?

NM: I didn't understand the question.

SQ: When you were talking about, I think Dr. Naison asked, "Did you see yourself like staying in the neighborhood," and you said, well when you started thinking about spreading your wings

–

NM: High school.

SQ: – right like in high school, did you see yourself in the neighborhood? Like when you saw yourself on your own, did you see yourself in that neighborhood –

NM: No.

SQ: – prior to – you still saw yourself leaving?

NM: Yes, and even at that time because that time it was on the edge, you know. You can – you could see certain things start to –

MN: What were the first –

NM: – happen to your friends and –

MN: What were the first signs of decay? When did you start to see that this neighborhood which was so safe and nurturing was starting to, you know, become shaky? What were the signs?

NM: [Tape cuts out] Was that around that time when the [Crosstalk], the [Crosstalk] because a lot of the veterans were coming back, and they were suffering from post-traumatic stress syndrome.

MN: This is even after the Korean War, or the Vietnam War?

NM: This is –

GS: No, no this is before the Vietnam War.

NM: Yes, this was before [Crosstalk].

MN: Wow, so he's in the 50's.

GS: Yes.

NM: Yes, yes, yes.

MN: Because people don't talk about that much, you know, that the Korean War had that affect on people.

NM: That was –

GS: Yes.

NM: – hard times for – you would go to, you know, you'd go on a date to 42nd Street to a movie, and you'd see amputees, and I mean you'd see veterans that were on the [Crosstalk] it was a sad time. That was a war that hit really hard in our neighborhoods, and I think it was from that point that the drugs started to come.

GS: Yes.

NM: And you saw, you know, your friends, you know, become involved in that. You know, and these were your friends. People who were in and out of your home, and you saw the debilitating effects.

MN: Was this more men than women who the drugs affected?

NM: Yes.

MN: So it was – you began to see some guys become junkies?

NM: Yes, they were very – for every ten or twenty guys you might find one female.

GS: Dope addicts we used to call them. There was a dope addict, you know. It was a sad time, you know, it was, yes and –

NM: But you know what? They were still your friends.

GS: Exactly.

NM: Because I remember, at that time I was working – I wasn't in teaching. I was working in the Wall Street area.

GS: Globe, what's that?

NM: Royal Globe, yes.

GS: Royal Globe.

NM: And I would take public transportation down and public transportation back, and the bus stop was like across the street. Oh no, I would walk from 3rd Avenue when they had the 3rd Avenue L.

MN: L right, yes.

NM: The 3rd Avenue L before they demolished that, right? And I would walk up from the 3rd Avenue [Crosstalk] – I would walk up from the 3rd Avenue L, and when I got to my block, they called them Moochie Boy, right? Moochie Boy would stop the traffic, right, and he would come and he'd take my arm, and he would walk me across the street.

MN: Wow [Crosstalk].

NM: And that was the fresh drug addict that I [Crosstalk] –

GS: He was a drug addict, yes, he was a drug addict. Mooch [Crosstalk] –

NM: He was, he was a friend –

GS: He was – yes, yes.

NM: – you know? And even during that time when, when drugs were affecting the young men and the young women in the neighborhood, you were still safe.

GS: Yes.

NM: You know? The doors weren't locked, you know. It wasn't until I guess after we started to grow up and leave the neighborhood that that started to occur.

MN: Did you remember – was there a time when people put gates on windows, or was –?

GS: That was later.

MN: That was later, so even though there were individuals who became drug addicts, there were still safe – safety?

GS: They took pride – they took pride in, in, in their community. They were, you know, opposed to the crack situation now, they took pride in protecting, protecting their community. They were

involved in you. They would see you or see your mother, and they'll help her with the groceries. They'll make sure, you know, so we, we had – we had some – we had –

NM: It was different.

GS: It was different, yes.

SQ: So, I mean, were there [Coughs] – not that there had to be, but what kind of – like were there, was there like the hustler kind of guy like growing up that you kind of saw from afar or like what –

GS: Oh now, they were close.

MN: It was close, yes [Laughter].

SQ: I mean, I mean like – you know like that – the bad element – what did the bad element consist of?

MN: But they may not have – like they were – the numbers, where was the numbers?

GS: Yes, numbers was right there [Crosstalk].

NM: But that wasn't considered –

GS: Bad.

MN: Bad [Crosstalk].

NM: As a matter of fact, the government took over what they called illegal, and they started the lottery, and the numbers – you can hit three numbers or four numbers. All the guys were doing that in the neighborhood. They were doing the same thing that the government is doing now.

GS: And –

NM: And, and –

GS: – I'm sorry. One of the important things that they made the numbers game – the number bankers made the neighborhood safe. They made the neighborhood safe, alright. Opposed to the police, opposed to the government that, you know – they had that element because they wouldn't make any money if the neighborhood wasn't you know, but more than anything they made the neighborhood so if you are doing something bad, you know, you got to answer to these guys. You know, they, they would make sure that certain people had certain things, you know, certain people that didn't have, they will have.

MN: So if somebody didn't have money for Christmas, the numbers' people would –?

GS: Yes, they, they, yes they would kind of have a little party for people, so you know, that, that, that was the thing. Opposed to the government, when the government took the numbers what they – well they made it on Sunday, which the local ones didn't have numbers on Sundays. You can't get no credit from the government, you can't go and say, "Can I play this lotto on credit?" No, but you can do that with the lawful guys, you know. If you go up to the government or went to – "Can I borrow five dollars from you?" The government said, "No, you can play some numbers, but you can't get no" – you know. So there's a lot of things, and now, you see people, you know, making a bee line towards this, this place that – where the machine is – they play numbers. They become habit forming, you know. You didn't – I didn't see anybody, you know, you had, you had nickel – penny numbers. You could play, you know, numbers for pennies and nickels, but you can't do that with the government.

MN: Yes, now this is, this is very interesting. Did church going people play the numbers? Was this something –?

GS: You sure – they sure did [Laughter]. They're cursing, drinking their – oh, yes, yes, yes you know.

MN: So this was – this was very much part of the fabric of the community?

GS: What's that?

MN: The numbers?

GS: Oh yes, oh yes. I, I think that maybe 85% of the people in the neighborhood were playing numbers, you know. Well mainly they – but I mean like they had the you bet on the single number, you bet on three numbers or two numbers, and, and they had it, you know, like day and night, you know, so it was –

NM: And they wouldn't allow me to play numbers [Laughter] because if I didn't win I'd want my money back [Laughter].

SQ: So was there a homeless problem at all in the neighborhood? I know you've –

GS: No, no.

SQ: Really? Did you guys notice it at all?

GS: No we didn't – no, you know, the hobo, the hobo – that's, that's the, you know, and that was down on Canal Street. We never saw that. We never knew about that. The homeless – that's, that's a good point, you know it wasn't.

NM: That was down –

GS: Canal Street and stuff.

NM: – Delancey, down there.

GS: Delancey Street – we never saw that [Crosstalk].

MN: So you didn't see people sleeping in the street?

GS: Oh no. When they were drunk – maybe if they're drunk or something [Laughter]. You know, but they wouldn't be, you know, you wouldn't see that element, you know. But this was a [Incomprehensible] as Naeme said, there were a lot of our folks that had businesses around – flourishing business. Mr. Clark had – this guy Mr. Clark, he had a restaurant that was – every six months he would paint it. You know, he would close down and paint it, you know, he was the cleanest restaurant in the neighborhood, and if anybody – if you ask anybody in the Bronx about Mr. Clark, especially around that area –

MN: Yes, now what was the name of his restaurant?

GS: Mr. Clark's.

MN: It was called Mr. Clark's [Laughter]?

GS: Mr. Clark's.

MN: Okay, and what street is it on?

GS: It was right on the corner of – it was on Union Avenue between Jennings Street and Boston Road.

MN: Okay, and it was called Mr. Clark's?

GS: Mr. Clark's, Mr. Clarks – I worked for him when I was in the seventh grade, and I got paid \$12.00 for the week.

MN: Wow.

GS: Me and Junie Bug [Laughter and Crosstalk]. \$12.00, and you know, that was in 1954.

MN: Wow.

GS: You know, and I said, "I had [Incomprehensible] for two hours." [Laughter] I needed \$12.00, and Mr. Clark was mean, I didn't think about [Laughter] – I was going to get that much, but I stayed with him until I was like 45 years old [Laughter]. No, I mean – I stayed with him for a while, but he was a very clean man, a very clean man. And then there was the barbershop that, that – three of them – Woody's, Woody's – and they were very clean individuals.

SQ: [Incomprehensible]

GS: What?

SQ: You said Woody's and what else?

GS: Woody's and George. Woody's had three barbers – four barbers, and, and every day there was – their chairs were full, and they were very cool. They were very elite. They [Incomprehensible], and they were very, very meticulous about how they dressed them and stuff. I didn't go in there because you had to wait too long, you know, and there were people that would come together, sit down and wait, you know, the barbershop was the Mecca of information. You know, you'll get information. That's, that's where not, not – but the changes in life, you know, now the barbershop is a Mecca for, not for positive information. That to me is not positive information, alright. You look at the history from the older guys, you know. I used to sit in there and just listen – just listen to the history, and of course, you know, the older guys lie [Laughter]. Yes, but it was so, so truthful, you know, a lot of things. You know, but now, you know, I have to choose my barbershops to go to because I don't want to hear that, a lot of negative stuff. I don't want to hear – I want to hear something that will be positive, yes.

SQ: So you go to Brennan's and mingle?

GS: Brennan's?

SQ: On Colleton Avenue?

GS: That's – no, no, no was that Brennan's? No there's an uptown – up might not be – because Uptown Barbershop has that now and then.

MN: This is New Jersey talk [Laughter].

GS: Yes, right, oh yes.

SQ: Actually, because I was just going to ask you about it. I was going to say did you gather up those [Incomprehensible] about the hairdressers and the beauty parlors [Crosstalk]. How many were there in like neighborhood [Crosstalk]?

NM: Well, they would come, and they would go, and there was always – there had to be three, four, five, six –

GS: Yes.

NM: – you know, just on the block. On our block there was one, two, three – there were three, and that was all.

MN: Three beauty parlors?

NM: Yes, and all doing flourishing business.

SQ: Because black girls like to get their hair done [Laughter].

SQ: So when your parents had the newspaper in the house, did they have like the Post, or did they have like any of the black newspapers in the house? Did they have any favorite radio shows they listened to, or?

GS: We had radio shows. We didn't have a television. We had radios.

NM: Early on, yes.

GS: Yes.

NM: They were the greatest.

GS: Right, imagination is flat, you know.

NM: It's a wonderful thing, yes.

GS: You can listen to the Shadow and, and, and –

NM: The Green Hornet.

GS: – the Green Hornet, yes. The Fat – was it the fat [Crosstalk].

NM: And then on Saturdays in the mornings they had the cartoons.

GS: A little Big John and Sparky.

NM: And, and the fairy tales for the kids and the –

GS: Big John and Sparky was on Saturdays.

NM: John and Sparky [Laughs].

GS: Yes, yes, the music was make [Crosstalk]. Now, the first black disc jockey that we had was Tommy Smalls. They called him Dr. Jive.

NM: Dr. Jive.

MN: A lot of people talk about Dr. Jive.

GS: Tommy Smalls.

MN: On WWRL?

GS: Correct, he was always – always our stations were always all the way back on the dial [Laughs]. You know, you turn to the back of the dial your just black music [Laughter], you know. But that came – who was that the Latino – always came on after Tommy Smalls, and the

music was, oh man, memories, right? But it, it, it was Dr. – yes he was Dr. Jive. Then on WL[Tape cuts out briefly], they also had –

MN: Was it Symphony Sid?

GS: Symphony Sid came on –

MN: He played Latin music right?

GS: He played jazz first.

MN: Right, jazz.

GS: Then he went to the Latin music, and he, you know, he just stayed with that, you know. But Sid was, was a cool dude too, you know, but then there was Ricardo Ray that had the Latin music on his station. Ricardo Ray was a [Incomprehensible] dude too, you know, yes man. But we had, we had – we had, we had to soothe our, our souls, you know. That, that – you kind of just, yes – made us counterproductive too – not with making babies but just [Laughter and Crosstalk]. She's, she's still – I could tell you how old she is, but I would get beat up, you know.

NM: Almost 100 [Laughter].

GS: Yes, and she does it. She's still retired and everything, still teaches camps and everything you know.

NM: And she looks kind of like you.

MN: Any other questions, because –?

SQ: You mentioned that when you moved there it was a racial mosaic. When did because [Incomprehensible] talks about race at all except for parts of the Hispanic community, but what – did white people move when –?

NM: Well, you went to school, you know, with –

GS: A mix, mix –

NM: – mixed groups.

GS: – yes.

NM: The, the, the businesses that were on the block, right, we became involved with the siblings, you know, and you would go to their homes. Ralph –

GS: Ralph, yes.

NM: – Ralph and his daughter and what not. The Chinese family that owned the grocery store, you know, there was [Crosstalk], and we hung out, and it was just – it was every – you know, you play together, you went to school together, you visited each other. It was –

SQ: And it didn't, it didn't change like even –

NM: Yes, once you – once the neighborhood started to change over. When we moved, right, into the neighborhood – were you born yet [Laughter]?

GS: 42, you know.

NM: I was six. By the time I was I'd say about eight or ten – I'd say ten, then the neighborhood changed. It became more African American, you know. The caucasians lived further out – where was it [Crosstalk] – Prospect Avenue –

MN: Right down the hill.

NM: – you know, and Crotona further, you know – from there on up to 174th Street, you know. They slowly migrated uptown, you know, and all families, and African American and the Hispanics, so we all sort of migrated uptown – uptown Bronx.

GS: Yes, the, the schools were, were [Incomprehensible], and through the schools and the teachers, I didn't – I never felt anything different. They were, most of the teachers were all, all caucasian, but they had the thing that they wanted you to learn. You know, you, you had to learn. Me, I had to learn from them, and I could call a lot, a lot of their names because I know they had an impact on me. I had, and especially English, you know my family used to say, "You weren't a great talker, George [Laughter], but now they, they, they made me, they made me write, you know – my syntax became a little better. You know, I had run-on sentences because I talk long. I write this – I just write the way I talk, you know, but there was certain things that, and I had a teacher in high school – the first teacher that ever said [Tape cuts out briefly] were positive and all. And all I'll remember his name for the rest of my night – my life – his name was Leo. L-E-O, and he made me feel like, "Oh man." And he sent a note home, but anyhow, the neighborhood was filled with, with the Irish, Jews, Italian people, Latinos, and African Americans, and we all got along. You know, we interchanged – the, the music was interchangeable, you know. We didn't dance you know, the polka [Laughter]. I mean we aren't doing that you know, but we used to do, we used to do the, the, the square dance. Square dance [Incomprehensible] – I mean and we had the guy, a teacher that taught it, you know, and we used to Dosey Doe, and do all that. But I used to like it, you know, I really liked it. It was a lot of fun. [Tape cuts out briefly]. You know, at first, you know, we all would say, "Oh, man we want to do the slide, you know, do the bop." But he made us do this, and when we started doing it, we enjoyed. We enjoyed it. [Incomprehensible] my partner and Dosey Doeing, you know [Laughter]. So when – as time went on – I used to go on to a Hebrew family, lived on Intervale Avenue. And Howley, I remember Howley man. We used to shoot marbles, you know, we used marbles, and he moved

from, from – I know he was one of the few Jewish families that was on the block, and when he moved it seemed like they started moving. Then they start tearing down the buildings and everything. Intervale Avenue was pretty much full of Latinos, and one of the groups – the Eternals, the Eternals. The Eternals were guys who partied with me, went to junior high school with me, you know, Ernest Yale or Freddie Harge or Gilbert Garcia, you know, and Alex, I think it was Alex. They changed some of the guys.

MN: So they were [Tape cuts out briefly]?

GS: They were a doo wop group, and they were bad. They were bad, some bad mammy jammies, you know.

MN: And this is African Americans and Latinos living together and – yes –?

GS: Yes, yes, yes, so – and, and, and we had – and the athletes. They were very – everybody – was athletic because we had – and then we had intramurals. [Tape cutting out every few seconds, Incomprehensible]. Then there was P.S. 99 that was the dance, music, and –

MN: Yes, talk a little bit about P.S. 99 [Incomprehensible] –

NM: [Crosstalk] Well, we would just go for the dances on Friday and Saturday nights [Crosstalk]. But knowing that the jazz they used to have on the weekends, on Sundays.

GS: It's like the – a place that manifests talent, and I was too young to go into the center, alright, so eleven and twelve years old – you have to be [Tape cuts out briefly] to go into the [Incomprehensible] center. So I used to watch through the window – them dancing. My sisters would never dance, so I just, the eight of us, we were a dancing [Tape cuts out briefly] [Laughter]. [Tape cutting out frequently and cell phone interruption]. I see them dancing down there, and it's like, oh man, this is what I want to do. [Tape cutting out constantly while George Sabb talks about music].

MN: [Incomprehensible] – release forms. And then, thank you so much for participating in this, joining our class, and showing us why oral history is so exciting.

NM: Thank you for having us.

MN: And I have to try that Turkey Gravy [Laughter].

[END OF INTERVIEW]